

*Religious Zionism  
Post Disengagement:  
Future Directions*

EDITED BY  
Chaim I. Waxman

Robert S. Hirt, Series Editor

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## THE ORTHODOX FORUM

The Orthodox Forum, initially convened by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University, meets each year to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Forum participants from throughout the world, including academicians in both Jewish and secular fields, rabbis, rashei yeshivah, Jewish educators, and Jewish communal professionals, gather in conference as a think tank to discuss and critique each other's original papers, examining different aspects of a central theme. The purpose of the Forum is to create and disseminate a new and vibrant Torah literature addressing the critical issues facing Jewry today.

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## Series Editor's Preface

In the intervening thirteen years since Chaim Waxman edited the third volume (1994) in The Orthodox Forum Series, *Israel As a Religious Reality*, we see a dramatic shift in the concerns of the Religious Zionist community. The earlier volume addressed issues of Israel's relationship with Diaspora Jewry, Aliyah, and Rabbinic Authority in the State of Israel.

The offerings in this volume reflect the mood today, with passions and tensions generated by security concerns and social and spiritual challenges to the Jewish State, following the disengagement from Gaza. One senses a significant increase in polarization between the population within Israel and in the Diaspora than a decade ago. The lack of consensus on political and ideological directions and a serious yearning for effective and inspiring spiritual and communal leadership are reflected in various articles in this work.

Many may decry the growing rift in the overall Diaspora/Israel relationship in the United States, however, the Modern Orthodox/Religious Zionist community has coalesced. The disengagement

from Gaza has led to a more invigorated Religious Zionist community in North America that identifies with the concerns faced by its counterparts in the State of Israel. While the Jewish people in both the North American and Israeli communities are frustrated by the absence of visionary leadership, they are seeking new ways to strengthen and contribute to Israeli society. The challenge for the Religious Zionist community, worldwide, is to channel its internal energies and idealism to address concerns not only for Israel's survival needs, but to develop a clarifying vision for its future.

The articles that follow highlight the precarious times in which we live and also capture the confidence in Israel's promising future.

We would be wise to recall the insight of the *Midrash Tanhuma*, "The sinner is deemed to be dead in his lifetime because he sees the sun shining and does not offer thanks to the Creator of light. He sees it setting and does not praise He who brings about the twilight..." Although we cannot know the ultimate outcome of today's dilemmas, the insights of the authors represented in this volume shed light on the current state of events.

We are grateful to Professor Chaim I. Waxman who has brought his broad knowledge, skill, and energy to the editing of this volume. Together with an outstanding group of American and Israeli scholars, rabbis, and educators, he has given us a work that is comprehensive and timely.

I am confident that these probing chapters and comprehensive analyses will provide a greater appreciation for the achievements of the State of Israel and Religious Zionism as well as a better understanding of the people who strive to advance the future direction of Religious Zionism both here and in the State of Israel.

Robert S. Hirt  
February 2008

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# Acknowledgments

The publication of this Eighteenth volume of The Orthodox Forum Series is a source of great pride. Since 1988, I have worked closely with an extraordinarily dedicated and talented steering committee, which has enthusiastically worked together to identify the more significant issues of concern to the Modern Orthodox community and the best qualified people to address them.

The Orthodox Forum is an annual gathering of from 70–80, men and women, rabbis, roshei yeshiva, Jewish educators, academicians and Jewish communal professionals. Papers are written and distributed to conference participants in advance, thereby allowing invitees to read the material and engage in meaningful discussions with the authors when coming together. The authors do not present their papers at the conference but respond to questions and engage with the participants in challenging and fruitful analysis and debate. The papers are then refined for publication in the annual volumes of The Orthodox Forum Series.



The Orthodox Forum volumes are cited widely in academic, rabbinic and popular Judaic publications around the world. These original articles, written specifically for The Orthodox Forum, have created a body of literature that has become a rich resource for professionals and knowledgeable laymen alike.

I am delighted to acknowledge my heartfelt thanks to the members of the current steering committee who have worked closely with me to guide this work. They include: Professor David Berger, Dr. Yitzhak Berger, Dr. Rivkah Blau, Rabbi Yosef Blau, Dr. Judith Bleich, Rabbi Shalom Carmy, Dr. Yaakov Elman, Rabbi Mark Gottlieb, Professor Jonathan Helfand, Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot, Rabbi Adam Mintz, Mr. Yossi Prager, Professor Lawrence Schiffman, Dr. David Schnall, Dr. David Shatz, Dr. Moshe Z. Sokol, Mr. Marc Stern, Professor Chaim I. Waxman, Rabbi Jeremy Wieder, and Dr. Joel B. Wolwelsky. Throughout the years, we have been blessed to enjoy the leadership and friendship of Dr. Norman Lamm, the Rosh HaYeshiva and Chancellor of Yeshiva University. His insights and support for The Orthodox Forum have contributed greatly to what has been achieved.

The annual Orthodox Forum Conference is made possible by the ongoing support of the Joseph J. and Bertha K. Green memorial fund at RIETS, established by our beloved friend Morris Green of blessed memory.

The Orthodox Forum acknowledges, with appreciation, The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of The Yeshiva University Press.

I am also pleased to thank Mrs. Sara Kessler for her invaluable assistance in the preparation and administration of the Orthodox Forum conferences and their subsequent volumes.

Finally, to the hundreds of Orthodox Forum Conference participants who, over the years, have contributed to the discussions and meaningfully enriched the more than 190 articles that have appeared in this series thus far, I say, thank you.

The basic goals of The Orthodox Forum have been to create a sense of community among Modern Orthodox colleagues in various disciplines from around the world and to create a body of literature

reflecting Torah U-Madda that speaks with a sense of authority without authoritarianism. I hope that our work will continue to fulfill these aspirations in the years ahead.

Robert S. Hirt  
February 2008



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# Preface

*Chaim I. Waxman*

The conference in which the essays in this volume were first presented was organized with a view that Religious Zionism was facing major challenges, especially in light of the “Disengagement” from the Gaza Strip, Gush Katif. The organizers perceived that these developments present a special challenge for the Religious Zionist perspective and, therefore, for Religious Zionist education in the Western Diaspora, especially the United States.

In fact, the challenges to Religious Zionism in America began long before the Disengagement. The organizational experience of Religious Zionism has long been part of the challenge. Although the Mizrachi organization was a major organization within the American Orthodox community during the first half of the 20th century, it declined significantly since and has been overshadowed by the non-Zionist Agudath Israel of America. Although there are no precise data by which this can be demonstrated, because neither organization reveals its membership numbers, one can rely upon other, fairly clear indicators. The growth of Agudath Israel of America is suggested by the growth in the number of attendees at their annual conventions. During the 1970s, approximately 500 people attended the conventions, whereas in recent years more than twice as many attend and

others are turned away because of lack of space. In 2002, about 4,000 people were present at the convention's plenary session.<sup>1</sup> Part of this increase may be attributed to the increased socio-economic status of American Orthodox Jews, including the more haredi sector. But the patterns also suggest significant growth in membership.

In addition, the attendance increases at the mass *Siyum Hashas* celebrations, commemorating the completion of the cycle of learning the entire Talmud, organized by Agudath Israel of America, likewise suggest significant increases in Agudath Israel membership. In 1968, about 700 people attended the affair; 3,200 in 1975; more than 5,000 in 1982; about 26,000 in 1991; about 70,000 in 1997 (including those who participated from a distance, via satellite); and in March 2005, more than 100,000 (including those who participated via satellite).<sup>2</sup> Although not everyone who attends is a member or even identifies with the organization, it seems reasonable to assume that most do identify with the "Aguda community."

Likewise, with respect to the decline of Mizrachi, there are no precise figures but there are indicators. Rabbi Aaron Pechenick, who was among the leaders of the Mizrachi in the United States prior to his making *aliya* and who served the movement in various capacities in Israel, summarized his 1977 survey of American Religious Zionism by pointing to the fact that "the movement in the United States did not progress much in recent years."<sup>3</sup> A recent professional in the organization put it this way: "Anecdotaly, I would say that the numbers are definitely lower, but I would need to research it to substantiate the decline."<sup>4</sup>

There are, for sure, various reasons for the decline of Mizrachi, some of which have little bearing on Religious Zionism per se.<sup>5</sup> Among them are the general decline in Zionist ideology in Israel; the decline of the National Religious Party in Israel; a broader declining enthusiasm for the Israeli government which is frequently perceived to be scandal-ridden and bereft of clear vision; a growing religious post-Zionism, especially in the United States where Jews are increasingly comfortable; the decline of the authority of the Rabbinate in Israel, especially in the modern Orthodox sector; and, finally, the Disengagement.

Within Israel itself, questions have been raised as to the actual impact of the Disengagement on Religious Zionism. It has been suggested that the nearly unanimous opposition of the Religious Zionist community to the disengagement has, in fact, not led to a major disengagement from secular Zionism and the State of Israel. This argument is indeed supported by the disproportionate number of religious military casualties during the 2006 Lebanon War, which are taken to be a sad but powerful reminder of the continued commitment to the State and the Zionist project by the majority of the Religious Zionist community. On the other hand, the Disengagement did apparently have an impact on the ideology of Religious Zionism by deepening the already existent rift between the religious and secular segments of Israeli society.<sup>6</sup> A growing rift of this sort within Israel further complicates the prospects for socializing toward Religious Zionism in the Diaspora.

There are surely many other aspects of the challenges and directions of Religious Zionism which need to be addressed and, as a start, this volume focuses on seven specific areas. As a beginning, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein and Dr. Lawrence Grossman offer their respective thoughts on the halakhic and pragmatic issues involved in being a Religious Zionist in the Diaspora. These are followed by two different perspectives, by Rabbi Avraham Walfish and Professor Dov Schwartz, on the matter of interpreting history and current events theologically. Professor Moshe Koppel and Dr. Kalman Neuman then present their alternative visions for Religious Zionism in Israel.

The group of essays that follow deals specifically and directly with educational challenges of Religious Zionism. The first two deal with those challenges in Israel, and the next with them in the Diaspora, especially the United States. Dr. Zehavit Gross analyzes the overall problems of state religious education, and brings these to a head within the context of her own empirical study entailing interviews of a sample of young adults about the Disengagement. Rabbi Yuval Cherlow then provides an analysis of a series of halakhic and other questions relating to the Disengagement which were posed to him on the Internet. Some of the exchange deals directly

with Religious Zionist education and the exchange can be viewed as a model of Religious Zionist education.

Rabbis Yoel Finkelman, Binyamin Blau, and Seth Farber address the complex problem of multiple educational loyalties, that is, the responsibility of the educator to American Judaism, in general, and American Orthodoxy, in particular, and the Religious Zionist goal of *aliya*. A central question with which they deal is the extent to which American Orthodoxy can afford to have its “best and brightest” make *aliya*.

The next two essays make the case for Religious Zionists *pesika*, halakhic decision-making. Rabbi Binyamin Lau provides an analysis of the decisoring of Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, who was appointed Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv in 1923 and, in 1939, Chief Sephardi Rabbi of *Eretz Israel*, as a case-study of halakhic decision-making from a Zionist perspective.

The volume concludes with several analyses of the relationship between Israeli and American Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism. Dr. Adam Ferziger analyzes the history, changes, and objectives of the Torah Mitzion program, in which Israeli educators serve in American Zionist yeshivot. This is followed by an analysis of the impact of Israel on American Orthodox Jewry, and Rabbi Leonard A. Matanky’s critical insights.

This volume and, indeed, the entire Orthodox Forum series, has benefited from its scholarly authors, the overall vision of Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, the superb leadership and hands-on administrative skills of Rabbi Robert S. Hirt, and the unrelenting efforts of a dedicated steering committee. On a personal level, I wish to express my deep appreciation to my devoted assistant, Aharon Arazi, who was present at the conference when the papers were delivered, and who made important contributions to both the volume’s content and form. May this work indeed contribute to the positive growth of Modern Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism.

Jerusalem, Israel

Tevet 5768/December 2007

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**NOTES**

1. These figures were provided to me by Rabbi Avi Shafran, Director of Public Affairs for Agudath Israel of America (May 25, 2005).
2. Andy Newman, Orthodox Jews Celebrate End of a True Sabbatical, *The New York Times* (March 2, 2005), B3.
3. Aaron Halevi Pechenick, Religious Zionism in the United States [Hebrew], in Yitzchak Rafael and S.Z. Shragai, eds., *Sefer hazionut hadatit* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 5737), 241.
4. Conversation with professional in Religious Zionists of America who requested anonymity (May 27, 2005).
5. Indeed, if one included the women's Religious Zionist organizations, AMIT and Emunah, as well as the Orthodox Union and Young Israel organizations, it is far from clear that there has been a decline. The focus here is on Religious Zionism as an ideology and a movement, and not necessarily on any specific American organization.
6. Yair Sheleg, *The Political and Social Ramifications of Evacuating Settlements in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip: Disengagement 2005 as a Test Case* [Hebrew], Policy Paper No. 72 (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2007), 79–95.





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# Part 1

**Being a Religious Zionist in the Diaspora**



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# 1

## Diaspora Religious Zionism: Some Current Reflections

*Aharon Lichtenstein*

Matthew Arnold opened his critical essay on Wordsworth by citing Macaulay's observation, "after Wordsworth's death, when subscriptions were being collected to found a memorial of him, that ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honour to Wordsworth, than was now raised all through the country."<sup>1</sup> I very much hope that Diaspora religious Zionism is not in the throes of terminal demise but there is no denying that if this Forum had been convened half or a quarter of a century ago, the context would have been much livelier. Unquestionably, this movement – as a public and as a private phenomenon, institutionally and ideologically, qua political entity and in the form of a shared spiritual commitment – has seen more vibrant days. And yet, many of the

relevant contemporary issues still cut to the heart of a Torah *hashkafah* (outlook), and remain worthy of note and incisive discourse.

Religious Zionism, tersely described and defined, is comprised of several components. In part, political movement, in part, both personal credo and public manifesto, it fuses the active and the contemplative. In all respects, however, it finds itself currently – in significant measure, in Israel, too, but to a greater measure, in the Diaspora– paradoxically, both embattled and dormant. The primary causes of both are dual. On the one hand, the fate of its religious element is but a local manifestation of the overall status and fortunes of Zionism in general. As the locus and the object of Zionist fervor, the State of Israel has been the victim of its own successes. Once the threat to its existential security waned, and as the erstwhile David became increasingly perceived as a Goliath, concern for the *yishuv* and for the welfare, physical or spiritual, of its inhabitants, lessened. As an impetus for energizing the Jewish world, no fresh goal could even approach the struggle for the founding of the state and the subsequent nursing of its fledgling body politic and institutions. Moreover, whereas the haredi world has a clearly focused agenda which it has pursued with great intensity, much of the religious Zionist camp has encountered difficulty in the apportionment of effort and resources between religious goals and more general Zionist aims.

In addition, as the dream metamorphosed into reality, a modicum of disillusionment set in, fuelled, moreover, by an erosion in the ethical status of Israeli society and a decline in its general idealism. At the same time, specific Diaspora issues such as intermarriage and assimilation were becoming exacerbated. Consequently, in many communities, Zionist commitment, even amongst the strongly identified, Jewishly, became jaded, as local and national interests competed for moral and material support.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, these trends did not spare the religious sector. In its case, however, the adverse effects were compounded by a major additional factor. The changes in the internal fabric of the general religious world and of the Orthodox community, in particular, has impacted significantly upon the strength, both relative and absolute, of its Zionist component. If, at mid-century, Mizrachi and its

adherents were a dominant presence and Agudah was perceived, even by many of its supporters, as marginal, the situation today is palpably and dramatically reversed. Moreover, at issue is not just the matter of political clout. One senses a loss of vitality and vibrancy in internal debate and discourse. A young acquaintance who recently had occasion to survey religious Zionist publication of a generation ago was astounded by the richness and the level of the discourse, as compared to the thinner fare to which he had become accustomed.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, this decline is manifest in Israel as well, where a blend of ideological rigor mortis has combined with obsessive concern with territorial issues to paint the *dati-leumi* (national religious) parties – at least, for the time being – into a corner of isolation and political irrelevance. However, its impact is more keenly perceived around the world, where, due to physical and, hence, emotional, distance, the divisive debates over foreign policy which have generated much heat, as they have driven the Israeli polis asunder, have not registered abroad with equal resonance.

Small wonder that many Diaspora religious Zionists find themselves today weakened and possibly befuddled; perhaps asking themselves, as did Wordsworth, in the very different context, of his “Ode on the Intimations of Immortality,”

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?

Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Moreover, beyond ideology, they are confronted by another issue – halakhic, philosophic, existential, and, perhaps acutely, pragmatic. Over all, looms the prospect of *aliya* (immigrating to Israel). And it looms as a genuine option. Admittedly, to some extent, as, in recent years, with respect to France and Argentina, anti-Semitism continues to impact upon consideration of the issue. Broadly viewed, however, and relative to the sociohistorical course of the last century and a quarter, with respect to most contemporary Jewry, *aliya* is more truly a matter of choice. Not, obviously, wholly free. Economic factors, for instance, still weigh heavily. And yet, choice has been considerably magnified. On the one hand, the gates of the Promised

Land are open, and, on the other, the pressure to leave current host countries and enter through them has receded. Hence, judgment in the light of merit is more readily possible. At the public level, literal ascent to the promised rose-garden is, preeminently, all sweetness and light. At one plane, conceived en masse rather than in individual terms, it contributes to the service of national needs – social, political, economic, and security – as it fleshes out and intensifies the character of *Eretz Israel* as our homeland. At another, viewed from the perspective of classical secular Zionism, it ameliorates the Diaspora's Jewish problem. And, of course, beyond the pragmatic, aliya, straddling the historical and the eschatological, constitutes a fulfillment of the divinely mandated providential commitment on the one hand:

הנני מביא אותם מארץ צפון וקבצתים מירכתי ארץ בם עור ופסח הרה  
וילדת יחדו קהל גדול ישובו הנה. בבכי יבאו ובתחנונים אובלים אוליכם  
אל נחלי מים בדרך ישר לא יכשלו בה כי הייתי לישראל לאב ואפרים בכורי  
הוא (ירמיהו לא:ז-ח)

I will bring them from northern land and will gather them from the ends of the earth, amongst them the blind and lame, the pregnant and those who recently gave birth, en masse will they return here. They will come crying, and with mercy I will direct them, guide them to streams of water in a direct route by which they will not falter, since I am a Father for Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn (Jeremiah 31:7–8)

and of the realization of our own collective aspiration on the other:

בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים (תהלים קכו:א)  
When God brings back the returnees of Zion we will have  
been like dreamers. (Psalms 126:1)

And, while even at the public level, aliya exacts a toll insofar as it may entail a brain drain, as the exodus of the most highly motivated

thins the ranks of Diaspora Zionism, on the whole, the net result is clearly deemed positive.

At the private level, however, *aliya* is, palpably, very much a mixed bag. Of the components of religious Zionism, it clearly offers the broadest opportunity, but, just as clearly, exacts the greatest toll. I trust that the major relevant factors are well-known, but a summary catalogue may nevertheless be helpful.

On the positive side of the ledger, the primary focus is, evidently, upon spiritual elements – particularly, of a normative character. At least four elements, bonding residence in Eretz Israel with the performance of *mitzvot*, may be identified. The first and most direct is the position of the Ramban, widely trumpeted and popularized by Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook, that the anticipation, at once promise and command, that we are to possess and settle Eretz Israel is to be enumerated amongst *taryag mitzvot* (613 commandments); and this, in two respects. Most fundamentally, this mitzvah is realized through the establishment and maintenance of the hegemony of *Knesset Israel* in the promised land, which is not to be left under the aegis of foreign rule, or as wilderness at the disposal of natural forces:

היא שנצטוינו לרשת את הארץ שנתן לנו ה' ושלא נעזוב אותה ביד זולתנו  
מן האומות או לשממה מבלי ישוב<sup>4</sup>

Which is that we were commanded to inherit the land given to us by God, blessed be He, and that we should not abandon it to the hands of other nations or to desolation bereft of settlement.

In this vein, *viyeshavtem bah* (“and you should settle it”) denotes *yishuv* as settlement – and, if necessary, conquest – as it affects the status of the land. Secondarily, however, the Ramban also subsumes *yeshivah*, mere physical residence – even in circumstances under which one’s absence would in no way endanger national interests – as a personal fulfillment of the mitzvah.<sup>5</sup>

While this element was included by the Ramban in a list of positive commandments whose omission by the Rambam he criticized, it is generally assumed, given the inclusion of halakhot concerning



the obligation to reside in Eretz Israel and prohibition of leaving it in *Mishneh Torah*,<sup>6</sup> that the Rambam would assent to the substance of the Ramban's position, the lack of formal enumeration notwithstanding. Be that as it may, no such gap exists with respect to a second factor: the status of the country as venue for the performance of many other mitzvot – particularly, agriculturally related *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz* (commandments specific to Eretz Israel).<sup>7</sup> This aspect is most sharply delineated in a *gemara* in *Sotah* – strikingly, with respect to Moshe Rabbeinu's aspiration to enter Eretz Israel and his passionate pleas in this connection:

דרש רבי שמלאי מפני מה נתאוה משה רבינו ליכנס לארץ ישראל וכי לאכול מפריה הוא צריך או לשבוע מטובה הוא צריך אלא כך אמר משה הרבה מצות נצטוו ישראל ואין מתקיימין אלא בארץ ישראל אכנס אני לארץ כדי שיתקיימו כולן על ידי אמר לו הקב"ה כלום אתה מבקש אלא לקבל שכר מעלה אני עליך כאילו עשיתם (סוטה יד).

Rebbi Simlai explicated: For what reason did Moshe Rabbeinu long to enter the Land of Israel? Does he need to eat from its fruit or satiate himself by its abundance?! Rather, this is what Moshe Rabbeinu said: "Am Israel were commanded numerous mitzvot that can only be fulfilled in the Land of Israel. Let me enter the land so that I can fulfill them all." The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "What you seek is nothing but to receive the reward; I will consider it as if you have fulfilled them."

The comment was subsequently cited by rishonim<sup>8</sup> as a paradigm for the principle that one should actively seek out circumstances which will generate obligation, rather than rest content with its circumscription; but for our purposes it is precisely the specific application which is most immediately relevant.

A third factor returns us to the Ramban; and, this time, with reference to a frequently stated – and yet, surprisingly radical – position. Not content with linking certain mitzvot with location, the Ramban contends that the halakhic regimen in its totality is geared

to Eretz Israel which constitutes a metaphysical and yet natural habitat for its realization. Basing himself, in part, upon a comment of the Sifre that the mitzvot of *tefillin* and *mezuzah* should be observed even in the Diaspora as a propaedeutic device for maintaining a mindset which should ensure their observance upon return to our native land, he notes that the remark apparently applies even to *hovot haguf*, personal, as opposed to agricultural, obligations;<sup>9</sup> and hence, he boldly draws the inference concerning the intrinsic bond between normative content and geographic context.<sup>10</sup>

This is, I repeat, a bold thesis, and one which, despite my enormous admiration and respect for the Ramban, I have great personal difficulty in digesting. Is it conceivable, we ask ourselves, that the *avodat Hashem* (serving God) and *kiyum mitzvot* (fulfillment of mitzvot) of many *gedolei Israel*, *kedoshim hasidei elyon* (religious leaders, holy and of the highest piety), had only instrumental, but no intrinsic, value? And even if we circumscribe the comment to refer to specific acts but not to the totality of avodah, or if we suggest that the Ramban only delimits the rationale for Diaspora Halakhah but not its character, once commanded, does not this still demean the tefillin of the Rif or the Gra and diminish their significance?

And yet, in a milder version, the Ramban's position can be readily understood and fully appreciated. Without divesting Diaspora halakhic observance of intrinsic value, one could accept the notion that context and location affect the character and significance of an action, so that the identical *ma'asseh mitzvah* (mitzvah performance) could have incremental qualitative value when performed in *eretz hakodesh* (the Holy Land). Thus, it has been reported of *mori verabbi* (my teacher and rabbi), Rav Y. Hutner zt"l, that, upon coming to Israel, after having worn tefillin en route, he was wont to put them on again, commenting: "Those had been *hutz la'aretz* (Diaspora) tefillin; now we shall put on Eretz Israel tefillin." And this increment is at the disposal of our prospective *oleh* with respect to each and every mitzvah.

Finally, we note a fourth factor, more amorphous but no less significant than the preceding. Eretz Israel is conceived as a plane of

paradoxical particular immanence – as a locus to which Hashem attends directly, with which He bonds, and in which, *mutatis mutandis*, He inheres. It is described, Scripturally, as, uniquely,

ארץ אשר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ דֹרֵשׁ אֹתָהּ תָּמִיד עֵינֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּהּ מְרִשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה  
וְעַד אַחֲרֵית שָׁנָה (דְּבָרִים י"א:יב)

A land which the Lord your God constantly seeks out, the eyes of the Lord your God are upon it from the beginning to the end of the year. (Deuteronomy 11:12)

Hence, Hazal could postulate that it is watered by the *Ribbono Shel Olam* (Master of the Universe) directly, as opposed to the mediating agency employed vis-à-vis other countries:

ארץ ישראל משקה אותה הקב"ה בעצמו וכל העולם כולו ע"י שליח שנאמר  
הנותן מטר על פני ארץ ושולח מים על פני חוצות (תענית י.)

Eretz Israel is watered by the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, and the whole world [is watered] through an emissary, as it says "He who gives rain upon the face of the land and sends water upon the face of the outskirts."  
(Taanit 10a)

And, halakhically, it is designated in the *mishnah*,<sup>11</sup> as the most elementary and comprehensive of ten levels of the sanctity of *mikdash* (Temple), whose conceptual essence is encapsulated in the summary commandment, ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם (and they shall make a Temple for me and I will dwell amongst them).<sup>12</sup> Hence, quite apart from formal and/or technical mitzvah performances, to live in Eretz Israel is, to subsist and suspire in the shade and in the shadow of the Ribbono Shel Olam, over and above the norm prevalent in the Diaspora. To the sensitive religious soul, the implications for service and experience are self-evident.

These positive elements, signaling the religious significance of Eretz Israel and life within it, are complemented in classical texts by statements, some quite sharp, denigrating the Diaspora. Thus, at one plane, life in *hutz la'aretz* is perceived as a spiritual vacuum of

sorts, bonding with the Ribbono Shel Olam being conditioned in some sense and to some extent, by location:

כל זמן שאתם בארץ כנען הריני לכם א-לוה אין אתם בארץ כנען [כביכול]  
איני לכם לא-לוה.<sup>13</sup>

While you are in the Land of Canaan I am your Master;  
[when] you are not in the Land of Canaan [it is as if] I  
am not your Master.

At another, emigration is described as tinged with idolatry – presumably, either because of the free choice of its environment per se:

כל המניח את ארץ ישראל בשעת שלום ויוצא כאילו עובד עבודת  
כוכבים,<sup>14</sup>

Anyone who leaves Eretz Israel at a time of peace it is as  
if he is doing pagan worship.

or, because subjection to pagan worshippers entails an element of subjugation to their deities:

משאתם עובדים לעובדיהם כאלו אתם עובדים להם.<sup>15</sup>  
When you are subjugated to their worshippers it is as if  
you are worshipping their deities.

The *ke'illu*, “as if,” softens this formulation. It remains however, harsh indeed. But can anyone contend that it is wholly inconsonant with perceived reality?

This brief catalogue, comprised of elements directly and immediately related to the religious realm, hardly exhausts the attractions of aliya and subsequent residence in the promised land. All that has been outlined heretofore could have confronted a prospective oleh several centuries ago no less than his contemporary counterpart. The current scene differs, however, markedly. Despite the momentous impact of the factors we have considered, they do not abide alone. At the very least, one additional major area which the modern religious Zionist – if he is truly that, not just an individual

who is committed to both Yahadut and Zionism, but one in whom the two are thoroughly intertwined – will take into account, bears examination. I refer to the sociohistorical reality our prospect will encounter in Israel should he reach its shores. That reality is itself, divisible into three components. There is, first, the vertical historical axis, bonding with the full range of Jewish existence, across the millennia, from our incipient national cradle to the epiphany of our meta-historical vision. Second, we note the horizontal social axis – particularly, as manifested by the demographic reality, or, as his Shunamite hostess told Elisha (מלכים ב, ד:יג) – “I reside amongst my people” – life as part of an indigenous majority rather than of an alien minority, with all this crucial fact implies for the organic unity of state and society and for the organic unity of personal sensibility.

Finally, we encounter the more narrowly Zionist dimension. I have noted elsewhere, that one of the major cruces dividing Zionist from non-Zionist Orthodoxy, concerns, at its core, a theological issue: the division, as it were, of the historical drama between providential control and human initiative. Abstract and abstruse as the point may seem, the question of the legitimacy and scope of activism bears directly upon the appraisal of the re-entry of Knesset Israel as a national entity upon the universal arena. To the extent that a religious Jew identifies with dynamic activism, he will be attracted to religious Zionism. And he will be drawn to ascending to Eretz Israel, for that is where the action in this vein lies.

Even if truncated, this is an impressive list; and it invites some question concerning the limits of its impact. Why, then, one might naively ask, do so many sincere and committed religious Zionists persist in residing and laboring in the Diaspora?

As in parallel halakhic scenarios, the answer, in part, lies in ambivalence or rejection regarding a number of the aforementioned contentions, some of which may be dismissed as fallacious, tendentious, or both. Differential immanence may be denigrated as theologically primitive, and the grading of mitzvot on the basis of some geographic scale likewise. The centrality accorded to *yeshivat*

*Eretz Israel* by the Ramban may presumably be challenged in favor of the Rambam's – or, in a later era, Chabad's – more arguably universal focus.

Alternatively, one may turn the halakhic argument on its head, contending, as did one of the *ba'alei hatosafot*, that precisely because of the normative demands imposed by residence in *Eretz Israel*, the burden is more than one can bear, and we are consequently now exempt from it:

והיה אומר רבנו חיים דעכשיו אינו מצוה לדור בארץ ישראל כי יש כמה מצות התלויות בארץ וכמה עונשין ואין אנו יכולין ליהרר בהם ולעמוד עליהם.<sup>16</sup>

Rabbeinu Haim would say that at this time it is not a mitzvah to live in *Eretz Israel* since there are some mitzvot based on the Land and punishments [for violating them] and we are not able to take [sufficient] precautions [not to violate them] and to live up to [the challenge of] fulfilling them.

And we bear in mind that in order to neutralize the impact of an argument it need not be rejected categorically as false; marginalizing it may suffice.

The halakhic discourse proper – in part, as expressed in commentaries on relevant Talmudic texts, but primarily concentrated within the corpus of *she'ylot uteshuvot* (halakhic responsa), wherein the issues were confronted and decision required formulation at the specific pragmatic plane – is multifaceted. The principal issues concern the basic normative obligation of *aliya* – does it exist at all, and, if so, whether *mi'd'oraitha* (biblical) or *mi'd'rabbanan* (rabbinic)? Second, to what extent, if any, can it be mitigated or overridden by circumstance?<sup>17</sup> For the most part, *poskim*, largely following the Ramban, were inclined to affirm a measure of obligation. There were, however, notable exceptions. Thus, Rav Shlomo Kluger<sup>18</sup> in the nineteenth century, and Rav Moshe Feinstein,<sup>19</sup> in the twentieth, both argued that if most observant Jews, including pious and saintly

*kedoshim hasidei elyon*, scholarly *talmidei hakhamim* as well as the untutored, remained in the Diaspora, evidently their sojourn there entailed no clear violation.

As to mitigating factors, these varied in character and degree. Rav Yizhak de Leon, in his role as expositor and defender of the Rambam against the critique of the Ramban, contends that the mitzvah was not enumerated by the Rambam because it had no contemporary application, as the norm is confined to periods of Jewish hegemony in Eretz Israel:

נראה לי כי זה שלא מנאה הרב הוא לפי שמצות ירושת הארץ וישיבתה לא נהגה רק בימי משה ויהושע ודוד וכל זמן שלא גלו מארצם אבל אחר שגלו מעל אדמתם אין מצוה זו נוהגת לדורות עד עת בוא המשיח.<sup>20</sup>

It seems to me that the rabbi did not enumerate it because the mitzvah of inheriting the Land and settling it were, applicable only in the days of Moshe and Joshua and David and while they were still not exiled from their land, but after being exiled from their land this mitzvah is not applicable to subsequent generations until the coming of the Messiah.

The emphasis here is clearly upon teleology: will aliya, manifested within a national context, advance the collective goal postulated in *בה וירשתם אתה וישיבתם*? In an analogous and yet fundamentally different vein, the nineteenth-century *Avnei Nezer*<sup>21</sup> asserts that the impediment of foreign rule is too formidable a barrier for an individual *oleh* to surmount; hence, he is exempt from braving alien masters. Most qualifications focus, however, upon personal factors – security, whether en route or, in Eretz Israel, once reached; livelihood; halakhic observance. Obviously, if recognized, these factors require definition and the continued current relevance of previously granted license bears examination; and these, too, figure in many responsa.

In summary, despite the numerical preponderance of *poskim* who dwell upon the obligation of aliya, it may be fairly stated that, while the positive religious aspects of life in Eretz Israel, as previously summarized, are clear and significant, and while these should

militate a far greater scope for religious aliya than presently exists, there is enough qualification to enable many to refrain. In this sense, at the level of personal existential decision, the halakhic debate remains for many inconclusive, and those who desire dispensation may find a basis for it. As formulated in the bottom line of the brief teshuvah of the fifteenth-century *Terumat Hadeshen*:

לכן כל איש ישער בעצמו בהכנת גופו וממונו באוצר, דרך יוכל לעמוד  
ביראת השם ובשמור מצותיו כי זה כל האדם.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore each person should estimate, on his own, [about] how prepared he is physically and financially, and [whether he can find] a way to maintain his fear of God and abidance to His commandments since “that is the essence of man.”

The statement focuses upon spiritual ramifications, but, on the view of many poskim, that material elements bear consideration as well, its differential approach can be readily adapted.

In large measure, however, the impact of the pro-aliya arguments is not so much affected by their total denial as by their being counterbalanced, and possibly outweighed, by contrary considerations. Many Israelis are wont to assume that the primary restraint upon aliya among religious Zionists derives from cleavage to the fleshpots of Egypt. This is a convenient assumption, especially inasmuch as it enables its advocate to flatter himself by basking in the reflected glory of his own comparative idealism. It is, however, also simplistic. I have no doubt that it is indeed true of a segment of the religious Diaspora community, and that, moreover, basic economic factors – such as, for instance, the ability to purchase adequate housing – enter into almost everyone’s decision making. For the most part, however, I believe that other factors, of a less materialistic or hedonistic cast, figure more prominently.

These include the quest for vocational self-fulfillment, with respect to personal development, on the one hand, and potential contribution to *yishuvo shel olam* (the development of the world), on the other. In a parallel vein, many are wary about the educational cli-



mate in the dati-leumi community in Israel, and bemoan the absence of certain desired options – say, the fusion of positive haredi passion for *lomdut* (conceptual Jewish learning) with serious readiness for secular profession – as well as the presence of radical ideology which brandishes a version of religious Zionism they find narrowly fanatic and excessively aggressive.

For many, more specifically personal elements play a key role. Ringing out the old and ringing in the new may be abstractly appealing. In practice, however, it may also be jarring. At one terminus, the prospect of being known as a greenhorn is perturbing. Grappling with the language, coping with a fresh culture, popular and high, finding oneself out of sync with icons and villains alike, bereft of instinctive linkage with the sports arena or with the concert hall, the fear of seeming a stranger in one's own presumed chosen bailiwick – all can be daunting. Worse yet, many are concerned about a cultural gap piggy-backed on a generational gap, opening a chasm between themselves and their children.

At the other terminus, some anticipate parting as not sweet sorrow but just plain sorrow. The problem is most acute vis-à-vis family – especially, of course, parents. Even if they are well, and, only middle-aged, still functioning vigorously, awareness of our prospective *oleh* that he will be depriving both his children and his parents of the bliss that he enjoys through contact and linkage with both, can induce both moral and psychological reservations. And of course, the matter is complicated even further if one entertains the possibility that declining parental health may necessitate direct assistance, so that one's planned emigration may deprive his elders not only of much deserved and cherished *nahat* (pride) but of much appreciated *shimush* (caretaking) as well. To be sure, technology and telecommunication will help bridge the gap, but an e-mail or a computer photo is still no substitute for fondling a baby or enriching the mind of a teenager.

Many of these factors carry little normative weight, and, to the committed religious Zionist, should presumably be no match for Rabbi Simlai or the Ramban. Nevertheless, these are issues which touch upon quintessential and existential concerns, and, collectively,

they serve as a phalanx which can formidably inhibit the readiness for aliya. Moreover, many are dissatisfied with certain aspects of the quality of current Israeli social and religious life; and not everyone responds favorably to Elie Schweid's mantra, that if you find fault with Israeli life, rather than maintaining a self-serving distance, you should feel bound to enter the lists in order to improve it. Add to this the normal quotient of inertia plus the instinctive fear of an unknown future, and the current limited scope of aliya becomes fully intelligible.

For many prospective olim, the upshot of attempted assessment and decision may be ambivalence, frustration, embattlement, or, simply, dilemma. I am inclined to believe that, at some level, the factors we have noted as militating for aliya are familiar to most religious Zionists. They sense that the quality of their avodat Hashem can be enhanced by the move, and they perceive that their relation to the pulse of Jewish history can be likewise deepened. They may refrain from making the leap, but not without anguish – some possibly troubled by the thought that they may be rationalizing, while others may be content that they have sound reason for staying put but are nettled by the need to justify themselves at all.

Perhaps the most ambivalent about aliya, however, are spiritual protagonists who, externally and adversarially, are not embattled at all but are, rather, torn, and possibly tormented; in no way impelled to choose between conscience and convenience, only between contrasting and, at the practical plane, often conflicting, claims of conscience proper. On the one hand, they are truly desirous and even anxious to live and work in Eretz Israel – and for all the right reasons. On the other hand, they are concerned by a sense of responsibility to their native community and to the need to minister to its spiritual and educational concerns. Upon completion of his book on Hegel, Franz Rozenzweig is reputed to have said that he had now paid his debt to the German landlord, and could move on to more critical matters. In the cases under consideration, however, at issue is often not so much a specific remission as the determination of lifelong venue and often of career as well. With how many young men have I discussed the alternatives of programming computers in Israel

as opposed to *hinukh* (education) or *rabbanut* (rabbinate) in the Diaspora? And with how many the respective merit of *hinukh* at different locales? Many of course seek ways to have their cake and eat it, and these have, collectively, contributed much to the Torah milieu in Israel – particularly, via institutions which cater to foreign constituencies. But there is only so much confection available.

The issues are, in part, general and theoretical: public vs. personal priorities, the value of *yishuvo shel olam* as opposed to *talmud Torah*, etc.; and, in part, obviously entail many private variables. In some instances, spiritual counselors take very sharp positions. I heard of a case in which a Sephardi educator who had done valuable work in France and, contemplating *aliya*, came to Israel in mid-summer to examine opportunities. Whereupon, despite the fact that he was planning to continue teaching here, Rav Ovadia Yosef sent him a message informing him that wherever he would apply for a position, Rav Ovadia would personally see to it that he should be turned down. Most mentors are, however, far more reserved, and their followers far less obeisant. With an eye to Yeats' comment that one writes rhetoric about his battles with others but poetry about his battles with himself, it may be suggested that this group's collected writings could constitute an impressive volume of verse.

Factually, in any event, the history of *aliya* since *shivat Zion* bears out the wisdom of Hazal's remark concerning earlier epochs. With reference to the events related to the danger posed by Haman's ascendancy and the process of *teshuvah* engendered by it, the *gemara* notes that the threat of extinction, symbolized by the transfer of the royal signet from Ahaseurus to Haman, was a more effective purgative agent than much hortatory prophecy and reproach. Moreover, the *gemara* extrapolates and generalizes:

אמר רב אבא בר כהנא גדולה הסרת טבעת יותר מארבעים ושמנה נביאים  
ושבע נביאות שנתנבאו להן לישראל שכולן לא החזירוּם למוטב ואילו הסרת  
טבעת החזירתן למוטב (מגילה יד.)

Rav Aba bar Kahana said: removing a ring is greater than the forty-eight prophets plus the seven prophetesses who prophesied for [the nation of] Israel, since all of them

failed to return them [their audience] to (spiritual) well-being, and removing a ring returned them to wellbeing. (Megilla 14a)

That, in a nutshell, is the summary of twentieth-century aliya.

Significant and central as aliya is to religious Zionism, what are the implications of its track record in this critical area? To some, they are, and should be, far-reaching indeed. From their perspective, the phrase, “Diaspora religious Zionism,” borders on the oxymoron. On this view, the *raison d'être* of a Zionist movement being conceived as geared, primarily, to the encouragement and implementation of aliya, once that goal is palpably beyond reach, it is time to fold the tent. Its proponents might acknowledge that in earlier days, before the floodgates had been opened, this was too rigorous a standard, but contend that in the era of *hok hashevut* it is by no means too exacting. And, as to the waiver postulated by Rabbenu Haym, it might be asserted that it is no longer meaningful, inasmuch as the alleged obstacles upon which it had been grounded had long since been neutralized by the growth of the yishuv and the rise in its level of organization and sophistication. Worse still, these critics contend that the profession of Zionist ideology in the context of continued residence in Hendon or in Woodmere is not only innocuous but hypocritical.

I confess that, in making judgments or drawing conclusions, I myself adhere to a less rigorous standard. For one thing, surprising as it may sound to some, I do not reject all strains of hypocrisy categorically, as I recall an adage Douglas Bush used to cite: “Hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue.” In a more conventional vein, however, there is much to commend the contribution of Diaspora religious Zionism to varied sectors and different levels – national, communal, and personal – of Jewish life. Even if we focus narrowly on the parameters of aliya, it is self-evident that the many who are bent on remaining abroad assist, in many diverse and meaningful ways, those who elect to emigrate. But why should we feel bound to such a narrow standard? Is the contribution to the spiritual and educational realm of any less moment? There are, to be sure, many

communities, flushed with manpower, resources, and commitment drawn from diverse sources, that feel self-sufficient, spiritually, even in the absence of input from religious Zionism; still others, who feel, rightly or wrongly, that, by acknowledging the spiritual worth of competing national and historical values, the Zionist component dilutes Torah education rather than enriching it. In a great many, however, the positive thrust is palpable, and in some, religious Zionism is its very lifeblood. This situation is particularly in evidence in an area which straddles the social and intellectual, that of the youth movements. Relatively speaking, the impact of Bnei Akiva is less powerful in North America than elsewhere. But even in the States, it has gained momentum in recent years, and on other continents, it has long been a lighthouse.

Probably the most meaningful contribution of religious Zionism, at the sociopolitical plane as well as at the level of personal commitment, relates to maintaining and stimulating bonds to Eretz Israel – and that, in religious categories, and from a Torah perspective. This may entail no more than an emotional link. Yet, that, too, is not to be dismissed lightly. I believe it was from the Rav zt”l that I heard the story of a couple from Minsk who were sharply divided over the issue of aliya. Unable to arrive at an understanding, they agreed to turn to the Minsker Gadol for guidance and resolution. To the surprise and dismay of Zionist circles, he ruled against the proposed initiative. When asked how this counsel could be reconciled with his consistent advocacy of the Zionist cause, he responded that “it is better to dwell in Minsk and yearn for Jerusalem than to dwell in Jerusalem and yearn for Minsk.” This may raise certain questions regarding the balance of practice and aspiration as well as halakhic issues concerning the prerogative of determining where a couple should live. For our purposes, however, it serves to exemplify the significance of pure attitude.

Or, to cite a more contemporary voice, a similar message underlies Rav Yaakov Kaminitzky’s reported admonition to some *talmidim* (students). He is said to have urged them that, upon walking down Saddle River Road in Monsey, when returning from shul on Shabbat morning, they should not wear their *taleisim* over their

coats, in full sight of local residents, lest they forget the nature of *galut* life as opposed to indigenous residence in Eretz Hakodesh. To the best of my knowledge – based, in part, upon direct personal observation – Monsey *bnei Torah* heed the counsel more in its breach than in its observance; but its substantive thrust is amply clear.

Broadly speaking, one may note three distinct components. The first is the concern that excessive acculturation may impair the religious Jew's ability to serve in the capacity of the outsider, so cherished by Colin Wilson, and designated by Leslie Fiedler as the destiny of Reb Israel and *Klal Israel* – to serve, that is, as the voice of conscience, harnessed to social criticism. It is a role for which an identity of *ger vetoshav* – the dual status suggested in Avraham's proposal to the Hittites, "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you"<sup>23</sup> – may be requisite, and it is incommensurate with the domestication reflected in wearing one's *talis* on a main street of a non-Jewish town.

I am not certain of the validity of this point, but I am reasonably certain that this was not Reb Yaakov's intent. Of greater relevance is the concern, here previously noted, of the jading of existential bonds to our own land, should we nestle too comfortably and too profoundly in a country which, to a committed Jew must, at some level, be perceived and experienced as foreign soil; at ease, not, as in Carlyle's celebrated phrase, "in Zion," but beyond its pale. Some may dismiss such discourse as romantic rumination, bereft of practical impact. I am inclined to assume that, in time, pragmatic ramifications may indeed issue. Even, however, if they don't, to a spiritual sensibility, attitude itself is crucial.

This point has been effectively expounded by a comment regarding Hazal's inference, most familiar to us from the Haggadah, from the term *ויגר שם* (and he dwelled there), denoting temporary sojourn, rather than permanent residence, in the recitation of *mikra bikkurim*: *מלמד שלא ירד יעקב אבינו להשתקע במצרים אלא לגור בה* (This teaches that Yaakov Avinu did not descend to Egypt permanently but only to dwell there [temporarily]). It has been suggested<sup>24</sup> that the text should not be read as description of Yaakov Avinu's conscious intent at the time. It seems hardly conceivable that a sickly old man,

half-blind, almost totally dependent upon familial support, and saturated with a self-image of impending death, should fantasize that he is only going into temporary exile, in quest of immediate respite, and that he would return presently to set up house once more. Hazal's view of the descent and its presumed aim, rather refer to the quality of the sojourn. Yaakov knew full well that Egypt would be his final destination but wished to emphasize that he was going in the capacity of an outsider, precluded from meshing into an alien culture by an existential and axiological chasm rather than by force of circumstances alone.

A third facet, linked to the foregoing and yet distinct, concerns appreciation of the uniqueness of Eretz Israel more than relations to ambient Gentile culture. This, too, may be elucidated anecdotally – only this time by means of an incident drawn from my own experience.

In the course of my initial visit to Israel, during the summer of 1962, I went to visit *mori verabbi*, Rav Y. Hutner zt"l, who, prior to his aliya, often spent the summer at Pension Reich in Jerusalem. After reproaching me gently for having left my wife in the United States (אזא כתובה האסטו געשריבען?), he began to question me regarding my impressions – particularly, about what had struck my notice especially. As, at that stage, I had focused upon the Torah world in Israel, I noted a number of phenomena which had struck me favorably, as compared to the American scene: widespread popular talmud Torah, the interaction of the Torah and general communities in the implementation of *Hoshen Mishpat* etc. Every reply was rebutted with the comment that its subject could have been found in Eastern Europe as well, and so was neither endemic nor unique to Eretz Israel. When he sensed that I had exhausted my material, he pressed on, inquiring as to what indeed was special about my visit, and, when it became clear that I could, at best, only respond feebly, the Rosh Yeshiva opened with a volley of sources and dicta – the description of Eretz Israel as ארץ אשר ה' אלהיך דרש אתה (a land that Hashem your God cares for), or as that to which Moshe and Aharon had been barred access, which was now open to us – דוכתא דמשה ואהרן לא זכו לה (כתובות קיב) – all trumpeting forth the sacral, metaphysical, and historical unique-

ness of the land and all causing me to realize, in a flash, that I had missed the boat entirely. As he railed on, as perhaps only he could, against tourists he had met on the plane, acting and talking as if they were en route to vacation in California, the sense of failure cut deeper and deeper. I walked out into the Beit Hakerem evening air like a beaten dog. But I knew I had been beaten justly; and today, almost forty-five years later, I remain deeply grateful to the Rosh Yeshiva for opening my eyes and for opening my heart.

In truth, the subject of bonding with Eretz Israel is not merely anecdotal at all. It is rooted in Hazal, in a context which is, at once, both halakhic and hashkafic – namely, the concept of creating and sustaining *zekher lemikdash*, “a memento of the Temple.” The memorialization of mikdash bears a dual aspect. It may refer to its destruction, as, for instance, according to the *Ba’al Hamaor*, with respect to *sefirat ha’omer* after the *hurban* (destruction).<sup>25</sup> More commonly, however, it relates to remembering mikdash in all its majesty and glory, and entails replicating its practice and aura. Thus, the mishnah states that Rav Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted an innovation with respect to the mitzvah of *lulav*, and that its rationale was the quest for *zekher lemikdash*:

“בראשונה היה הלולב ניטל במקדש שבעה ובמדינה יום אחד משחרב  
בית המקדש התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי שיהא לולב ניטל במדינה שבעה זכר  
למקדש”<sup>26</sup>

At first, the *lulav* was taken in the Temple for seven [days] and in the rest of the country, for one day. Since the Temple was destroyed, Raban Yohanan ben Zakkai decreed that the *lulav* should be taken in the rest of the country for seven days as a memorialization of the Temple.

The gemara goes on to query whence do we derive the principle of creating such memorials, and it cites a *pasuk* in *Yirmeyahu*:

מנא לן דעבדינן זכר למקדש א”ר יוחנן דאמר קרא כי אעלה ארוכה לך  
וממכותיך ארפאך נאם ה’ כי נדחה קראו לך ציון היא דורש אין לה דורש  
אין לה מכלל דבעיא דרישה (ל:יז).



From where do we know that we should memorialize the Temple? Raban Yohanan ben Zakai said, From the verse “I will bring you healing and cure your wounds,” says the Lord, ‘since they called you dejected, [and said] Zion has no seeker. “Has no seeker”’ indicates that it must be sought out (Jeremiah 30:17).

The source is cited here with respect to a very specific halakhic ordinance, and it presumably serves as the *raison d'être* for similar ordinances. Unquestionably, however, it serves equally to enunciate a principle whose scope extends beyond the explicitly normative to embrace the realm of consciousness and sensibility. To sustain the memory of *mikdash*, that whose locus is in Jerusalem and that which coincides with the boundaries of the concentric country, is to vivify it, to rejuvenate it via mental image and soul's yearning.

*Derishat Zion* (seeking out Zion), *zekher lemikdash* – this has, traditionally and historically, been the central charge of Diaspora religious Zionism. Of course, it was not denominated as such; but sans nomenclature, with nary a notion about political structure and activity, with no meaningful prospect of implementing its agenda, for millennia, dispersed Jewry persisted in keeping the dream and its underlying and overarching faith alive. Those abiding elements remain a vital aspect of our collective and personal spiritual existence. We have neither the right nor the inclination to waver in our commitment to them, and this sustenance and transmission continue to constitute a sacred charge. Beyond politics and internecine rivalry, its beck and call challenges us continually; and even were there no other, *derishat Zion* is sufficient cause for the perpetuation of Diaspora religious Zionism. To those who dismiss it as anachronistic, to those who denigrate it as anomalous, we can simply respond that, while they are not wholly wrong, they surely are not wholly right. So long as *derishat Zion* is not comprehensively realized, and quite apart from any political activity, religious Zionists, wherever located, and within the context of their broader identity as members of Knesset Israel, are charged and challenged.

Response to the challenge is complicated by its character and

context. In effect, my perception has focused upon the spiritual aspect of religious Zionism, as opposed to the pragmatic implementation of its vision. I have no doubt that this emphasis is warranted, in light of both fundamental and permanent priority, and with an eye to current need. By dint of its very nature, however, this factor potentially pits religious Zionism against competing distinctive Torah values. Such internecine confrontation tends to be perturbing in any event, but in our case perhaps doubly so. For, in certain respects, depth and scope of palpably and narrowly religious commitment is the Achilles' heel of religious Zionism – particularly, in the Diaspora. To be sure, the portrait, often delineated by detractors, and bordering frequently on caricature, of the average *mizrahnik* as ever cutting halakhic corners in the quest for facile compromise and accommodation, is grossly unjust. There is much genuine and profound Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilut hasadim* in the current datileumi community, and in many respects, the situation has improved measurably during the past generation. And yet, as with Tennyson's Ulysses, "Tho' much is taken, much abides." There is no gain saying that the level of engagement in these critical areas, "by which the world is sustained," needs to be broadened and deepened in much of the religious Zionist community. Hence the pressure to intensify *derishat Zion*, at the possible expense of other essential values, may be fraught with axiological difficulty.

Nevertheless, while priority and balance cannot be ignored, our commitment to *derishat Zion* should be neither abandoned nor diminished. And this, for two reasons. First, it should be obvious that apart from attending to dividing the existing cake, the prospect for enlarging it ought to be very real. We are far from exhausting reservoirs of time, energy, and passion to be harnessed in the pursuit of spiritual goals. Much can be garnered from *hefker*, in Melville's terms, "loose fish"; from resources wasted upon the spectrum ranging from frivolity through pettiness to ennui; and, in this respect, we have a great deal to learn from the *haredi* world and its standards. The second factor relates to the character and substance of *derishat Zion*. Beyond flag-waving and beyond merely exuding emotion, it is all about search and relation; about bonding and

linkage; about developing a thirst for Zion and all that it represents and about seeking avenues to quench that thirst – by remembrance and reenactment of things past in conjunction with anticipation of things future.

Consequently, properly understood and experienced, *derishat Zion* does not compete with other Torah values, but rather reciprocally reinforces and is reinforced by them. To seek Zion is to engage in the ultimate quest described and prescribed by Yeshayahu:

ואותי יום יום ידרשון ודעת דרכי יחפצון כגוי אשר צדקה עשה ומשפט  
א-לקי לא עזב ישאלוני משפטי צדק קרבת א-לקים יחפצון (נח:ב).  
And day by day they will seek Me out and want to know  
My ways, like a nation which has carried out justice and  
has not abandoned the law of its Lord, they will ask me  
for just laws and pine for proximity to God (Isaiah 58:2).

Or, in a normative vein: (נה:ו): דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראהו בהיותו קרוב (נה:ו). Seek out God wherever He is found, call out to him when He is near (Isaiah 55:6).

### CODA

Whilst in no way privy to the process, I presume this year's Forum organizers deliberated more than usual before deciding on the assignment of this topic. The argument for giving the nod to a current *ben hutz la'aretz* (Diaspora Jew), appears, in certain respects, compelling. The choice of a person in whose mind the issues are fresh and vibrant, in whom the admixture of resolve and resignation – at times, even of pride and guilt – mesh, intersect, and interact within the matrix of a charged emotional present, would have infused the discussion with a vividness not readily attained in a partially retrospective, albeit empathetic, piece.

If I was nonetheless selected, I would like to think the decision was not grounded upon possibly questionable personal qualities, but rather – even if, perhaps unwittingly – as a vehicle for establishing a point. The choice of a person who, while residing in the United States grappled, together with his wife, with the option of *aliya*, who

went on subsequently, to carve a niche in Israel, while retaining ties with his former bailiwick, but who never looked back in regret or reconsideration, possibly signifies the bonding power of derishat Zion. Bonding Jew and land, bonding Jew and Jew, it is the charge and prerogative of neither the Diaspora religious community, nor of the indigenous Israeli community. It is part of what links us, vertically and horizontally, with Knesset Israel.

And, I ask myself, in conclusion: Is it too presumptuous to suppose and suggest that an appreciation of the value of varied perception and perspective, is, in part, the import of a relevant gemara in *Ketubot*:

אמר אביי אחד מינייהו עדיף כתרי מינן אמר רבא אחד מינן כי סליק להתם  
עדיף כתרי מינייהו

Abbaye, among the preeminent Babylonian *amoraim*, stated: “One of them [i.e. from Eretz Israel] is superior to two of us.” Rava stated: “And if one of us goes there, he is then superior to two of them.” (*Ketubot* 75a)

I hope and trust that I am neither so vain nor so foolish as to fantasize, personally, presumed superiority to peers who have chosen to serve the Ribbono Shel Olam and to service Knesset Israel within the context of continued residence in the Diaspora. And yet, without harboring illusions, I also trust that I am fully appreciative of the spiritual benefits harvested by my family and myself due to pitching our own tent on the soil of *eretz hakodesh*.

## NOTES

1. In *The Portable Matthew Arnold*, ed. Lionel Trilling (New York, 1949), 331; widely reprinted.
2. This is, in part, an obvious clash of pragmatic priorities. However, among the priorities concerning the recipient of *tzedakah*, the Halakhah has assigned weight to both 1) affinity to the donor, including a common local base, and 2) inherent significance and worth, including residence in Eretz Israel. See *Devarim* 15:7 and the Sifre thereon:

באחד שעריך. יושבי עירך קודמים ליושבי עיר אחרת: בארצך.  
יושבי הארץ קודמין ליושבי חוץ לארץ.

“In one of your gates.’ The residents of your town come before residents of another town. ‘In your land.’ The residents of Israel come before residents of the Diaspora.

This invites the obvious question of which, if any, has the upper hand in the event of a clash. To the best of my knowledge, the point is not raised in primary sources, but was discussed by later poskim. The *Bah*, in his comment on *Tur Yoreh Deah*, 251, held that *aniyyei irkha* should clearly be preferred, and this view was accepted by the *Shakh*, *Yoreh Deah*, 251:6, and by the *Netziv* in his commentary on the *Sifre*, ad locum. However, the *Pe’at Hashulhan* argues vigorously that *anniyei Eretz Israel* should be prioritized as ארץ ישראל שבתניתו ליושבי ארץ ישראל (מקיים שתי מצוות, להחיות עניים ולקיים ישיבת ארץ ישראל (הלכות ארץ ישראל ב:בט)). (In giving it to residents of Eretz Israel he fulfills two mitzvot, sustaining the destitute and maintaining the settlement of Eretz Israel [Laws of Eretz Israel 2:29]). This position was also adopted by many nineteenth-century European poskim. See M.M. Rothschild, *Ha-halukkah*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem, 1986), 66–85. It should be noted, however, first, that, in such a case, possibly no normative position exists and the donor may do as he wishes, as in the clash of *tadir* and *mekudash* (see *Zevahim* 91a and *Menahot* 49a and *Rambam*, *Temidin U’musafim*, 8:20 and 9:2). Secondly, these relatively extraneous factors obviously do not exist in a vacuum and other elements – particularly, the nature, character, and level of the need – must be considered as well; see *Hatam Sofer*, *Yoreh Deah*, 233. Cf. also my remarks in 29–22, “שערי שמואל (תל אביב, תש”ס), “בענייני צדקה בארץ ישראל ובחוץ לארץ”.

3. In this connection, it is worth noting David Shatz’s observation regarding the paucity of interest in the area of *mahshavah*, within the Torah world, in America, as compared to Israel. See his perceptive analysis in “Remembering Marvin Fox: One Man’s Legacy to Jewish Thought,” *Tradition*, 36 (2002): 59–88.
4. מצוה ד’, ברשימת מצוות העשה ששכח הרמב”ם לדעת הרמב”ן, בשולי חלק מצוות העשה שבספר המצוות להרמב”ם.
5. The *Ramban*’s position is most familiarly associated with his discussion in this locus classicus of the *Sefer Hamitzvot*, in which it is fully elaborated, and with reference to many *pesukim*. However, the gist of his view is also expounded in his commentary on the most central text,

והורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה כי לכם נתתי את הארץ לרשת אתה: על דעתי זו מצוות עשה היא יצוה אותם שישבו בארץ וירשו אותה כי היא נתנה להם ולא ימאסו בנחלת ה’ ואלו יעלה על דעתם ללכת ולכבוש את ארץ שנער או ארץ אשור וזולתן ולהתישב שם יעברו על מצוות ה’ (במדבר לג:ג).

‘And you shall inherit the land and settle in it, since I have given you the land to inherit’: In my opinion, this is a positive commandment that God commanded them to settle in the Land and inherit it since it was given to them and they should not renounce the inheritance of God. And if they consider going and conquering the Land of Shinar or the Land of Ashur or another land and to settle there, they violate a commandment of God (Numbers 33:53).

In the course of this comment, the Ramban later evidently acknowledges that Rashi interpreted the *pasuk* differently. However, inasmuch as he goes on to state that his own view is buttressed by many parallel *pesukim*, he may have intended that Rashi only disagreed with his interpretation of this particular text, but not that he rejected the Ramban's halakhic position.

6. See *Melakhim* 5:9–12.
7. This distinction is clear in the *Sefer Hamitzvot*. However, in the passage in *Bamidbar*, only one goal is defined: residence, collective and/or personal, in Eretz Israel.
8. See, e.g., Tosafot Rosh, *Niddah* 61b.
9. See *Kiddushin* 36b ff., with respect to the criteria for defining which mitzvot are confined to Eretz Israel.
10. Ramban, *Commentary on the Torah, Devarim* 11:18.
11. See *Keilim* 1:6. The sacral character of Eretz Israel bears a dual aspect. 1) Its soil and the produce thereof is subject to certain halakhot which do not apply elsewhere. 2) It is regarded as the locus of *shekinah* – in a sense, as an extension of mikdash – beyond the level of presence which obtains universally. This mishnah only relates to the second element.
12. *Shemot* 25:8. The concept of geographic significance with respect to divine presence raises obvious questions. Just as obviously, however, it is rooted in the mainstream of Jewish tradition. Proper analysis of this problem lies, however, beyond the scope of this paper.
13. Tosefta, *Avodah Zarah* 5:2. The qualifying term, *kevayokhol*, is included in some texts but not in all. The implications are self-evident, but, even if it is included, the formulation is far-reaching. Evaluation of this point would require extensive analysis of the substantive weight of this slippery term in various texts and contexts.
14. *Ibid.* The qualification, *bishlat shalom*, clearly implies that the pressure of circumstance can legitimize emigration. Elsewhere, this principle is explicitly stated, with respect to dire economic straits; see *Baba Bathra* 90a. However, the Rambam, *Melakhim* 5:9, held that *middat hasidut* required that this dispensation not be invoked. In a similar vein, the Ramban, *Bereshit* 12:10, states that Avraham Avinu was judged by a higher standard and punished for moving to Egypt in time of famine. See, however, *Nedarim* 32a, where, by implication, this assertion appears to be rejected.
15. Rashi, *Devarim* 4:28.
16. *Ketubot* 110b, s.v. *hu*.
17. The salient issues and many of the most relevant sources are discussed in a brief, clearly biased, and nevertheless highly useful, monograph, Zvi Glatt's posthumously published *מעפר קומי: ברור חובת העליה לארץ ישראל בזמן הזה (ירושלים, ללא תאריך)*.
18. עיין האלף לך שלמה: שו"ת על אהע"ז, סי' קיח.
19. עיין שו"ת אגרות משה, חלק אבן העזר, סי' קב.
20. *Megillat Esther*, in the response to the Ramban's animadversion, cited above, ad locum. As noted by Glatt, pp. 57–8, there is some ambiguity and, possibly, some

internal contradiction regarding the precise historical situation upon which the mitzvah of aliya is contingent.

21. See e.g. *Avnei Ezer, Yoreh Deah*, 554:56. It might be noted that the attempt to neutralize Rabbenu Haym's position was taken to an extreme by the sixteenth-century *posek*, Rav Yosef Trani (although, obviously, for reasons very different from *Avnei Nezer's*). Evidently, in part, because he was scandalized by the position, and in part, on the basis of comparison with texts of other *rishonim*, he contended that the text of the Tosafot was not genuinely Rabbenu Haym's but, rather, a later interpolation. See *Shèyloṭ U'teshuvot Maharit, Yoreh Deah*, 2:28. It has, however, been noted that his father, Rav Mosheh Trani, in his *Shèyloṭ U'teshuvot Mabit*, 1:245, had clearly assumed the text was genuine.
22. *Pesakim*, 88.
23. *Bereshit* 23:4. For an exposition of this phrase, see the Rav's *Hamesh Derashot* (Jerusalem, 1974), pp. 48–52.
24. I have a clear recollection of the content of this comment, but, regrettably, am presently unable to recall or trace its source.
25. See his comment at the end of *Pesahim*, in the Rif, to explain why the *brakhah* of *sheheheyanu* is not recited in conjunction with *sefirat ha'omer*.
26. *Rosh Hashanah* 30a. The mishnah's assertion is predicated on the assumption that, *mi'doraita*, the mitzvah of lulav obtains for all seven days of Sukkot in mikdash, as it is to this that the "rejoicing before Hashem," cited in *Vayikra* 23:20, refers, and not, as interpreted by a contrary view in the Yerushalmi, *Sukkah* 3:11, to additional *karbanot shelamim*.

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# Decline and Fall: Thoughts on Religious Zionism in America

*Lawrence Grossman*

Viewed strictly by the numbers, Religious Zionism in the United States is a huge success story. Polls indicate that Orthodox Jews are far more connected to and involved with Israel than are other American Jews. Asked, in a late 2005 survey, “How close do you feel to Israel?” 74 percent of Orthodox respondents answered, “Very close,” as compared to 36 percent of the entire sample of American Jews. While only 20 percent of the full sample said they had visited Israel once and another 20 percent claimed to have done so more than once, 18 percent of Orthodox Jews said they had visited once and an astounding 57 percent more than once. Similarly, 55 percent of the Orthodox rated travel to Israel a “very” or “extremely” important element in their Jewish identity, as contrasted to 29 percent of the larger sample.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, this Orthodox tie to Israel has



remained remarkably consistent over time even as the sentiments of the non-Orthodox about Israel have fluctuated and, over the long term, somewhat cooled.<sup>2</sup>

The disparity between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews in their relations with Israel is likely to persist and even widen, given the Orthodox/non-Orthodox gap evident within the young-adult (18–39) age cohort. According to the National Jewish Population Survey of 2000–01, 69 percent of Orthodox Jews that age said they were “very emotionally attached to Israel,” as compared to 33 percent of married non-Orthodox Jews with children – the non-Orthodox subgroup with the *highest* connection to Israel.<sup>3</sup> The same pattern holds for other measures of young-adult identification with Israel.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, one source of the Orthodox distinctiveness within this age group is the widespread, and in some circles universal, year (or more) that Orthodox day-school graduates spend at Israeli Orthodox educational institutions before starting college.

Recently, Orthodox Jews have also become very visible in the leadership ranks of Israel advocacy. Nowhere is this more evident than at the policy conferences of AIPAC, the preeminent pro-Israel lobby, where *kippah*-wearing delegates are a common sight, and, at least in the minds of unhappy left-leaning American Jews, Orthodox clout ensures that AIPAC espouses a hard-line, right-wing agenda. While claims of Orthodox control are exaggerated, it was surely no accident that in 2006, for the first time in its history, AIPAC selected an Orthodox Jew as its president.<sup>5</sup>

The ultimate test of Zionist commitment is *aliya*, and here too Orthodoxy reigns supreme. Since at least the late 1960s, aliya from the United States has been disproportionately Orthodox, its percentage of the total steadily rising. Current estimates of the Orthodox share of American aliya range as high as 80 percent; the Orthodox-sponsored organization Nefesh B’Nefesh alone brought more than 10,000 olim between 2001 and 2006.<sup>6</sup>

But figures can be misleading. For one thing, “Orthodox” is not synonymous with “Religious Zionist.” As is obvious to anyone who has been at the airport before the takeoff of an Israel-bound flight, yeshivish and Hasidic Jews make up a large part of the traffic

between the two countries. And since much of haredi Orthodoxy has not only made its peace with the existence of a Jewish state but has also developed a strong stake in its financial viability and geopolitical security, there is little ground for interpreting the strong pro-Israel tilt among American Orthodox Jews as an expression of Religious Zionism.

There is an even more fundamental problem with assessing Religious Zionism on the basis of numbers. While support for Israel, visits there, political activism, and even aliya might denote “pro-Israelism,” Religious Zionism, as historically understood, has meant far more. From its origins in late-nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, the movement had wide-ranging religious and cultural connotations. These have seriously eroded over time, and are barely visible in the United States today.

### CLASSICAL RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

For Orthodox Zionists, return to the Jewish homeland was the highest expression of a broader aspiration: demonstrating that Torah Judaism could address, and ultimately overcome, the challenges posed by modernity. The greatest test of whether the Jewish tradition could flourish outside the ghetto (physical, psychological, or cultural) would be whether it would strike roots and thrive in a modern, sovereign, Jewish state. The leaders and thinkers of early Religious Zionism, without exception, pursued that goal, each in his own way.<sup>7</sup>

Religious Zionism sought to achieve the synthesis of Torah and modernity through a double strategy that marked it off from non-Zionist Orthodoxy. First, it insisted on the principle of *Klal Israel*, cooperation and collaboration, in the project of national renewal, with Jews who were not religiously observant – and who, indeed, constituted the large majority in the Zionist movement. Second, the commitment to address modernity entailed intellectual involvement beyond the four cubits of traditional Torah study. This required not only some degree of immersion in secular studies, but also acceptance of a broadened notion of Jewish culture that would encompass previously neglected areas, such as Bible and Jewish

history, and include, for many Religious Zionists, modern Hebrew language and its literature as well. Also, as part of coming to grips with modernity, the prospect of a Jewish political entity, restored after a two-thousand-year hiatus, raised the need for Orthodox leaders to define the place of Torah Judaism in what would surely be a predominantly secular state. Issues would now arise that demanded great halakhic creativity; one could not just “look things up” in a code of Jewish law.<sup>8</sup>

Religious Zionism in America shared with the worldwide movement the goal of devising an Orthodoxy at home in modernity capped by a sovereign Jewish state. Indeed, its espousal of the twin values of *Klal Israel* and a broadening of cultural horizons was perhaps even more pronounced than was the case elsewhere, since there was no tradition of Orthodox separatism from other forms of American Judaism until after World War II, and the ideology of *Torah U'Madda* was strongly associated with Modern Orthodoxy in the United States. The history of American Religious Zionism, however, is a subject still in search of its chronicler.<sup>9</sup> In the absence of any scholarly or even popular studies, what follows is a highly personal and, perforce, impressionistic account of its development since World War II.

Religious Zionism was part of the warp and woof of postwar Modern Orthodoxy. It takes an effort of the imagination today to grasp the stunning and thrilling effect the creation of Israel had on that generation. While we tend to take Israel as a given, and enjoy the luxury of criticizing its flaws, real and imagined, American Orthodoxy in 1948 saw the hand of God in the very existence of a Jewish state. The centrality of Zionism to Orthodoxy was most clearly demonstrated in the synagogues and the day schools.

In the Modern Orthodox synagogues of my youth, an *El Male* was said for Theodor Herzl at every *Yizkor* memorial service. The *hazzan*, on festivals, would chant the prayer *ve-havienu le-tzion berinah* (“bring us to Zion in joy”) and the subsequent request for the restoration of the sacrificial system to the tune of *Hatikvah*, and the congregation would spontaneously rise – although I doubt that they actually considered the reinstitution of animal sacrifices to be a

logical or necessary outcome of Jewish national sovereignty. The *tefilah lishlom ha-medinah* (Prayer for the State of Israel) was recited as a matter of course on Shabbat and festivals. Given the theologically and politically loaded nature of Zionist messianism today, I often wonder why the words *reishit tzmihat ge'ulateinu* (the first flowering of our redemption) raised no problems in that more innocent era. No one I knew ever suggested that we were living in messianic times. I can only surmise that, for the pre-1967 generation of Religious Zionists, the emergence of a Jewish state – the object of 2,000 years of Jewish prayers, and chronologically following the bloodiest Jewish catastrophe in history – was of such transcendent significance that “redemption” was the only appropriate metaphor.<sup>10</sup>

Orthodox Jewish day schools entered a period of growth during the 1950s and 1960s. The best of them, under the impact of the creation of the State of Israel, aspired to teach Jewish studies *ivrit b'ivrit* – totally in Hebrew. Some actually did. Even those that were not as “modern,” and did not hold up *ivrit b'ivrit* as a model, stressed Hebrew language as written and read, if not spoken; and I would later discover that my peers who attended all-boys yeshivas where the Talmud was explained and translated into Yiddish were put through the same *dikduk* (Hebrew grammar) drills that I was, in my co-ed, Hebrew-speaking school. Unlike them, however, I had the good fortune to study much *Tanakh* (and to memorize some of it – good fortune only in retrospect). And instead of large doses of Talmud, I studied Bialik, Ahad Ha'am, Agnon, and the rest of the pantheon of modern Hebrew literature (once again, a lot of required memorization), along with Jewish history – all in all, a Jewish educational menu that roused, and still rouses, the deepest wellsprings of my spirit.

But for the young Religious Zionists of my era, the impact of regular attendance at school and synagogue could hardly measure up to the power of two months at a Hebrew-speaking summer camp (that went for parents as well: my father's doubts about sending me to camp vanished as soon as he received my first letter, entirely in Hebrew). As Jewish educators have come to realize, the community created at camp, where campers and counselors live together day

and night, weekday and Shabbat, can have a life-changing Jewish influence.

It was at camp that I and others of my background came to internalize the Religious Zionist principle of *Klal Israel*. True enough, synagogue and school *taught* it, but since neither brought us into contact with our non-Orthodox peers, only at camp did we *live* it. The camp was not officially “Orthodox,” even though it was an Orthodox *rav hamahaneh* (camp rabbi) who monitored *kashrut*, and another Orthodox rabbi – a well-known president of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and the Religious Zionists of America (RZA) – who served as head counselor. Educational sessions (conducted of course, in Hebrew) focused on Jewish history, Israel, and Zionism, not “learning” in the Orthodox sense. Campers were free to swim or play ball on Shabbat. Nevertheless, the bulk of the campers and counselors did not do so: they came from the Orthodox day schools, and so a *de facto* Orthodox atmosphere pervaded the place. But at the same time, the presence of non-Orthodox Jews who shared our love for Israel, commitment to Hebrew, and interest in Jewish culture ensured that neither I nor, I daresay, the other Orthodox campers, would ever be able to write off non-Orthodox Jews as somehow beyond the pale.

The camp was sponsored by Histadrut Ivrit of America, which, founded in 1916, promoted Hebrew language and culture, and thus, like its camp, served as a neutral space where Orthodox and non-Orthodox Zionists could jointly further the renaissance of Jewish life that Zionism embodied. Its Hebrew-language publication, *Hadoar*, then a weekly, provided semi-scholarly articles and commentary on issues of current Jewish concern. Many of the contributors were Religious Zionists, some of them Orthodox rabbis. Three of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik’s classic essays were first published in *Hadoar* – *Al Ahavat Ha-Torah Uge’ulat Nefesh Ha-Dor* (May 27, 1960); *Pleitat Sofreihem*, the eulogy on R. Chaim Heller (April 21, 1961); and *Mah Dodekh Midod*, the eulogy on his uncle, R. Yitzhak Zev Soloveitchik (September 27, 1963). That the leading American halakhist would publish in a “secular” Zionist organ says much about the nature of Religious Zionism in that era.

It was the Rav, indeed, who most deeply influenced the Zionist sentiments of my generation of Modern Orthodox Jews, who attended college and came to intellectual maturity in the 1960s, when his seminal writings became widely available and his lectures drew large crowds. The Rav's intellectually sober, rigorous, and spiritually demanding approach gave shape and purpose to our somewhat sentimental and largely inchoate Zionist yearnings. Three key themes in his Zionism, all of which articulated aspects of the engagement with modernity, were especially significant.

The first two fleshed out the key Religious Zionist principles mentioned above: first, *Klal Israel*, and second, the need to transcend simplistic halakhic decision-making in dealing with complex contemporary issues. In developing the distinction between *brit goral* (covenant of fate) and *brit yi'ud* (covenant of destiny), the Rav conceptualized the dual consciousness of the Religious Zionist, who marched arm-in-arm with the secular Zionist in building the Jewish state and renewing the Jewish people ("fate"), even while insisting on a commitment to Torah ("destiny") not shared with the nonobservant and not open to compromise.<sup>11</sup> And in explaining his decision to abandon family tradition and cast his lot with the Zionist movement, the Rav stated flatly that momentous issues in Jewish life do not necessarily lend themselves to solution through the mechanical application of standard halakhic reasoning; sometimes, as in the case of the validity of the Zionist vision, history – the events of World War II and the Holocaust – *paskened* (ruled) as it were, that the Zionists were right.<sup>12</sup> This was a striking alternative to the view (sometimes attributed to him!) that Halakhah is capable of dealing with all issues, large and small.

A third important principle that the Rav articulated for Religious Zionism was a deeply God-centered and yet staunchly non-messianic understanding of the creation of the State of Israel. Using the imagery in the Song of Songs of the "Beloved" knocking at the door, he described six "knocks" whereby God, in enabling the reestablishment of an independent Jewish state, sent messages of hope to the Jewish people in the aftermath of the Holocaust, when Jews felt His utter absence. This teaching imbued Religious Zionism with

profound spiritual meaning while avoiding any hint of history entering a messianic age or of the chauvinistic nationalism that often accompanies messianism.<sup>13</sup> No one should have been surprised, therefore, when, in his dramatic *teshuvah shiur* (discourse on repentance) in October 1967, the Rav identified the significance of Israel's victory in the Six-Day War not in eschatological terms, but simply as the salvation of the Israeli population from imminent danger. Halakhah, he went on, had nothing to say about the disposition of the newly occupied territories, a matter he declared to be solely within the jurisdiction of Israeli authorities.<sup>14</sup>

### THE TRANSFORMATION

It was after the Six-Day War, and especially after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, that Religious Zionism began a gradual metamorphosis. In Israel, the issues and expectations aroused by the capture of the territories triggered a dramatic messianic upheaval in Religious Zionist circles. First articulated by R. Avraham Isaac Hachohen Kook in the early twentieth century, the messianic interpretation of Religious Zionism had lain virtually dormant until the unexpected capture of the West Bank, including the Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, in 1967, when the students of R. Zvi Yehuda Kook made it the basis of a militant Religious Zionism focused on retaining and settling these areas.<sup>15</sup>

In America, however, the war itself played only a secondary role. For a variety of reasons, the entire Modern Orthodox enterprise, of which American Religious Zionism was a major part, began to lose its luster by the late 1960s. As American society and politics lost their moorings during those years, "modernity" itself came under attack in American intellectual circles. The ripple effects on Orthodox Jewry included a narrowing of intellectual horizons, a remarkable enhancement in the prestige accorded to those engaged in full-time Torah study, and a new reluctance to interact with non-Orthodox Jews.<sup>16</sup>

The underpinnings of Religious Zionism in the United States toppled over the next quarter-century. Institutional bridges between American Orthodox and non-Orthodox Zionists disappeared as the



Orthodox turned inward while, at the same time, non-Orthodox enthusiasm for Zionism – an ideology that appeared, to many liberal Jews, to have been taken over by advocates of territorial expansionism – diminished. My Hebrew-speaking camp closed down in the early 1980s as more and more Orthodox families insisted on sending their offspring only to camps sponsored by their own denomination.<sup>17</sup> The shared religious-secular Hebraic culture evaporated. In the Orthodox day schools, ivrit b'ivrit became the rare exception, both because it was no longer considered important and because the male yeshiva graduates hired as teachers, trained primarily in Talmud, could not speak it.<sup>18</sup> The Hebrew weekly *Hadoar* became a biweekly, then a monthly, and finally went out of business, along with Histadrut Ivrit that had sponsored it, in 2005.<sup>19</sup> To my knowledge, there is today no national organization in the United States that promotes the study of Hebrew.

If the Zionist side of Religious Zionism eroded, its religious side was transformed. The replacement of what Haym Soloveitchik has called the mimetic tradition by book tradition, already far advanced within haredi Orthodoxy, infiltrated Modern Orthodoxy as well. The written law code, as authoritatively interpreted by the *da'at Torah* of the Talmudic sage, squeezed out historical or practical considerations that might point toward more creative solutions in the spirit of Religious Zionism, or validate some degree of individual autonomy. And all sorts of questions, from the most mundane to the most cosmic, that had not previously been seen as halakhic, were now submitted for decision to rabbinic scholars.<sup>20</sup>

From Israel came the influence of Zionist messianism, which was, of course, poles apart from the Rav's nonmessianic Religious Zionist posture. Israel, in this view, was religiously, indeed, halakhically, required to maintain control of all captured territory. With American Orthodoxy already moving in a sectarian direction, Religious Zionism increasingly subordinated its previous priorities, and the fight against ceding land became the sum and substance of the movement in the United States. Religious Zionism no longer entailed Hebrew language, the unity of the Jewish people, and the creation of a vibrant Jewish culture in Israel and the Diaspora that



both embraced Jewish tradition and was at home in the modern world. Instead, it embraced a narrow and formalistic conception of Halakhah, saw no need to dialogue with non-Orthodox groups, and tended to define Zionism solely in territorial/messianic terms.<sup>21</sup>

In Israel, a reaction began to set in during the 1990s among some younger Religious Zionists against the intellectual trends set off by the Six-Day War, as the first intifada, the Oslo Accords, and a widespread popular backlash among secular Israelis against “settlers” increasingly belied previous messianic expectations. While certainly constituting a minority within the Israeli Religious Zionist camp, there were mavericks who suggested that it may be halakhically permissible to cede land, and who, as Charles Liebman pointed out at the time, “argue on behalf of greater individual autonomy, question the authority of halakhic masters to rule on many issues including political issues, and raise the question of how one resolves issues where the straightforward understanding of the canonical text offends one’s moral sensibilities.”<sup>22</sup> They established a presence in Israel in the form of numerous organizations and publications.<sup>23</sup> Religious Zionism in America, however, has barely been affected by these countertrends, as evidenced by the ignominious collapse, in 2006, of Edah, an organization founded ten years earlier that sought to propagate similar ideas.<sup>24</sup>

### AMERICAN RELIGIOUS ZIONISM TODAY: THREE CASE STUDIES

Contemporary Religious Zionism in the United States suffers from a constricted vision and a lack of realism that severely weaken its capacity to address problems facing Israel and world Jewry. To illustrate this we will examine three public positions recently taken by *mainstream* Religious Zionism – one by a leading organization, another by a well-known *rosh yeshiva*, and the third by a prominent pulpit rabbi – as well as the reactions within the community to the promulgation of these positions. The subtitle of this session, “Philosophical, Halakhic, and Pragmatic Issues,” provides the rubrics for our analysis, with the first two items reversed.

## A Halakhic Pronouncement

For decades, starting even before the creation of the State, Zionist settlers, and then Israelis, have struggled with the vexed question of how to maintain *tohar ha-neshek* (literally, “purity of arms,” that is, wherever possible not harming civilians) when confronted not only by Arab soldiers but also by an overwhelmingly hostile Arab civilian population. The Religious Zionist community agreed fully with the principle of *tohar ha-neshek*. In the late 1930s, when the “Arab Revolt” against the British mandate resulted in the murder of many Jews, triggering some sentiment in the Yishuv to retaliate, “Palestine’s two chief rabbis and most of the spokesmen of the religious Zionist camp supported the official leadership...and condemned terrorist attacks against innocent civilians.”<sup>25</sup> In 1953, after an Israeli army unit killed scores of civilians, including women and children, in a cross-border raid into the Jordanian village of Kibiyeh, Moshe Haim Shapira, a cabinet member and the political leader of Israeli Religious Zionism, was the government’s most outspoken critic of the army’s action. Comparing it to the killing of innocent Arabs at Deir Yassin during the War of Independence, Shapira told a cabinet meeting, “All through the years we have opposed this. Even when Jews were being murdered in the Land of Israel, we never called for the righteous to perish with the wicked.... We said this way of doing things was out of bounds from a Jewish point of view.”<sup>26</sup>

Notably, Shapira cited Abraham’s plea to God to spare Sodom so that “the righteous” would not “perish with the wicked,” and advocated “a Jewish point of view” in opposition to harming the innocent; he did not present halakhic arguments. But it was Kibiyeh that stimulated R. Shaul Yisraeli to publish an article on the treatment of hostile civilians from a halakhic perspective, essentially transferring the subject from the plane of “morality” and “Jewish values” to that of Jewish law, where, for much of the Religious Zionist public, it has remained ever since.<sup>27</sup>

Professor Ya’acov Blidstein, who has traced the evolution of Religious Zionist rabbinic thinking on this issue, finds that the application of halakhic reasoning now “allows for extremely forceful

action toward various Arab populations, whether those populations encourage and support hostile activity, or only have Arab ethnic identity. We have found that, with regard to...the application of the status of *rodef* (oppressor)...there is also an expansion of the category with regard to Jewish groups as well.”<sup>28</sup>

The first and second intifadas, in which distinctions between Palestinian combatants and non-combatants were hard to discern, were followed by the war in southern Lebanon in the summer of 2006, where Hezbollah blended into the civilian population, making it almost impossible for Israeli troops to target the enemy without harming civilians and destroying their homes and property. This placed Israel in a no-win situation, criticized, on the one hand, for failing to deliver a convincing knockout blow to Hezbollah – criticism that probably induced the IDF to use cluster bombs, barred under international law<sup>29</sup> – and on the other, condemned around the world for violating the rights of civilians.

The issues – moral, military, and political – were complex, requiring detailed knowledge of the situation on the ground and an understanding of the diplomatic ramifications. From the perspective of Jewish tradition, matters were even more confusing since it was not all clear whether Halakhah, in its present state of development, possessed the tools necessary for an appropriate application of relevant Jewish law.<sup>30</sup>

The Rabbinical Council of America, the rabbinic body most closely identified with Religious Zionism in the United States, issued a statement on July 20, four days into the war, praising Israeli forces “for their determination to minimize civilian loss of life” and expressing “sadness at the unavoidable loss of...life that is made necessary by terrorists who use civilians as shields.”<sup>31</sup> The RCA then sent a solidarity mission to Israel, which, arriving after the war was over, toured communities in the north of the country that had been affected. Somehow, this postwar visit changed the RCA’s view of the situation. On August 17, the organization issued another statement, “speaking from within our own Judaic faith and legal legacy.” In the name of Jewish religion and law, the RCA stated that “Judaism would

neither require nor permit a Jewish soldier to sacrifice himself in order to save deliberately endangered enemy civilians.”<sup>32</sup>

This formulation had far-reaching implications. If a Jewish soldier was not required or permitted to “sacrifice himself” to save the lives of “deliberately endangered enemy civilians,” the only way to be sure he would not be sacrificed was to kill them all.<sup>33</sup> Such a stance was hardly the nuanced and sophisticated kind of halakhic reasoning that might have been expected from Religious Zionism, and bore, in fact, more than a passing resemblance to the widespread Muslim view that, since all Jewish citizens of Israel serve in the IDF, its civilians were fair game for terrorist attacks.

Whether the RCA intended its statement as a formal halakhic decision, it was surely taken as such by many. Yet, issued by rabbis who did not witness any of the war, it could only have been based on second-hand evidence, at best. Furthermore, no halakhic citations were appended, and so there is no way of knowing what legal reasoning lay behind the ruling. And coming so soon after the organization had praised Israeli forces for trying to avoid injuring civilians, it gave the impression of having been concocted in haste, perhaps in response to extra-halakhic considerations.

This categorical RCA statement received no public criticism from Religious Zionist quarters, a silence that undoubtedly reinforced two views already widespread outside the Orthodox community: that Orthodoxy has no compassion for the suffering of non-Jews, and that Halakhah can have nothing relevant to contribute to the solution of the existential dilemmas confronting Israel.

### **A Philosophic Exclusion**

In the spring of 2005, as fierce debate raged over Israel’s planned withdrawal from Gaza and settlements in the northern West Bank, Rabbi Hershel Schachter lectured before large audiences in a number of venues on “The Gaza Disengagement: A Torah Perspective, a Non-Political View.” His April 6th talk at the Young Israel of Midwood, in Brooklyn, for example, sponsored by the National Council of Young Israel, drew close to 300 people and “was broadcast via satellite to

many hundreds of additional participants across the United States” at seventeen locations.<sup>34</sup>

The great interest in what he had to say was understandable. Not only was Rabbi Schachter the best known rosh yeshiva at RIETS – the rabbinical school affiliated with Yeshiva University – but he was also widely regarded as the authoritative *posek* for YU-style Orthodoxy, and thus for Religious Zionists in America. In addition, Rabbi Schachter was often described as the foremost contemporary expositor of the teachings of the Rav. Since the speaker came with such impeccable credentials and his topic was a matter of intense practical consequence for Israel and world Jewry, the disclaimer that the talk was “non-political” was curious.

In his presentation, Rabbi Schachter determined that Gaza was part of the land of Israel even though the Torah’s agricultural laws (*mitzvot hateluyot ba’aretz*) are not applicable there. Furthermore, “there’s a *mitzvah* to have a Jewish government controlling all of Eretz Israel.” Under such a government, when “there is pressure to surrender sovereignty over some of the areas to some foreign government, then everyone agrees that that constitutes a *milhemes mitzvah* (obligatory war),” even though it is certain that Jews will be killed. The State of Israel, as a legitimate Jewish government, is thus required to go to war to prevent the loss of territory, but only “when you know in advance that you’re going to win,” not in a hopeless situation.

Who is to decide whether a war is winnable and hence obligatory? In the absence of an agreed-upon “*gadol hador*” (outstanding halakhic authority) Rabbi Schachter posits that the decision should be made by those most directly affected, “Klal Israel that are living in Eretz Israel.” But not all Israeli Jews can have a voice. Rabbi Schachter proposes a philosophical test: only those who subscribe to the Rambam’s Thirteen Principles of Jewish Belief, found at the end of his mishnah commentary on Masekhet Sanhedrin, are qualified to vote, since the Rambam himself, in listing the Principles, asserts that someone rejecting any of them is “not a member of Klal Israel.”

Thus from a non-political, “Torah” perspective, decisions on territorial withdrawal are to be made via referenda in which only

believers in the “Principles” may vote. This raises several complications. First, it requires the elected Israeli government to refer all decisions on territory to popular referendum, an unwieldy if democratic approach. But then it nullifies democracy by disfranchising not only Israeli Arabs, but also the majority of the electorate, the Jewish “unbelievers,” whose personal stake in these decisions – their *brit goral*, as it were – is surely no less than that of the “believers.” In the process, such a system also negates what has been the basic axiom of Religious Zionism since its inception, that of *Klal Israel* in its broadest sense, cooperation on an equal basis between religious and secular Jews.

As for the specific “test” the rabbi would impose, the obligatory nature of the Thirteen Principles has hardly been a matter of consensus in the history of Jewish thought. What if a would-be voter claims to adhere to the views of those authorities who differed with Maimonides – the the Ra’avad, for example, who saw nothing heretical about the notion that God is corporeal? And even were we to assume that in our day the Rambam’s Principles have attained binding status, their interpretation is notoriously difficult, as centuries of commentators, disagreeing among themselves, have found. Shall philosophers be stationed at the polls to question Israelis so as to determine whether they *really* accept the Principles?<sup>35</sup>

The very posing of such questions indicates the utter unreality of Rabbi Schachter’s admittedly non-political scheme, once again reinforcing the widespread prejudice that Orthodoxy has little of value to say about the issues of greatest concern to the Jewish people. And, since many view him as the *posek* of the movement,<sup>36</sup> his address exposes the lack of seriousness – indeed, the intellectual irrelevance – of Religious Zionism in America, a judgment confirmed by the absence of any subsequent public criticism from other Religious Zionist leaders.

### **A Pragmatic Betrayal**

As Israel completed its evacuation of the Gaza settlements, the September 2005 issue of the monthly *Jewish Voice and Opinion*, published in Englewood, New Jersey, carried a sensational front-page

article, “Leaving Israel Because I’m Disengaged.” The pseudonymous author, S.A. Halevy, was identified as “a powerful, important rabbi in the tri-state area who was a force in the National Religious movement.” Thus this piece – considerably more radical than either the RCA statement or Rabbi Schachter’s lecture – emanated, like them, from the mainstream of Religious Zionism, not its fringes.

Halevy, indeed, claimed that he spoke for “many formerly religious Zionist American Jews” when he charged that the State of Israel, far from being “a harbinger of the coming redemption,” had proven “a persecutor of religious Jews.” It had “betrayed Jewish history” by uprooting the Jews of Gaza, thereby affirming “the notion that Jews have no right to live and prosper in a certain part of the world simply because they are Jews.” Comparing the destruction of Gaza synagogues to Kristallnacht, Halevy claimed that “we are no better than our enemies, and often we are worse, because we are doing this to ourselves and our own people.”

Halevy’s alienation from the Jewish state for its lack of Jewishness leads him into the ideological camp of Israel’s worst enemies. Israel’s secular leaders, he notes, justify the state with the argument that “because Europeans killed Jews, therefore Jews had the right to displace Arabs from their land,” reasoning he considers “neither very moral nor very persuasive, so it is no wonder that the international community routinely rejects it.” And, aligning himself again with the enemy, Halevy writes that “if Jews have a right of return after 2,000 years, then surely the Arabs have a right of return after less than 60 years.” Since Israeli leaders “cannot morally defend or justify their presence in the land of Israel...they are divesting themselves of it even as the land continues...to spit them out, slowly but surely.” Then, judging the Jewish state on the scales of Western democracy, Halevy finds it equally deficient on that score. He cites government “dishonesty,” “lies,” “deceit,” “suppression of civil liberties,” “jailing without trial of dissidents,” and the lack of checks and balances or anything resembling the United States Bill of Rights. Rabbi Halevy announces that he will not contribute “a dime or a shekel” to Israel or to any cause connected to it. “No more, at least for me,” he says.

“There are plenty of worthy Jews and institutions right here in the tri-state area...”

Interestingly, the rabbi is harshest on those ideologically closest to him. He denounces the evacuees and their leaders for not defending their homes “to the death.” “And where were the rabbis?” he asks. Halevy denounces them all: the chief rabbinate, the rabbis of *Yeshiva*, American rabbis who, “aside from a handful,” were “intimidated into silence.... The OU and RCA were spineless and ineffective.... They could only suggest recitation of tehillim, and prayers for some indeterminate and unarticulated goal.”

For Halevy, “Religious Zionism is dead in the water,” while “the Satmar Rebbe... is looking more and more visionary.” Halevy goes so far as to suggest that “the coming of the Moshiach will herald, or require, the dismantling of the secular Jewish state as we know it today. But Religious Zionists must make an accounting on the political level of the current irrelevance of the RZA, and on a philosophical level of the ongoing validity of its creed.”

Despite considerable opposition to the disengagement policy among their members, the three Modern Orthodox/Religious Zionist organizations attacked by Halevy – the RZA, the OU, and the RCA – had taken no official position on the matter, reportedly, at least in the case of the OU, at the urging of Israeli government leaders.<sup>37</sup> Surely, even to the large number of Religious Zionists who had severe misgivings about the withdrawal from Gaza, Halevy’s delegitimation of Israel was anathema.

Nevertheless, when his article appeared there was far more interest in the titillating exercise of guessing the true identity of the mystery author than in pondering the shocking fact that *any* otherwise reputable Modern Orthodox rabbi could have penned such an anti-Zionist screed.<sup>38</sup> Only one leading rabbi active in the RCA, Haskell Lookstein of Kehillath Jeshurun in New York City, spoke out on the merits of the case, telling a reporter that Halevy “makes the Neturei Karta, the arch-enemies of Israel, look like Menachem Begin,” and describing the article as “the ravings of a petulant child who says ‘if you don’t play the game my way, I’ll take my marbles



and leave,' and along the way, he defames the government of Israel and the army of Israel."<sup>39</sup>

But the RCA itself, of which Halevy was undoubtedly a member, took no action. The RZA and OU maintained official silence about the article as well. The latter, in fact, published a similar piece in its quarterly magazine a year later, in which a young Israeli man explained how his anger about the withdrawal from Gaza had so alienated him from the state that he refused to serve in the army. An editorial note described the piece as "a cry from the heart that we believe deserves to be heard, even though some of the author's language might be objectionable by some of our readers. It reflects an opinion that we know is shared by others, although we cannot be sure by how many."<sup>40</sup>

S.A. Halevy, by staking out "disengagement from the state" as a viable position for an outraged Religious Zionist, also managed to "define deviancy down" – to borrow the term coined by the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan – making anything short of Halevy-style disengagement look almost moderate. Thus on November 25, 2006, the OU biennial convention, meeting in Jerusalem, voted to abandon the organization's previous policy of never voicing public criticism of Israeli policies on matters of security. In anticipation of further Israeli government moves to relinquish territory, OU leaders would, from now on, "on a case by case basis, express opposition to Israeli government policies in any appropriate way – including publicly."<sup>41</sup>

Mainstream American Religious Zionism, until then, had maintained a sense of responsibility toward Israel that historically induced it to remain silent in cases of disagreement with Israeli governments on issues that might mean the difference between life and death for Israelis. Now, it was no different from such dovish organizations as Americans for Peace Now and the Israel Policy Forum, except that its attacks on Israeli policies would presumably come from the right rather than from the left.

## RAMIFICATIONS

Our three case studies can be seen as symbolizing the gradual un-

raveling of Religious Zionism in America. What begins with the vulgarization and misuse of Halakhah moves on to reading the majority of the Jewish people out of the community, and finally to rejection of the State of Israel itself.

Clearly, the strategies underlying each of these stages – interpreting the teachings of religious tradition in the most chauvinistic and least universalistic possible light, delegitimizing hundreds of thousands of Jews on narrow theological grounds, and “disengaging” from the Jewish state in the name of religion – are absolutely antithetical to Religious Zionism as traditionally understood. The three also have something else in common that may not be immediately obvious: all have analogues within contemporary radical Islam.<sup>42</sup> To be sure, Religious Zionism – particularly its American branch, which has no access to arms and no territorial base – is a far cry from militant Islam. Even so, the events of September 11, 2001 should sensitize Jews, particularly Orthodox Jewish Zionists, to the dangers of the radical religious mindset. It was a Religious Zionist who murdered an Israeli prime minister.

In the absence of survey research gauging the views of rank-and-file Modern Orthodox/Religious Zionist American Jews, it is impossible to know whether, and to what extent, they share the sentiments expressed by their leaders and organizations. The virtual absence of protest against the RCA statement, R. Schachter’s address, and Rabbi Halevy’s letter suggests that these Jews are at least passively acquiescent. But there are alternative explanations. Conceivably, there is a critical mass of Religious Zionists that is disturbed by the drastic metamorphosis of their ideological principles, but, in a community that tends to defer to religious authority, the fact that no rabbi or Orthodox body defends traditional Religious Zionism has cowed them into silence. Another possibility is that Orthodox aliya, over the years, has siphoned off many of the most thoughtful and engaged Religious Zionists, leaving behind in the United States those less interested and those whose Zionism tends toward the simplistic and one-dimensional.

Clearly, the richness, creativity, and breadth of postwar Religious Zionism in America cannot be revived any time soon. It thrived,

after all, in a climate of great optimism about the possibilities of Jewish renewal, as embodied in a fledgling Jewish state that captured the imagination of Jews both inside and outside the Orthodox fold. That optimism has turned, in the words of a report in the *Economist*, into “second thoughts about the Promised Land” as “Jews all around the world are gradually ceasing to regard Israel as a focal point.”<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, Religious Zionism, with its unflagging, faith-based commitment to Israel, which shows up consistently in opinion polls, lobbying missions, and aliya statistics, would seem to be the one movement with the potential to revitalize Zionism. But in order to appeal to Jews outside its own current narrow confines it must first go back to its roots and emphasize, in policy pronouncements and educational programs, Klal Israel, the need for cultural openness in order to address the complexities of the modern world, and an authentically religious yet nonmessianic understanding of the miracle of a Jewish state reborn, priorities that are as vital in Israel as in the United States.

## NOTES

1. *2005 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006), 18, 20, 46.
2. Previous AJC annual surveys showed similarly high rates of Orthodox closeness to Israel. For the broader community's gradual disenchantment see Steven T. Rosenthal, *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel* (Hanover: University of New England Press, 2001).
3. Cited in Jacob B. Ukeles, Ron Miller, and Pearl Beck, *Young Jewish Adults in the United States Today* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006), 79.
4. Jacob B. Ukeles, Ron Miller, and Pearl Beck, *Young Jewish Adults in the United States Today* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006), 80–81, 83–84.
5. “OU Congratulates its Long-Time Lay Leader Howard Tzvi Friedman on Swearing in as AIPAC President,” Orthodox Union press release (March 7, 2006), [http://ou.org/ou/print\\_this/5414](http://ou.org/ou/print_this/5414).
6. Chaim I. Waxman, *American Aliya: Portrait of an Innovative Migration Movement*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 98–100; Steven Bayme and Charles Liebman, “Foreword,” in Yair Sheleg, *The North American Impact on Israeli Orthodoxy* (New York: American Jewish Committee and Bar-Ilan University, 1999); Sheera Claire Frenkel, “10,000th Nefesh B’Nefesh Oleh Arrives,” *Jerusalem Post* (December 28, 2006).
7. To mention only the two most famous early ideologists of Religious Zionism, R.

Yitzhak Ya'akov Reines, who initiated Mizrahi, was the founder of the first Russian yeshiva that offered secular studies, and R. Avraham Isaac Hacoheh Kook, the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine, developed a complex mystical Zionist ideology that incorporated elements of the modern and the secular within the traditional and the holy.

8. Yosef Salmon, *Religion and Zionism: First Encounters* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002); Dov Schwartz, "Mi-reshit Ha-tzmiha Le-hagshamah," in *Ha-tziyonut Ha-datit: Idan Ha-tmurot*, eds. Asher Cohen and Yisrael Harel (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2004): 24–134.
9. Standard histories of American Zionism give the religious wing short shrift. The latest such work, Naomi W. Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897–1948* (Hanover: University of New England Press, 2003), does not even contain an index entry for "Mizrahi." Studies focused on American Religious Zionism tend to limit the discussion to institutional developments within American Mizrahi, scanting the cultural dimension that deeply affected the broader American Orthodox world. See, for example, Yosef Salmon, "Mizrahi Movement in America: Belated but Sturdy Offshoot," *American Jewish Archives*, 48, no. 2 (Fall–Winter 1996): 161–75. Ironically, the most creative and original American Religious Zionist thinker of the first half of the twentieth century, R. Chaim Hirschensohn, is barely remembered by the American movement today, even as his reputation is being revived in Israel. See Alan Mittleman, "Capitalism in Religious Zionism," *Society*, 44, no. 1 (November–December, 2006): 23–28.
10. For a recent attempt to "save" the prayer from messianic associations see Yehuda Amital, "What Is the Meaning of 'Reshit Tsmihat Ge'ullatenu?'" *Tradition*, 39, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 7–14.
11. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, "Kol Dodi Dofek," in *Be-sod Ha-yahid Ve-Hayahad*, ed. Pinchas Peli, (Jerusalem: Orot, 1976): 368–80.
12. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, "Va-Yahalom Yosef Halom," in *Hamesh Derashot*, (Jerusalem: Orot, 1974), 25.
13. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, "Kol Dodi Dofek," in *Be-sod Ha-yahid Ve-Hayahad*, ed. Pinchas Peli (Jerusalem: Orot, 1976): 354–62.
14. This segment of his talk has never been published. An English translation of the original Yiddish transcript is available online, Arnold Lustiger, "RYBS on Territorial Compromise," <http://www.aishdas.org/avodah/vol15/v15no40.shtml#10>
15. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 122–23; Gideon Aran, "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)," in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 265–344. In fact, the "Young Guard" faction of the Religious Zionist party Mafdal had already begun pushing the party in a more assertive direction in the early 1960s, but the territorial issue presented by the results of the war overtook and quickly overshadowed this earlier trend.

16. The erosion of Modern Orthodoxy in America over the last three decades of the twentieth century – glaringly symbolized by the widespread replacement of the word “Modern” by the substitute “Centrist” – has not yet received scholarly treatment. For the most recent summary see Samuel C. Heilman, *Sliding to the Right: The Contest for the Future of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), Ch. 1.
17. Burton I. Cohen, “Jewish Camping,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. Vol. 11, 273.
18. See, for example, “Ivrit B’Ivrit: A Discussion in *Ten Da’at*” at [www.Lookstein.org/articles/ivrit.htm](http://www.Lookstein.org/articles/ivrit.htm)
19. Michael Berenbaum, “Histadrut Ivrit of America,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. Vol. 9, 151.
20. Haym Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Tradition*, 28, no. 4 (Summer 1994): 64–130. The trend to seek authoritative rulings from poskim on everything did not please the Rav. Walter Wurzburger recalled, “When I turned to him for guidance on policy matters, which at times also involved halakhic consideration, he frequently replied that I should rely upon my own judgment.” Walter S. Wurzburger, “Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik as Posek of Post-Modern Orthodoxy,” *Tradition*, 29, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 18. Also see Hershel Schachter, “Mi-Pninei Rabeinu: Kuntres B’Inyanei P’sak Halakhah,” *Beit Yitzhak*, 38 (2006): 1–8.
21. A full study of Religious Zionism in America since the Six-Day War would include reactions to the bombing of Arab mayors by the so-called *mahteret* (which included some Americans) in 1984; the massacre of Muslims who were praying at the Tomb of the Patriarchs by American-born and Yeshiva University-educated Baruch Goldstein in 1994; and the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by an Israeli Religious Zionist in 1995. Another topic of interest would be whether there has been any pattern in the religio-political affiliations of Israelis invited to address American Modern Orthodox synagogues.
22. Charles S. Liebman, “Modern Orthodoxy in Israel,” *Judaism*, 47, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 407. Significantly, Liebman underlined the potentially antinomian tendencies of some of these manifestations in the title given to a Hebrew version of the essay, “Atzor, Gevul Lefanekha,” *Meimad*, 14 (September 1998): 8–10.
23. There is a growing secondary literature on this “new Israeli Orthodoxy” and its possible long-term impact. See, for example, Yair Sheleg, *Ha-datiyim Ha-hadashim: Mabat Akhshavi al Hahevrah Ha-datat B’Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2000); Yitzhak Geiger, “Ha-Tzionut Hadatit Ha-Hadashah,” *Akdamos*, 11 (Tishri 2001); and Yoel Finkelman, “On the Irrelevance of Religious Zionism,” *Tradition*, 39, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 21–39.
24. Thus Yitzchak Blau’s assertion, in 2000, that “Religious Zionism does include many voices on all sides of the political spectrum that reject much of the nationalistic and militaristic excess.” (“Ploughshares Into Swords: Contemporary Religious Zionists and Moral Constraints,” *Tradition*, 34, no. 4 [Winter 2000]: 57) may have been true for Israel but certainly not for America.

25. Ehud Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel: Power, Morality, and Jewish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 205.
26. Ehud Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel: Power, Morality, and Jewish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 208–09; Eliezer Don Yehiya, “Manhigut U-Medinyut Be-Tzionut Ha-datit: Haim Moshe Shapira, Ha-Mafdal, U-Milhemet Sheshet Ha-Yamim,” in Cohen and Harel, *Ha-Tziyonut Ha-Datit*, 144.
27. The divergent approaches of Shapira and Yisraeli suggest that Haym Soloveitchik’s suggestion in “Rupture and Reconstruction” of a shift, in the twentieth century, from mimetic to text-based Judaism holds true not only for ritual behavior, but also for ethics. That Jews do not initiate violence – and certainly never pick on innocent Gentiles – was an unquestioned norm (though perhaps breached at times in practice) in the traditional Jewish society of Eastern Europe where Religious Zionism emerged. The application of halakhic texts to the matter, under the new condition of statehood, marked a radical shift.
28. Ya’acov Blidstein, “The Treatment of Hostile Civilian Populations: The Contemporary Halakhic Discussion in Israel,” *Israel Studies*, 1, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 27–44. In an epilogue added after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 (pp. 40–41), Blidstein notes once again the gradual “inflation,” since Kibiyeh, of the term *rodef*, “to the point of justifying killing,” and asks, “Did this progression lead – not in the theoretical sense, but on a very practical level – even to the murder of a Prime Minister?”
29. Ina Friedman, “Moral Morass,” *Jerusalem Report* (September 4, 2006): 12–17; Nir Hasson and Meron Rapoport, “IDF admits targeting civilian areas with cluster bombs,” *Ha’aretz* (November 20, 2006).
30. Stuart A. Cohen, “The Re-Discovery of Orthodox Jewish Laws Relating to the Military and War [*Hilkhot Tzavah U-Milhamah*] in Contemporary Israel: Trends and Implications,” *Israel Studies*, 12, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 18.
31. <http://www.rabbis.org/news/article.cfm?id=100814>
32. <http://www.rabbis.org/news/article.cfm?id=100826> Also see Rebecca Spence, “Rabbis: Israel Too Worried Over Civilian Deaths,” *Forward* (August 25, 2006).
33. Just a few weeks after the RCA delegation returned home a somewhat similar view was put forward in Israel by Effi Eitam, the former NRP leader who then headed the right-wing National Union. See Ben Kaspit, “Pashut La-Harog,” *Ma’ariv* (September 15, 2006). While some individual leaders of American Religious Zionism said that Eitam did not speak for them, “none of the American Orthodox organizations in Eitam’s theological camp – the Religious Zionists of America, the Rabbinical Council of America, the Orthodox Union – issued statements condemning his remarks....” Steven I. Weiss, “Israeli Rightist Calls for Transfer of Arabs,” *Forward* (September 15, 2006).
34. The following description of the address is based on a transcript, “National Council of Young Israel Sponsors Program on Gaza Disengagement with Rabbi Hershel Schachter: A Torah Perspective – A Non-Political View.” <http://www.youngisrael.org/articles/gaza.htm>. It was neither reviewed nor edited by the speaker.

35. On the problems involved in making the Principles a litmus test for Jewish Orthodoxy see Marc B. Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised* (London: Littman, 2003).
36. According to the transcript, "One woman summarized the discussion by saying, '...when Rav Schachter speaks, everyone listens.'"
37. Lawrence Grossman, "Jewish Communal Affairs," *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 106 (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006): 96.
38. See Adam Dickter, "Article Attacking Israel: Which Rabbi Wrote It?" *Jewish Week* (New York, September 30, 2005).
39. Dickter, "Article Attacking Israel."
40. Yaakov Eisen, "The Day After: A Religious Zionist Youth Speaks Out," *Jewish Action*, 66, no. 4 (Summer 2006): 61–65. The editorial note is on p. 61.
41. "OU Adopts Resolutions at Jerusalem Convention," [http://www.ou.org/ou/print\\_this/8961](http://www.ou.org/ou/print_this/8961). Also see Stewart Ain, "Israel Criticism Gets an O-U," *Jewish Week* (New York, December 1, 2006).
42. There is now an extensive literature on the subject. Particularly useful in this connection are Gilles Kepel, *Islamic Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002) and Daniel Pipes, *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Press, 2002). On the last point, the ascendancy of religious over political allegiance, also see Michael Slackman, "And Now, Islamism Trumps Arabism," *The New York Times Week in Review* (August 20, 2006): 1, 3.
43. "Second thoughts about the Promised Land," *Economist* (January 13–19, 2007): 14.

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# Part 2

## Interpreting History and Contemporary Events Theologically





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# 3

## Re-engaging Theology

*Avraham Walfish*

By objective standards, the Disengagement does not qualify as a watershed event in contemporary Jewish history. It pales in significance before twentieth century events such as the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel, and even before less momentous events such as the Six-Day War or the Yom Kippur War. However, this event too has left a deep impression on the consciousness of many Israelis, and if not a watershed, nonetheless it represents for many of us a signpost of patterns engulfing Israeli society. One snapshot of the Disengagement may serve to illustrate the depth of the cleavage in Israeli society and Zionist ideology brought to a head by this event. Describing a crucial and poignant moment, in which he rebuffed the pleas of the rabbinic leader of the Torah community about to be banished from Gush Katif, Gen. Gershon Hacohen explains that his choice was clear. He knew that he and the rabbi represented two values that were on a collision course: the Kingdom of the State and the Kingdom of Heaven. While many Religious Zionists will reject this dichotomy, many of us felt and continue to

feel that the issue put so starkly by this once-religious and Jewishly knowledgeable general needs to be addressed.

The summer of 5766, one year later, was disrupted by the mini-war in Lebanon, which unleashed a torrent of criticism and calls for stock-taking and reassessment of various and sundry policies. As I write these lines, it appears that these calls have been and will be largely unheeded. However, the “business as usual” mood projected by opinion makers runs barely skin-deep. Faith in the leadership of the country is at a dangerously low ebb, and the government rests more on apathy than on actual support. It is arguable that many of the shortcomings of our leaders and governmental institutions, even much of the corruption, have existed since the country’s inception, and perhaps since the beginnings of human history. I believe – and I think this view is widespread – that recent leaders have set increasingly, indeed shockingly, low standards both of performance and integrity. Moreover, the public mood is less tolerant and forgiving. When the country was in the exuberance of youth, foibles and peccadilloes were often perceived as having a certain charm. When many of the society’s successes were rooted in bold risk-taking and heads-up improvisation, rules and regulations were often viewed in Israeli eyes as annoying obstacles. As the country progresses into middle-age, recklessness and misdeeds are no longer perceived as naughty pranks.

Mid-life crisis is an opportunity for stock-taking: where we have come from and where we are going? My paper at this forum will discuss these issues in relation to the One before Whom we will ultimately give reckoning, namely to view them from a theological perspective. Theology is a multi-faceted field, and my focus will be on one of them: the attempt to interpret historical events theologically, seeking to discern the hand of God in history, as well as to understand its meaning and purpose. As will be apparent from my discussion, my theological models have been constructed mainly on the basis of my readings of primary texts, biblical and rabbinic, focused mostly on narrative sections of these works. While I have learned much from the extensive philosophical and theological writings of thinkers both within and outside the Jewish tradition,

the primary sources seem to me not only more authoritative, but richer and more inspirational. Much as Martha Nussbaum has argued that moral and legal thinking should be conducted by sensitive and delicately nuanced responses to narrative images,<sup>1</sup> I believe that religious and theological thought as well are shaped by the images which capture our imagination and provide a framework for weighing, sifting, and organizing our ideas and insights.

In this, as in many other areas, I have drawn inspiration from the Rav, whose theological reflections often were conducted by means of “a metaphysical and axiological interpretative approach” to biblical narratives.<sup>2</sup> I have tried, in my own limited way, to model my thinking on the Rav’s approach, but I have drawn inspiration as well from Uriel Simon’s exegetical method, which he labeled *hapeshat hakiyumi* (existential plain meaning). The Rav’s prodigious reading skills, honed in the *beit midrash* (study hall) of Brisk and the philosophical school of Marburg, while often affording profound textual insights, not infrequently took “metaphysical-axiological” liberties with the text. For myself, and I believe for many other contemporary Jews, there is a need to ground one’s reading more firmly in the careful analytical tools of *peshat* (plain meaning) without surrendering the engaged “metaphysical and axiological” search for meaning. It is my hope that merging the horizons of careful *peshat* readings of canonical sources and of clear-sighted perspectives on contemporary reality will help to generate instructive theological models and captivating spiritual images.

## A

From the earliest stages of human history, man has been confronted with the ultimate theological dilemma: to “read the mind” of God. While no man can know the mind of the One Who revealed that “My thoughts are not your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8), we are not free to desist from attempting to fathom God’s designs and our role in accomplishing them. Commentators have long pondered whether Noah should be praised or criticized for his unquestioning acceptance of God’s command to build an ark, rather than petitioning God to rescind the evil decree. God’s pronouncement and command

to Noah is thus seen as posing an exegetical challenge, rooted in a theological predicament: does God expect His words to be taken at face value, as expressing His Absolute Will and designs, or does He expect man to play a proactive role, exercising his own human judgment and challenging God to respond to his human understanding? The commentators, following R. Yohanan (Sanhedrin 108a), who have judged Noah unfavorably were inspired by such events as Avraham's challenge to God regarding the destruction of Sodom and Moshe's remonstrations against God's professed plan to destroy the people of Israel following their construction of the golden calf. These stories establish unequivocally that certain divine pronouncements are designed to elicit a human challenge rather than unquestioning submission. Resh Lakish, who argued (*ibid.*) that Noah was a "righteous man in his generations – all the more so in other generations," clearly assumes that theological truisms are not equally applicable in all historical settings. What was true for Avraham and Moshe is not necessarily true for Noah: perhaps Noah realized that his generation was so thoroughly corrupt – "every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time" (Bereshit 6:5) – that there was no hope for their salvation.<sup>3</sup>

The differing evaluations of Noah's personality and behavior are grounded in the presupposition that the proper response to the divine Word involves three interrelated components: interpretative questions (is God declaring or proposing?); theological issues (the role God has assigned to man in managing His world); and the evaluation of a given historical reality (was Noah's generation salvageable?). In similar fashion the Torah summons its students to evaluate other great figures of Jewish history by pondering such questions alongside them. Avraham's challenge to God regarding the destruction of Sodom is rooted in interpreting the divine pronouncement as a call to participate in judgment, as well as in his evaluation that a core of ten righteous people in a city indicates its spiritual salvageability. The same figure teaches us that the divine command to sacrifice his son demands surrender of independent judgment, teleologically suspending the ethical. David understands that his anointment as king by Samuel does not entitle him to smite

the anointed king who preceded him. Mordekhai shows us that even when God's voice is no longer audible through prophecy, events may be correctly interpreted as indicators of the divine plan: "and who knows if it was for this moment that you arrived at queenship?"<sup>4</sup>

Alongside such instances, where the *Tanakh* indicates a clear theological/hermeneutic matrix for interpreting the divine Will, there are many instances in the Bible where the divine Will remains translucent, even opaque. Does the prophecy that "the elder will serve the younger" (Bereshit 25:23) entitle Jacob to steal the blessings intended for his elder brother? The dreams that Joseph dreams and interprets are undoubtedly divinely inspired, but it is not always clear that Joseph correctly understands what they call upon him to do. Was he right to relate his dreams to his brothers and his father? Does his plea to the Wine Steward to remember him before Pharaoh reflect a correct reading of the dream or a lack of faith? Was his proposal to Pharaoh to appoint a wise economic manager a profound interpretation of the divinely inspired dream or a bold intuitive gambit? Profoundly instructive is Joseph's explanation to his brothers that they are absolved of responsibility for his bondage in Egypt, because – "It wasn't you who sent me here, but God." Although Joseph's perception of the divine hand in his personal history is clearly well-grounded, the conclusions he draws from it are highly questionable, on two grounds. First, the Torah does not subscribe to the idea that serving as an agent to advance the divine plan absolves a human being of his moral responsibility – "And also the nation that they shall serve will I judge" (Bereshit 15:14).<sup>5</sup> Hence, perhaps Joseph's brothers may take some comfort in knowing that their misdeeds have promoted the unfolding of the divine plan, but they cannot – and most assuredly should not – accept Joseph's pronouncement of their absolution. Second, there is profound irony in Joseph's reading of the divine Plan. Joseph correctly perceives that he was sent by God to Egypt in order to bring his family there and support them during the years of famine. However, he fails to detect the deeper Plan, "the deep counsel of the *tzadik* buried in Hevron" (Sotah 11a), in which the descent of Jacob's family to Egypt represents the beginning of the dark period of exile and subjugation

foretold in the *Berit bein habetarim* (Avraham's covenant). Joseph's career represents simultaneously both the success of the man who governs his actions by theological interpretation of historical events and the grave, often ironic, limitations of human theological understanding.

Rabbinic sages throughout the generations have sought time and again to emulate their biblical predecessors. Lacking the gift of prophecy, they have sought inspiration in the received and transmitted Word of God, and like the biblical Joseph, their efforts evince neither unequivocal failure nor unequivocal success. An instructive example is Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's (RYBZ) appearance before Vespasian (Gittin 56a-b). RYBZ's wisdom is clearly demonstrated by his successful escape from the besieged Jerusalem and by his translations of midrashic readings of biblical verses into successful interpretations of reality. Vespasian – and the reader – is duly impressed by RYBZ's remarkable prophecy that Vespasian will be appointed emperor and by the psychological insights that enable Vespasian to put on his shoes. RYBZ knows how to read reality in light of biblical verses, because he knows how to read these verses creatively in light of his penetrating perceptions of reality. But RYBZ is twice unable to convincingly respond to Vespasian's challenge: "Since you are so smart, why did you not come to me earlier?" The Talmud cites a later Sage – R. Joseph or Rabbi Akiva – who finds this failure of RYBZ's puzzling, and perhaps divinely ordained: "Who turns sages back and confounds their knowledge" (Isaiah 44:25). Moreover, the same Sage is confounded by a further and greater failure on the part of RYBZ – why did this great Sage not exploit Vespasian's admiration of his wisdom to request that Jerusalem, rather than Yavneh, be spared? Here the Talmud proposes a response, justifying RYBZ's conduct: "He thought: Perhaps he (Vespasian) will not grant me that much, and then even a small salvation will not be achieved." The Talmud does not indicate whether what "he thought" is in fact correct, or whether the critique of R. Joseph/Akiva is on target.

The question is left hanging, and RYBZ's remarks on his deathbed in Berakhot 28b indicates that RYBZ himself was haunted by it. RYBZ's explanation to his disciples as to why he is weeping, despite

his lofty standing as “candle of Israel, right column, strong hammer,” is grounded in a *kal vahomer*. Were I to be conducted before a flesh-and-blood king, RYBZ reasons, would I not be weeping – all the more so when I am about to be conducted before the King of Kings! RYBZ’s analogy strongly evokes the memory of his actual meeting with the flesh-and-blood emperor Vespasian, and it would appear that RYBZ bases his *kal vahomer* on a keenly-remembered actual event rather than on a fictitious test-case. Contemplating his upcoming encounter with the King of Kings, he remembers the most fateful event of his life, his encounter with a terrestrial king, and he ponders: does my behavior on this previous occasion merit *Gan Eden* (Paradise) or *Gehinnom*? This, I believe, is the key to understanding RYBZ’s final remark before departing this world: “prepare a throne for Hizkiyahu the King of Judah who is coming.” RYBZ, agonizing over the rectitude of his surrender of Jerusalem, recalls a leader of Israel who, against all political and military logic, stood fast against the Assyrian juggernaut and saved Jerusalem from destruction. Hizkiyahu was blessed with the counsel of a prophet, whereas RYBZ had nothing to follow but his own human wisdom, guided by interpretation of Scripture.<sup>6</sup> Imagining Hizkiyahu coming to greet him in the next world and to conduct him before the Heavenly King, he foresees two possible scenarios. Hizkiyahu might greet him sadly, questioning why RYBZ did not follow his own prophetically-guided precedent, or he might lay a gentle hand on his shoulder and console him by noting the differences between the two seemingly analogous historical events.

I have cited only a small selection of sources from the Tanakh and *Hazal* which, as far as I understand them, encourage man to try to interpret the Will of God as expressed in historical events, even as they caution him that his understanding is inevitably limited and frequently faulty. Even when God has spoken explicitly, He does not desire Israel mechanically to follow His pronouncements, but rather to exercise their judgment in interpreting and applying them. And even when He has not spoken explicitly, He wants them to attempt to ascertain His Will by analyzing current events, Scriptures, and tradition. In short, Israel is called upon to be a partner in shaping the



destiny that He intends for her. As a junior partner, Israel is enjoined to submit to the Will of the divine senior partner, and departures from this requirement are wrong both morally, spiritually, and tactically. However, God – for His own mysterious reasons – desires the input of his limited and frail human partner, and makes accommodations in His limitless wisdom for man’s creativity and insights, as well as for his mistakes and missteps.

## B

I am fully aware that serious problems and hesitations attend the theological enterprise. In this paper I will not address the question of the practical consequences of theological reflection. Perceiving a certain goal to be the will of God does not necessarily authorize a human being to act to carry out that goal. Human activity needs to be governed by Halakhah and practical reason, and theological convictions are no warrant for ignoring their dictates.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there are many gray areas – certainly in our current situation – where theological considerations may play an important, perhaps even a decisive, role in tilting the scales towards one or another mode of behavior.

However, the very attempt to fathom the theological meaning of current events may be challenged on religious grounds, and indeed has been by no less an authority than the Rav. The Rav argued that when confronted either with evil or with promising divine “knocks,” the appropriate human response is to focus on how man may meaningfully engage his fate and transform it into destiny, rather than fruitlessly attempting to divine the purposes of the Divine. There is much power and spiritual instruction in the Rav’s grand attempt to cut the Gordian knot of theodicy, but I find it ultimately religiously unworkable. If there is room for man to employ his reason to detect divine knocks, and to decipher what they summon us to do, then no spigot may shut off this reasoning faculty when God confronts us with tragedy and frustration. Even though Moshe’s attempt to fathom the meaning of Rabbi Akiva’s cruel fate was met with the curt divine response, “Thus has it arisen in My thinking” (Menahot 29b), a careful reading of the narrative in its entirety will show that

God does not intend to forbid human questioning. Indeed, from the very beginning of the narrative, God invites Moshe to probe and to question. The very fact that Moshe finds God attaching of the crowns to the letters indicates that God wants him to participate as a witness to the Torah's finishing touches, and presumably God anticipates that Moshe will wonder what these crowns contribute to the Torah's meaning.<sup>8</sup> God responds graciously to most of Moshe's questions and demands throughout the story, until the two points where Moshe challenges divine wisdom: "Why give the Torah through me, when one much wiser than I is available to You?"; "How does Rabbi Akiva's 'reward' correspond to the greatness of his Torah?" I believe that this story is designed not to discourage human questioning, but to encourage it, even while delineating its limitations. Moshe is summoned by God to participate as a thinking and reasoning being in attempting to fathom the unfathomable divine Mind. Superior divine wisdom is asserted to conclude a desirable process of questioning and searching, not to stifle it at its inception.

Much as Kant asserted the need to address the human need to think metaphysically even while denying its philosophical impossibility, so Hazal affirmed the need for man to seek to understand how God conducts His world, even while asserting his need to accept ultimate failure.<sup>9</sup> There is both nobility and instruction in man's attempts to fathom the divine Mind, even though the mystery far outshadows the meager rays of understanding. As the midrash noted (*Bereshit Rabbah* 8:5), the creation of man irrevocably compromises the attribute of Truth, and yet mysteriously God desires the human "truth which sprouts from the earth." Beyond enhancing man's spiritual personality, the superhuman attempt at understanding God fosters *devekut* (devotion):

Expounders of *aggadot* say: If you desire to know He Who spoke and the world came to be, then study *aggada*, because through this you will come to know He Who spoke and the world was and to cleave to His ways.<sup>10</sup>

While one might root his belief in divine justice in faith alone, the

assent of reason – however partial – enhances one’s spiritual personality and deepens his relationship with his Creator.

I would argue that the Rav himself did not utterly deny the value of man’s theological activity, and not only in perceiving the divine knocks and deciphering their message.<sup>11</sup> God appeared, as the Rav so eloquently writes, in the midst of a “long dark night,” a night apprehended by the questing human mind who has long sought the light of the divine Presence. When Avraham sought to understand, “Through what shall I know that I will inherit it (the land)?” (Bereshit 15:8), part of God’s response was to bring upon him a great and fearful darkness. This darkness, I would argue, does not condemn Avraham’s demanding question, nor does it contradict human understanding. *Yado’a teida* (Bereshit 15:13), declares God to Avraham, and although Avraham is undoubtedly mystified by the information that God conveys to him and overwhelmed by the terrifying darkness, God is – in my reading – not making a purely ironical point. Darkness and mystery are the limit point which mark the boundaries of human reason, not a point of departure for denying it.

In a Religious Zionist framework, in particular, it is difficult to evade the need to respond to seek theological meaning in recent significant events, such as the Disengagement or last summer’s war in Lebanon. The mainstream of Religious Zionism has long celebrated the founding of the State of Israel as a redemptive divine act. Not all Religious Zionists have subscribed to the messianic theology of Rabbis Kook and their followers.<sup>12</sup> Some have seen the redemption as local rather than eschatological, and assessments as to the messianic potential embedded in the current Jewish State range over a broad spectrum from unswerving faith in the inexorably unfolding process of ultimate redemption to denial of any perceptible messianic value, with many reserved and tentative shadings in the middle. Common to most, if not all, Religious Zionist theologies is the view, not shared by mainstream haredi thinking, that the founding of the State and the return to the land are significant and positive historical events which reflect active divine involvement of whatever nature or degree.<sup>13</sup> Hence, if the events of the past two summers have raised

question marks about the viability of the state, its degree of Jewishness, and the values and staying power of secular Zionism, the Religious Zionist cannot divorce these questions from his theological views regarding the State and the Land. A religious movement that has traditionally regarded recent historical events from a theological standpoint will not be faithful to its calling if it does not reflect on the theological significance of these most recent events. We – certainly I – do not pretend to know the mind of God, but I feel it to be my responsibility, together with others, to make the attempt, to glean whatever light and guidance we can wrest from the darkness, and to pray that God and His Torah may be our guide.

### C

The first theological reflection I would like to offer regarding recent events relates – briefly – to “meta”-issues. The Disengagement dealt a powerful blow to ideologies of *da'at Torah*, at least of the haredi *Leumi* variety, and has raised serious question marks regarding the leadership role of rabbis regarding political issues. The embarrassing spectacle of leading Zionist rabbis promising to the last minute that the Disengagement would fail has, and certainly should, make one wonder how any rational individual can continue to believe in the divine inspiration supposedly enjoyed by these rabbis. More generally, many in the Religious Zionist camp hold the rabbinic leadership of the “Orange” camp responsible for a series of miscalculations and missteps. Several leading Religious Zionist rabbis were regularly consulted by the *Yesha* Council regarding protest activities, and the more militant, especially the more youthful, wing of the Orange camp blame them for the *mamlakhti*<sup>14</sup> approach that prevented more militant opposition to the Disengagement. On the other hand, the call by some leading rabbis for massive military refusal of orders proved to be tactically ill-conceived, engendering as much opposition as support among rabbis and the religious public; moreover, the more *mamlakhti*-minded Orange wing perceived this call to be wrong both politically and morally. Religious Zionist rabbis divided over this issue, and as a participant in the public discussion surrounding it, I found that the arguments advanced in

both directions were frequently superficial or fragmentary.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in addition to proving their lack of divinely-inspired prescience, the Disengagement cast serious doubts both whether rabbis possess any greater wisdom than taxi drivers on political issues and whether the Torah values that rabbis were invoking had been thought through with sufficient clarity.

I will return to the Torah values issue later, but at this point I would like to sum up and drive home my point regarding rabbinic leadership. For those who thought otherwise beforehand, it should (I am not so naïve as to believe it will) now be clear that God's plans, at least those that relate to the immediate future, are as opaque to rabbis as to any other human being. Moreover, expert knowledge of Halakhah or of any other branch of Torah is no guarantee of political wisdom. If we rabbis have a contribution to make to future political moves and struggles, we need to stake out our realm of expertise with greater honesty and clarity. If we need in the future to compete with other potential leaders on a more equal footing, this may stimulate us to rely less on our presupposed superior vision and to think more deeply about the spiritual issues in which we specialize than we have in the past.

The second "meta"-issue I would like to address is the perception, widely circulated in the religious public, that the War in Lebanon 5766 was a "measure for measure" punishment for the Disengagement. As I indicated above, I strongly believe that man is summoned to attempt to perceive the hand of God in history, but I feel no less strongly that specific "measure for measure" calculations generally exceed the proper bounds and the proper spirit in which such investigation should be carried out.<sup>16</sup> That being said, I nevertheless must concede that I too perceive (without joy) a certain poetic symmetry between the events of these two painful summers. Almost exactly a year after much of the Israeli public evinced apathetic unconcern for the destruction of the homes of 8,000 Israeli settlers,<sup>17</sup> we all suffered a blow which included, among other elements: the fall from glory of key Disengagement architects; the crumbling of the prognostications with which the Disengagement

was justified; and the Katyusha-induced temporary exile of many Israelis from their homes. If the point of noting this symmetry is to assert a causal relationship between the events of 5765 and of 5766, I reiterate my strong reservations against presuming to understand the detailed equations of the divine calculus.<sup>18</sup> However, such symmetries may serve a theological purpose on the halakhic-spiritual plane advocated by the Rav in *Kol Dodi Dofek*,<sup>19</sup> insofar as many aspects of the Lebanon War may aid the Israeli public to internalize the importance of values of which they were insufficiently mindful during the Disengagement.<sup>20</sup> Indeed even Disengagement opponents would do well to reflect, in the light both of the Disengagement and of the Lebanon War, whether they have been sufficiently attentive to these same values when the victims were residents of Ofakim or Dimona rather than of Gush Katif.

#### D – WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

A large majority of Religious Zionists regard the destruction of over a score of Jewish towns in Eretz Israel as a national tragedy, compounded by several exacerbating factors:

The many personal tragedies of people wrenched from their homes and communities, torn from their livelihoods, without even moderately adequate compensation.

The destruction of synagogues and the uprooting of Jewish cemeteries, including people whose deaths *al kiddush Hashem* had been rendered meaningful by the continued Jewish presence in the settlements for which they sacrificed their lives.

The use of the army to carry out the uprooting of families from their homes seared profound psychological, as well as ideological, scars on the consciousness of many Israelis, both in and out of active service.

The destruction was decided by and acted upon by a Jewish government, without any readily perceptible goal or motivation,<sup>21</sup> accompanied by deep suspicion – which

has only deepened with time and its revelations – that there were shady personal motivations for Sharon’s unexplained turnabout.

The process both of ratifying and of carrying out Ariel Sharon’s policy was marred by a shocking breakdown of due democratic process, including unprecedented dictatorial behavior by a Prime Minister, and abdication of democratic watchdog responsibilities by compliant judicial authorities and journalists. The resolute refusal of the government to conduct a referendum, together with the lack of meaningful public debate and the unprecedented repression of democratic protest, fueled a sense that the *vox populi* was improperly represented.

The fact that the Disengagement was hatched by Ariel Sharon and supported, with whatever degree of bellyaching, by politicians long associated with the Israeli Right contributed an element of betrayal, compounded by the sense shared by many in the Orange camp that their own leadership (rabbis, Yesha Council, right wing political parties) failed on several counts.

Perhaps the most appalling aspect of the Disengagement was (and remains) the cavalier disregard both by the government and by the public at large of basic human rights of the exiles and their supporters, an incontrovertible collapse of basic morality and decency, which further exacerbated the Orange camp’s sense of having been abused and betrayed.

For those in the Religious Zionist camp who thought that the Disengagement was justified and necessary, this conviction served to ameliorate the tragedy to a greater or lesser extent. Moreover, their view that settlement in Gush Katif and the northern Shomron was a mistake provides them with a ready-to-hand theological explanation of the human suffering that attended the inevitable if painful operation that the Jewish people was forced to perform. However, for the majority of Religious Zionists who were and are firmly convinced that this policy was mistaken, the tragedy is unmitigated.

As religiously committed Jews, they naturally wonder why God has brought this tragedy upon them. Some spokesmen for the Rav Kook redemptive theology have been quick to comment that the inexorable process of redemption has its ebbs and eddies, and far be it from us to dictate to God how or at what pace to bring His redemptive process to fruition. However, even a committed devotee of the Rav Kook philosophy of redemption may make allowance for positive or negative Israeli behavior to impact on when the process ebbs and to what extent.

### D-1

Rav Yoel Bin-Nun, long a gadfly within the right-wing Religious Zionist camp, runs true to form by interpreting the Disengagement as divine punishment to the *Eretz Israel hasheleimah* camp for its long-standing attempts to coerce Israeli society into settlement of the entire Land. In his view, militant opposition to the Disengagement and calls for refusal of orders both subvert the social cohesiveness of Israeli society and compound the sin for which God has decided to punish the religious right wing. Like Rav Bin-Nun's pronouncements from decades past regarding the failure of the Land of Israel movement *lehitnahel balevavot* (to settle in Israeli hearts), his recent declamations seem to me to be partial truths, and I believe that his theological model is open to serious question on several counts. First, I would question whether a free uncoerced act performed by a Jewish government should be regarded theologically as an act of Providence. When a human agent freely decides to commit an act of destruction and to violate the person or property of his fellow, it is unclear that Jewish theology would summon the victim to examine what guilt brought this fate upon him. Grappling with the well-known paradox of human ethical responsibility vs. divine Providence, Eliezer Berkovits has argued that human responsibility implies that not infrequently man-made evils are perpetrated upon the innocent, that God's "manifest intervention" in human affairs is confined to particularly significant events, and even "indirect intervention" to influence the course of events cannot be presumed in all cases, and may be the exception rather than the rule.<sup>22</sup> I am



well aware that Berkovits's narrowing of the scope of Providence is subject to question. It is difficult to square his view of Providence with the traditional view, for example, of Rosh Hashanah as the day when life or death is decreed for each human being. However, there were already *tannaim* who took issue with this model of divine judgment, as well as *rishonim* who wondered whether Rosh Hashanah indeed determines physical longevity, as opposed to providing a spiritual reckoning of the previous year.<sup>23</sup> Mainstream traditional theology would certainly support the idea that, despite the free will exercised by the perpetrator of a transgression, the fate of the victim was ultimately decreed by divine Providence,<sup>24</sup> thus justifying the theological model presumed by Rav Bin-Nun. However, important traditional sources lend support to Berkovits's alternative;<sup>25</sup> hence it is doubtful whether Land of Israel faithful should hasten to assume full blame for the public mood and political climate that made the Disengagement possible.

Even if we accept a theological model in which the victim is called upon to examine his responsibility for crimes perpetrated upon him, Religious Zionism should maintain a proper sense of proportion. One may legitimately expect RZs to focus their *heshbon nefesh* on their own measure of responsibility for the collective failure of the Jewish people, but exaggerating this responsibility may be as wrong and unproductive, indeed equally as presumptuous, as the absolute refusal to shoulder any share of responsibility. No doubt the Israeli religious community could have, and should have, done considerably more than they did to impact spiritually and educationally upon Israeli society. But, much as the Jewish victim of persecution should not delude himself to think that repairing his personal flaws will eradicate anti-Semitism, so too the vilified Israeli right, and its demonized religious locomotive in particular, should not presume that impeccable behavior on their part is the key to the restoration of Israeli society as a whole. In a society where playing by the rules is the exception, and where the deck is stacked on the secular left side of the political spectrum, it is doubtful that the religious right could have achieved better results by being good little boys. When Israeli governments set out to commit outrageous acts, militant opposition

may be called for, within the bounds of accepted democratic political struggle. The *gemara* (Arakhin 16b) teaches that sometimes the mitzvah of *tokheha* (reproof) must be performed up to the point of provoking one's fellow to strike him, and I firmly believe that the *gemara* understands this sometimes to be a necessary corrective measure in order ultimately to restore the relationship. Playing by political rules that are not observed or respected by one's opponents is unlikely either to succeed or even to impact favorably on public opinion – the abject crumbling of opposition to the Disengagement juggernaut did little to win points for the Orange camp in anticipation of the next round of confrontation. Civil disobedience and the call to refuse orders are extreme measures, and should be resorted to only in extreme circumstances, but a battered wife serves nobody's well-being by submissively suffering her beating. Hence, even if one accepts Rav Bin-Nun's project of seeking the roots of the Disengagement in the misdeeds of the Religious Zionist right wing, one may plausibly argue for a conclusion diametrically opposed to his own: that the Disengagement occurred because of an excess of *mamlakhtiyut* (colloquially pronounced *mil'el*, meaning: devotion to the State and its institutions), which not only provoked the divine punishment, but on the human level emasculated truly effective opposition. In a yet more revolutionary mode, one might – indeed more militant voices have – interpret the Disengagement as a divine message that secular Zionism has outlived its usefulness and has moved into self-destruct mode.

In short, if one finds the Religious Zionist right wing theologically responsible for the Disengagement, the blame may be interpreted a-la Bin-Nun as excessive devotion to Land, or alternatively understood as excessive devotion to the State. This question cannot be settled on purely theoretical theological grounds, and of necessity involves one's social and political Weltanschauung, indeed the totality of one's Zionist outlook. Hence, to sum up, attempts to explain the Disengagement theologically, as punishment to Land of Israel advocates for failures of omission or commission, fail to convince, due both to the question of whether God should be expected to prevent a freely willed act by an Israeli government and to the fact

that identifying the purported sin is inextricably bound up with matters of opinion that are far from consensual.

Rejection of Rav Bin-Nun's theological explanation of the Disengagement does not entail rejecting his call to re-examine and adjust the balance between the political and the spiritual-educational aspects of the Religious Zionist program. Regardless of whether one feels that the political stance of Religious Zionism should be more militant, less militant, or more of the same, I believe that a strong case can be made that, with some notable exceptions, Religious Zionism has done far too little to influence the secular community from within. A certain degree of parochialism may have been necessary for an embattled minority to maintain its identity, and arguably it has borne some positive fruit, but the Disengagement certainly ought to have made clear that Religious Zionism has paid a price for insularity. Whether the Disengagement is regarded as divine punishment, as a divine wake-up call (in the spirit of *Kol Dodi Dofek*), or as a purely human failing, Religious Zionism needs to engage in serious *heshbon nefesh* (self-examination) regarding its everyday, non-political relationship and dealings with secular Israeli society.

In sum I would submit that, unlike such dramatic events as the founding of the State or the Holocaust, regarding which the impulse to seek theological explanations cannot and ought not to be denied, the Disengagement, as a discrete event, presents us with very little, if any, new information regarding the divine Mind and Will. If this conclusion be accepted, one might infer that any *heshbon nefesh* following this event should be conducted on the purely human plane, without grounding in any theological component. However, even if the Disengagement presents no discernible divine "knock," I believe that it casts into sharper relief central theological issues that attend the broader event of the establishment of the State. Inasmuch as the Disengagement, along with other recent events, impacts on our perception of the nature and proclivities of Israeli society, it concomitantly serves as an indicator of what divinely-guided events such as the founding of the State and the Six-Day War have accomplished, and what ultimate goals they may serve.

## E

A central fault line in Religious Zionism which was highlighted by the Disengagement was located by Gadi Taub, who argued that this debacle of Religious Zionism is rooted in its failure to decide between the competing values of Land and State. I believe there is a great deal of justice in this claim, even though the tone of Taub's charges indicates to me that Taub is unaware of the depth and scope of the issue. To my mind, this dilemma cannot be divorced from a deeply-rooted issue accompanying the ideological history of Zionism, and not only its religious wing, from its very inception. Herzl's political Zionism was opposed from the outset by Ahad Ha'am's cultural Zionism, highlighting a fundamental question at the heart of the Zionist enterprise: how Jewish the Jewish state? Herzl's political goal of statehood – if not his dreams of normalization and abolishing anti-Semitism – was achieved, while the goals of Ahad Ha'am have been accomplished only to a partial degree. Israel is indeed a cultural center for Torah studies, as well as for academic Judaic studies and various forms of Jewish literary and artistic creativity. However, even leaving aside the question of how much Jewishness informs this Jewish creativity, Ahad Ha'am's vision certainly is violated by the dismal failure of the Israeli educational system to transmit Jewish knowledge and inculcate vibrant Jewish values (beyond eating kosher and fasting on Yom Kippur). Thus, while the existence and vitality of the State of Israel attest the rousing success of (part of) Herzl's vision, the vision of Ahad Ha'am lives a shadowy existence among a thin upper crust of intellectual and cultural elites. Never rejected, indeed not infrequently proclaimed, but pursued with insufficient vigor, the Jewishness of the State remains an unresolved and glaring issue. Statehood has been elevated into an overarching value, and the "democratic" component of the "Jewish democratic" state has taken on qualities of a categorical imperative to which public discourse often ascribes quasi-religious qualities.<sup>26</sup> Gershon Hacoheh's vignette, cited at the beginning of this article, gave clear expression to this nearly kerygmatic view of statehood/democracy, and his sentiments were echoed by repeated invocations

during the Disengagement of the overriding value of “defending democracy.”<sup>27</sup> The Jewishness of the Jewish state is difficult to formulate in terms of democratic values, certainly in the increasingly supra-national ultra-liberal way in which Israeli (and other Western) elites have understood democracy. Thus, alongside the failure of Zionism to produce a Jewish cultural center, the political vision of a Jewish state is in retreat. Many reasons may be adduced for this retreat, some of them rooted in global factors sweeping the world at large and the Western world in particular. However, among the factors that need to be considered is the weakness of the structural foundations of Zionist ideology, for many years covered over by the enormous challenges to which Israelis society needed to devote its energies and by the dizzying, indeed miraculous, successes of State-building. Over a decade before the founding of the State, Berl Katznelson predicted that the vision of state-building is insufficient to sustain a nation for very long.<sup>28</sup> The third and fourth generations of the Jewish state need a spiritual vision that classical Zionism never succeeded in formulating, certainly not clearly enough to pass on to future generations. Zionism as a whole needs to return to its roots, to acknowledge the unresolved tension among the elements on which Israel has based its national identity, and to formulate a far clearer vision of how these elements may be accommodated.

For all shadings of Religious Zionism the Jewishness of the State as its central goal has never been doubted. However, the religious counterpart to the political/cultural faultline of Zionism is the issue of Land vs. State. If both Herzl and Ahad Ha'am were rather indifferent to the Land of Israel as a value and a goal, Religious Zionists could hardly be insensitive to the halakhic, spiritual, and theological ramifications of establishing Jewish settlement in the land of holiness and ancestral roots. Indeed secular Zionism early awakened to the powerful tug of the Jewish connection to the Land, rooting it in their renewed interest in Tanakh study and archaeology. In the non-religious sector, the weakening of the Jewish component of Israeli identity has brought about an utter collapse of the connection to the land as a value, to the point that even the most right wing secular Israelis base their ideology nearly exclusively on security

considerations. In the Religious Zionist camp, however, the dominance of Rav Kook's philosophy in Religious Zionism has served to magnify both the value of the land and the value of the Jewish collective, including both peoplehood and statehood.<sup>29</sup> Advocates of this philosophy have generally been averse to acknowledging real conflict among these numinous core values, but Israeli government policies since Oslo have made it increasingly difficult to ignore the clash between them. In the Disengagement, the differing policies supported by leading rabbis of the Rav Kook school divided between those who advocated *mamlakhtiyut* as the overriding value and those who argued that loyalty to the State and the government was superseded when they sought to surrender parts of the Land. Inasmuch as the Disengagement presented Religious Zionism with the need to choose among the competing values of Land, people, and State, it challenges Religious Zionism to re-examine the nature and interrelationship of values that many in the Religious Zionist camp had sought to view as inextricably intertwined.

For followers of the Rav's *Kol Dodi Dofek*, the choice among these values is clear. The Rav rooted his Zionism firmly rooted in peoplehood, interpreting the "divine knocks" as a call to reassert the values of *berit goral* (Covenant of Fate) and *berit ye'ud* (Covenant of Destiny). Neither statehood nor Land are accorded values as independent religious goals.<sup>30</sup> While many in the Religious Zionist camp resonate deeply to the Rav's brilliant development of the values of peoplehood, I believe that the vast majority of RZs, especially those who actualize their Zionism by living in Eretz Israel, feel Land and statehood to be integral parts of their Religious Zionist commitment.<sup>31</sup> In the divine "knocks" they have discerned a summons to attach oneself to the Land, and to celebrate the re-establishment there of a Jewish government, alongside the summons to deepen their attachment to the doubly covenanted people.

In my reading both of contemporary historical reality and of the sources of Jewish tradition, the three core values at the heart of Religious Zionism – the land, the state, and the people of Israel – should remain intact. The return of Jews to their land, to peoplehood, and to the stage of history are dramatic events that do, and ought

to, inform our understanding of the classic triad of fundamental Jewish categories, Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. It goes without saying that any contemporary perspective on Redemption must take contemporary statehood and peoplehood into account, and as Religious Zionists we continue to believe that this reality, at least potentially, is a significant advance towards the full redemptive restoration of these values. Moreover, according to Kuzari, Ramban, and Rav Kook, return to the land impacts upon “revelation” as well, and one might read the Rav’s “divine knocks” as well as focused on an enhancement of communication between God and Israel, and not only (as the Rav argued) as centered on peoplehood and its two covenants.

Observers have noted that mainstream Religious Zionist thinking may be divided into two historical stages: a pragmatic phase, in which ideology served as the maidservant of pragmatically determined goals, and an ideological phase driven largely by a harmonistic and absolutist theology.<sup>32</sup> If indeed overly romantic and overly rigid theology may bear much of the blame for recent setbacks, I would suggest that Religious Zionism attempt a synthesis of the two previous phases, combining the faith and fervor of theo-ideology with the clear-eyed sophistication and flexibility of the pragmatist. Immediacy after reflection (*hatemimut hashnuyah*) is never a simple proposition, but I believe it possible to formulate a “pragmatic metaphysics” which will preserve the symbolic potency of core values, without elevating each to the level of an incommensurate and inflexible absolute. I have no ready-made model to offer for synthesizing the Rav’s ethical pragmatic people-centered theology with Rav Kook’s historiosophical-metaphysical passion, but in the remainder of this article I will attempt to sketch some of the contours to which such a model might conform.

## E-1

Following the Disengagement, it is undeniably true that the mainstream of Religious Zionism has paid a heavy price for its passionate commitment to Eretz Israel. Passionate commitment need not entail, as some facilely assume, messianic devotion devoid of rational

guidelines and constraints. Indeed the devotees of Eretz Israel Hasheleimah have proven themselves in the past thirteen years to be better diagnosticians and prognosticators of the facts on the ground than either peace activists on the left or security-conscious pragmatists on the right. Lt. General (res.) Moshe Yaalon has observed that the penchant of the Israeli public to swallow ill-conceived peace programs stems from what he terms their “hydroponic” character – lacking Jewish roots, it is difficult for them to summon the fortitude to face protracted struggle, with no short-range solutions in sight. I believe that, in accordance with the vision that was once shared by both secular and religious Zionists, the Jewish roots that Israelis need to deepen must be firmly grounded in Eretz Israel’s geography, history, and heritage. While I would (again) argue that Religious Zionism should not hold itself to be the guilty party in the weakening of Jewish roots, including the connection to the Land, I do feel that we have a share in this failure. The discourse of connection to the Land is carried out, for the most part, in language accessible only to religious *bnei Torah* (Torah personalities), and most Israelis no longer resonate to the language spoken by the shrinking population of “dinosaurs” within the secular community who are still attached to the value of Eretz Israel. I believe we need to address the challenge of translating our theological message of Land into the language of contemporary discourse.

Accomplishing this involves overcoming formidable obstacles. The discourse of contemporary liberalism – *a fortiori* post-modernism – ranges from indifferent to hostile regarding attachment to land (at least regarding “us,” namely “colonial” societies; Arabic *tzummud*, and other attachments to Land by the “Other,” tend on the other hand to be regarded as inviolate). The ideology of the “hilltop youth” (*naarei gevaot*) wing of the neo-spiritual, New Age, movement includes the spirituality of the attachment to Land, but I doubt that this vilified sector of Religious Zionism will achieve broad support in the foreseeable future. Can the spiritual-emotional tug of the Land of Israel be rekindled in the hearts of Israelis, or was it an ephemeral fashion, lacking deep roots in commitment to Jewish history, religion, and peoplehood? I would not discount the first



possibility, as some thinkers have, both because classical Zionist values may be moribund but their obituaries have been exaggerated, and because we don't have the luxury of writing off the vast bulk of the Israeli population. Hence the challenge facing Religious Zionism: to translate our theological commitment to Land into a language both meaningful and appealing to Israelis groping for identity and ideology. Sanctity is a concept that, in most of its forms, is barely accessible to modernity, and is incomprehensible to post-modernism. Perhaps the faltering of classical Zionism will create an opportunity to achieve what previous Religious Zionist visions have failed to accomplish: not only to fortify the already committed, but to persuade the general public that some version of sanctity is essential to any viable ideology. More specifically: to formulate a concept of the sanctity of Eretz Israel for the Jewish people that will resonate even for those whose commitments are not grounded in theological presuppositions.

## E-2

Of the three core values of Religious Zionism, statehood is the one most deleteriously affected by the Disengagement. Not only were the organs of statehood utilized for purposes most Religious Zionists regarded as morally and spiritually wrong, but serious question marks were raised about the way in which they function, and in particular about the way in which they were seen to be riddled with special political interests and corruption. Subsequent events have only deepened the doubts regarding the health and integrity of Israel's organs of statehood, which indeed are shared today by most Israelis. I believe that the *mamlakhti* philosophy adhered to by many Religious Zionists requires serious re-evaluation, but without jettisoning this important value entirely, especially inasmuch as it plays so central a role in the philosophy of secular Zionism. It is well-known that authorities such as Hazal and the Rambam accorded value and honor to *malkhut Israel*, even when ruled over by kings of dubious spiritual mettle, such as Ah'av and the Hasmonean kings.<sup>33</sup> However, recent events make it far more difficult than previously to accept "the belief of those dreamers who adopt a completely

positive stance to the point where they identify the State with the [fulfillment] of the highest goal of our historical and meta-historical destiny.”<sup>34</sup> In reflecting upon the State of Israel’s tenth anniversary, the Rav questioned whether “Judaism’s affection for the state [is] instrumental or as an ideal, is it practical or full of aspiration,” and wondered further, if the state be seen an ideal, whether it “possess[es] original and internally rooted sanctity or only sanctity rooted in a higher purpose that shines upon it splendor and significance.”<sup>35</sup> At least insofar as we are dealing with the current State of Israel and its government, I think we need at the present time to scale down our axiological evaluation of the state. The value of Jewish sovereignty, while not negligible, does not rate inordinately high when leadership is in the hands of visionless technocrats, whose devotion to their people is overshadowed by their devotion to power and success. However, the theology underlying these propositions needs to be thought through and formulated. The language of *segulah* and sanctity, again, tends towards the ineffable and the inflexible, whereas the rational, often pragmatic, terms in which thinkers such as the Rav and Eliezer Berkovits formulate the value of statehood fail to capture the imagination and to fortify the soul. Between the approach of Rav Soloveitchik, who honored the flag of Israel only as a symbol of the self-sacrifice of those who died defending the state,<sup>36</sup> and the declaration of Rav Zvi Yehuda that “all the weapons...all that pertains to this day of establishing the kingdom of Israel – all are holy,”<sup>37</sup> Religious Zionism needs to formulate an intermediate view, according statehood a value that transcends the pragmatic but stops short of the absolute.

### E-3

To my mind, the thorniest issue confronting Religious Zionist thinking today is the value of peoplehood. Rav Yaakov Meidan expressed the feelings of many when, immediately after the Disengagement, he announced his disappointment in his erstwhile allies from the secular Zionist left and center. Jews whom he had previously found to be idealistic and committed to Jewish unity betrayed both Jewish solidarity and their own democratic values by failing to denounce

governmental outrages and by ignoring the basic human and democratic rights of people on the wrong side of the political spectrum. Translating Rav Meidan's reaction into the language of Religious Zionist theology, the Disengagement presents a serious challenge to two classic models that have shaped Religious Zionist thinking. In the language of the Rav, it represents for many Religious Zionists a serious retreat from the main achievement of secular Zionism, the fostering of *berit goral*. The sense that *berit goral* has been weakened is rooted in more than the hostility and apathy directed towards settlement and its supporters. Ehud Olmert's famous "we are tired of fighting and winning" speech expresses with frightening clarity that Israel's failure to defend Sderot from Kassam rockets and the Galilee from Katyusha rockets stems from a weakening of resolve, rooted in such factors as war-weariness, hedonistic individualism, globalism, and post-Zionist ideologies. Recent events show secular society to be rather far removed from Rav Kook's "holy rebellion." The militant opposition of secular ideologues especially to those forms of religion supposedly closest to their own values calls into question the kind of imminent synthesis of *Torat Eretz Israel* with secular Zionism envisioned in Rav Kook's dialectic. Whether or not Rav Kook correctly perceived the nature of the secular Jews of his day, the secular community has undergone changes, such that neither their virtues nor their shortcomings are identical with those described so trenchantly in his writings.

To my mind, it is important for Religious Zionists to understand and internalize that, to whatever extent secular Israeli society may in the past have played the roles our leading thinkers perceived, we cannot assume that they will continue to follow our script. I would not hasten, however, to eulogize the historic partnership between Religious Zionism and the larger Zionist movement. Even were Religious Zionism in a position today to create a religious "Kingdom of Judea" in place of the Zionist state, this would be wrong from a theological point of view. Just as Moshe refused to replace the calf-worshipping people recently redeemed from Egypt, so our sense of *berit goral* should recoil from building a new kingdom on the ruins of Zionism. Whatever guidance or alternatives Religious

Zionism can provide should be channeled into rebuilding our partnership and re-establishing solidarity, and recent events present some hopeful signs, alongside the negative ones. The Lebanese war, along with its many negative phenomena, also proved the fortitude of the average Israeli, citizen as well as soldier, to be far greater than many had expected. In a situation of open warfare, Israelis of different backgrounds and persuasions again displayed that, like the dust of the earth, we bond together under pressure. Moreover, although public disenchantment with the fruits of Disengagement and with the Lebanon War may fail in the short run to spark thoroughgoing re-examination of the public mood which allowed it to happen, it may in the long run open a window of opportunity to plant important questions in the mind of the average Israeli. Israelis today might be more open than they have in the past to realizing, as people such as Lt. Gen. (res.) Moshe Yaalon have done, that – to put the message in theological language – lack of positive berit ye'ud is rendering the power of berit goral increasingly tenuous.

Even more than either of the other two values we have examined, the value of peoplehood requires careful and receptive attention to the nature of the other sectors of Israeli society. Appeals to brotherhood and outreach activities will fail as long as they are rooted in metaphysical assumptions regarding the nature of the Jewish soul or historiosophical postulates regarding the role of secular Zionism. Presuming to understand our neighbors better than they understand themselves is problematic, tactically, morally, and spiritually. *Ahdut Israel* commands *ahavah she'eina teluyah badavar* for our non-religious neighbor, including respectful attention to his beliefs, values and concerns, and even – a la Rav Kook – openness to be influenced by some of his values and ideas. Establishing Jewish peoplehood on a new and firmer basis, to which both religious and secular Israelis may subscribe, demands of us sensitivity as well as creativity. From our religious perspective, compounded by our “outsider” status, we are uniquely positioned to perceive the built-in shortcomings and aporias of secular Zionism, but both from a moral and a tactical standpoint we need to approach this topic with humility and respect. If some of the greatest tannaim wondered whether

anyone in their generation was capable of properly administering reproof,<sup>38</sup> how much care do we need to take in order to ensure that we are equal to this vital mission!

Rather than differentiating religious from secular along the lines of berit goral and berit ye'ud, as the Rav proposed, I would suggest devising a common language in which both berit goral and berit ye'ud can be formulated in terms which include deep personal and historical roots, as well as a sense of sanctity. A religious sense of berit goral and berit ye'ud rooted entirely in Revelation and Halakhah will not aid us to promoting these values among secular Israelis, and will not heal the split between religious and secular. I believe that the value, and even the sanctity, of these values may be formulated for our "translated message"<sup>39</sup> in terms accessible and attractive to all Israelis, without surrendering the deeper kerygmatic message to which we subscribe as faithful halakhic Jews.

Our desire, indeed our need, to impact on general Israeli society requires of us humility in a different sense as well: *keshot atzmekha v'ahar kakh keshot aherim* (decorate yourself, afterwards decorate others). Many of the flaws which we find in the secular camp may be found in our camp as well, both ideologically – as discussed above – and morally-spiritually. Prior to the Disengagement, the Religious Zionist camp was as apathetic as others to shady political machinations, corruption, police brutality, and denial of civil rights, when they were directed against people who were not *anshei shlomeinu* (our fellows). Nor did Religious Zionists distinguish themselves by battling unrelentingly for social justice. More pointedly, religious Jews have failed to demonstrate their moral and spiritual superiority in areas over which they have full control, such as marriage, divorce, conversion, and burial. The insensitive and sometimes immoral conduct of many of the rabbis entrusted with these emotionally charged issues not only creates an ongoing *hillul hashem* (desecration of God's name), but also raises serious question marks regarding the ability of the stewards of contemporary Halakhah to confront the challenges of modern society.

In addition to making us more humble and more tolerant of the shortcomings of Israeli society at large, these considerations should

also guide us towards understanding how we may be more successful in impacting positively upon the consciousness and outlook of the Israeli public. We congratulate ourselves, often justifiably, on the values, achievements, and idealism characteristic of the observant Jewish community. However, we need further to evaluate humbly and honestly the extent to which we have fashioned a Torah outlook that can address the entire spectrum of issues confronting a modern nation in a way that arouses the admiring description: “a wise and discerning nation is this great nation” (Devarim 4:6); only then can we address to the general public a message of *berit ye’ud* that can help to rehabilitate the damaged value of *berit goral*.

## F

The point of departure for Religious Zionist theology is thankfulness to God for having granted the Jewish people in our time a sovereign state in Eretz Israel, providing a center for the ingathering of exiles from far-flung corners of the globe. I have failed to detect in recent events any reason, either theological or socio-historical, that warrants surrendering this perspective. Regardless of whether the Disengagement be viewed as an act of God or purely an act of man, I do not hear in it any divine message to relinquish any of the three values which the founding of the State summoned us to affirm: Land, State, People. I do detect in the Disengagement and in subsequent events a call to re-examine the meaning and the relative significance of these three pillars. In my view, Religious Zionism needs to reformulate these three values, in terms that strike a different balance between the pragmatic and the numinous than the models we have employed heretofore. The recasting of these values should involve a serious attempt to formulate them in terms to which secular Israelis can relate positively. Moreover, these values should be readjusted to address the strengths and shortcomings of the religious community to date. These are provisional ruminations on a large topic, and I hope and pray that colleagues, friends, and partners will offer corrections and additions and join in carrying this important project forward.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, her books, *Love's Knowledge* (New York: Oxford, 1990) (ethical philosophy) and *Poetic Justice* (Boston, 1995) (legal philosophy).
2. See the Rav's *Family Redeemed*, eds. D. Shatz and J. Wolowelsky (2000), 4.
3. It is possible to judge Noah favorably based on a different consideration as well. The possibility of petitionary prayer, which we take for granted, may not have been obvious to the earliest human generations. The first petitionary prayer in the Torah was spoken by Avraham, and the Torah's language gives clear indications that Avraham had grave hesitations regarding the propriety of this revolutionary act. Noah, therefore, should perhaps not be held accountable for failing to relate to God in a way that no human had ever contemplated.
4. See discussion in my article, "Divrei Shalom ve-Emet" [Hebrew], *Hadassah Hi Esther*, ed. A. Bazak, (Alon Shevut, 5757): 114–116.
5. See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah – Hilkhhot Teshuvah* 6:5 and Ra'avad, *ad loc.*, Ramban to Bereshit 15:14.
6. Compare J. Fraenkel, "Ha-Manhig be-Sifrut Hazal," *Demut ha-Manhig ha-Realie veha-Ideali* (Jerusalem, 5755): 27–23.
7. As Yeshayahu declared to King Hizkiyahu, "What is my concern with these hidden matters of the Merciful One?" (Berakhot 10a). See further sources cited above, n. 5, and compare Bereshit Rabbah 41:5, as well as David's refusal to slay King Saul (cited above).
8. Compare J. Frænkel, *The Aggadic Narrative – Harmony of Form and Content* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv, 2001), 42. For a different reading of this story see S.Z. Havlin, "Towards an Understanding of the Talmudic Sages' Method of Study" [Hebrew], *Studies in Halakha and Jewish Thought*, ed. M. Beer (Ramat-Gan, 5754): 85.
9. This is echoed by Ramban, *Torat ha-Adam*, in ed., H.D. Chavel, *Kitvei Rabbeinu Moshe ben Nahman*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 5724): 281, and see further S. Carmy, "Tell Them I've Had a Good Enough Life," *Jewish Perspectives on the Experience of Suffering*, ed. S. Carmy (Jerusalem: Northvale, 1999): 99. My thanks to R. Shalom Carmy for pointing out these sources.
10. Sifre Devarim 49, s.v. *vedavka bo*.
11. Compare, for example, the Rav's *Days of Deliverance*, E.D. Clark, J.B. Wolowelsky, and R. Ziegler, eds. (2007), 71. The Rav presented a more complex and nuanced approach to the questions of theodicy in *Out of the Whirlwind*, eds. D. Shatz, J. Wolowelsky and R. Ziegler (New York, 2003), 91–104, allowing room both for the "metaphysic of suffering" of the "thematic Halakhah" and for the "ethic of suffering" of the "topical Halakhah."
12. "Rabbis Kook" refers to Rav Avraham Isaac Hacoheh Kook and to his son Rav Zvi Yehuda Hacoheh Kook. In this paper the Rav Kook philosophy or the Rav Kook camp will denote points of view commonly subscribed to by the followers of these important Religious Zionist leaders, without attempting to disentangle the various strands or to examine nuances and developments within the camp. For a discussion

- of the differences between father and son, see Dov Schwartz's contribution to this volume.
13. Elsewhere, following categories proposed by Peter Berger, I have argued that the "empirical" bent of religious Zionism, which accords value to human perception of reality rather than rooting faith in "deductive" principles delivered by revelation alone, is bound up with the response to modernity characteristic of most religious Zionists (*harda*"l = *haredi leumi* Jews, who are becoming progressively closer to the classical *haredim*, notwithstanding). See my articles: "Hatziot Hadatit Be-Olam Hahermeneutika" [Hebrew], *Kovetz ha-Tziot ha-Datit*, ed. S. Raz (Jerusalem, 5759): 456–465; "Hermeneutics and Values: Issues in Improving Contemporary Talmud Teaching," *Wisdom From All My Teachers*, eds. J. Sacks and S. Handelman (Jerusalem and New York, 2003): 266–270.
  14. *Mamlakhti*, literally "governmental," when pronounced with the accent on the second syllable, has become a code word for a religious Zionist approach that sets adherence to and faith in the institutions of the Israeli government at an extremely high premium.
  15. See my articles: "Metutelet Hasarvanut: She'elot li-Shney ha-Tzedadim," *Hatzofeh* (January 20, 2005); "Mabat Aher al Seruv Pekudah," *Hatzofeh* (Musaf, September 2, 2005): 12.
  16. Hazal frequently resorted to "measure for measure" explanations, for events both large and small. However, inasmuch as Hazal in their *aggadot* frequently subordinated exegesis and historical veracity to their behavioral or spiritual goals, it stands to reason that apparent theological formulations as well were sometimes designed more for exhortation and inspiration than for theological instructional. In this reading, statements by Hazal that appear to proffer causal explanations on a theological plane may actually be closer to the Rav's model of deriving instruction rather than offering explanations.
  17. The apathetic disregard for the ramifications of destroying people's homes and livelihood was evidenced most clearly by the glaring and well-documented failure to provide them with decent living conditions. I will leave for later the question as to the degree to which such culpable unconcern characterizes the Disengagement itself and the way in which it was decided upon and carried out.
  18. Several of the participants in the Orthodox Forum discussion wondered why, in light of this discomfort, I didn't simply abandon this point altogether. I would argue that meaningful theological reflection must include admittedly tentative observations regarding specific Providential actions. The vibrancy of religious faith includes entertaining notions regarding prayers that have been answered, as well as private events that may be seen as reward or punishment for one's actions. I would accept the argument that greater theological circumspection is required regarding events that befall other people than events concerning oneself – hence (among other reasons) the criticism directed by the book of Job towards Job's friends – and yet greater caution is demanded for events that affect entire communities. Yet neither *haredi* circles nor Religious Zionist circles have foresworn the attempt to



understand major events such as the Holocaust and the founding of the State. Here, of course, one may justify theological speculation on the grounds of the profoundly dramatic nature of the event, far more dramatic than the Disengagement or the second Lebanese war. I don't believe there is a precise calculus that determines the exact parameters of speculation regarding theological causality, and I think that the best policy is to temper one's theological conclusions with a healthy dose of tentativeness and humility (and see further next footnote).

19. I am mindful of my animadversions above regarding the Rav's attempt to draw a rigid distinction between theological causality and theological spiritual instruction. Here too I am proposing skepticism, rather than agnosticism, regarding theological causality. My argument here assumes that even when theological explanations may be doubtful from a causal standpoint, there is benefit in reflecting on their possible moral and spiritual ramifications.
20. One participant in the Forum questioned whether the apathy regarding the uprooting of settlers from their homes is any worse than the disregard of the Israeli public – settlers included – for the everyday plight of families dispossessed of their homes because of callous banking practices and inadequate social services. The implicit criticism, that supporters of the Orange camp choose their ethical issues in a politicized and self-serving fashion, has some justice (see end of this footnote). Nevertheless I would argue that in important respects apathy towards the suffering engendered by the Disengagement is worse than the everyday apathy towards routine events: (a) the plight of the Disengagement victims was highly visible, as opposed to the extremely low visibility level of most lower-class homeless and dispossessed families; (b) the Disengagement was carried out by an official act of government, in the name of the public, whereas most other acts of dispossession are carried out in the private domain. Of course ameliorating factors should not be taken as exoneration, and see my remarks at the end of this paragraph.
21. In the previous case of the destruction of Yamit, the goal was apparent: a peace treaty with Egypt. Even those – such as myself – who felt that the goal was wrongheaded, could not be unaware of what the goal was, and moreover, could not be 100 percent certain that the goal was not worth pursuing. In the case of the Disengagement, it was announced without any official goal or any explanation of the reasons for the radical change in government policy. On the rare occasions when Ariel Sharon or his messengers bothered to explain its rationale, they invariably resorted to empty generalizations, such as: “it will improve Israeli security;” or “we have nothing to look for in Gaza.” Reasoned and detailed refutation of such claims, such as the arguments advanced by Gen. (res.) Yaakov Amidror, were never addressed. Subsequent events, and subsequent admissions of key players such as Ehud Olmert and Tzippi Livni, have only confirmed that the goals of the Disengagement had little basis other than wishful thinking.
22. See E. Berkovits, *God, Man, and History* (New York, 1959), 142–148. The fact that Berkovits returned to this idea in *Faith After the Holocaust* to explain God's inactivity during the Holocaust shows the extent to which God, in his view, may be

- willing to allow man to perform evil upon the innocent without being checked by even indirect divine activity. Compare also the views of Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God After Auschwitz," *Out of the Whirlwind*, ed. A.H. Friedlander (New York, 1968): 465–476. One need not take this idea quite as far as Berkovits and Jonas do in order to explain an event such as the Disengagement.
23. Regarding the tannaim see the views of R. Yosi and R. Natan in Tosefta Rosh Hashanah 1:13 and Bavli Rosh Hashanah 16a, compare the anonymous baraita in Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 1:2, 57a, and see my discussion in "Yom Hadin Betorat Hattannaim" [Hebrew], *Be-Rosh Hashanah Yikkatevun*, eds. A. Bazak, E. Ben-Eliyahu, and M. Munitz (Alon Shevut, 5763): 82–86. Among rishonim, see Tosafot, Rosh Hashanah 16b, s.v. *venehtamin*, as opposed to Ramban, *Torat ha-Adam* (above, n. 9), pp. 264–265 and *Derashah leRosh ha-Shanah*, in: Chavel, *Kitvei* (above, n. 9), 1, pp. 221–225. See further: *Hagahot Maimuniyot*, Hilkhot Teshuvah, Chapter 3, n. 1; *Hiddushei ha-Rashba*, Rosh Hashanah 16b, s.v. Ha Derabbi Keruspedai.
  24. See for example Rav A. Nebenzal, "Al Hashgahat Hashem ve-al Palti ben Layish" [Hebrew], *Tsohar*, 28 (5767): 143, basing himself on Bereshit 15:13–14, and compare H. Iram, "Lo Lishkoah, Lo Lisloah (Teguvah Lema'amaro shel ha-Rav Shlomoh Rosenfeld)," *Tsohar*, 27 (5767): 101ff.
  25. See, for example, Ramban to Devarim 19:19; Rambam, *Shemonah Perakim*, in *Hakdamot ha-Rambam la-Mishnah*, Y. Shilat, ed. (Jerusalem, 5752): 250; *Igrot ha-Rambam*, Y. Shilat, ed., 1 (Jerusalem, 5747):237. My thanks to Dr. Yosi Marziano for directing me to the Maimonidean sources. This issue is part of a broader discussion of the scope of *hashgahah* (Providence), and see the discussion of *mori ve-rabbi* Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, "The Duties of the Heart and the Response to Suffering," *Jewish Perspectives on the Experience of Suffering*, (above, n. 9): 38–39 and the extensive sources cited and discussed in S. Ariel, "Ha'im Kol Eru'a Mekhuvan mi- Shamayim?" [Hebrew], *Tsohar*, 28 (5767): 33–50.
  26. Many have written on the "religion of democracy" – termed "the democratic faith" by Oz Almog, *Farewell to 'Sru'lik'* [Hebrew], (Haifa: Or Yehudah, 2004), 26ff. See also Yuval Elbasha, "Dat ha-Demokratia" [Hebrew], *NRG* (July 3, 2005) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART/953/277.html>, who identifies himself as a believer in the "religion of democracy." Much as early Zionist thinkers touted Jewish nationalism as a substitute for Jewish religion (see E. Schweid, *Rethinking* [Hebrew], (Jerusalem, 1991), 245–281, on "'Nationalistic Theology' in Zionism"), Almog argues that the "democratic faith" serves as a substitute for Zionism. As much as Zionist culture weakened, so Democracy gained strength; so too in reverse, as much as Israeli Democracy gained strength, so Zionist culture weakened. Compare S. Kaniel, "Zehut ve-Zehut Yehudit: Bein Murkavut Meshateket le-Fashtanut Me'uvetet," *Da'at* (2006), <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/chinuch/beayot/zehut-2.htm>, who discusses the conflict between the religions of Judaism and democracy in the context of the Disengagement. Another value to which many Israelis ascribe quasi-religious qualities is Peace, a "religion" closely aligned with that of democracy.
  27. "Democracy" was generally invoked in vague, often incongruous, ways, reflecting

- its employment as a rough synonym for the overriding, near mystical, value of statehood.
28. B. Katznelson, "Evel Yahid" *Kitvei B.* [Hebrew], cited by Yair Sheleg, "Tzionizatziyah shel ha-Yahadut, Yehudizatziyah shel ha-Tzionut," *Nekudah*, 297 (January, 2007): 41. Curiously, Sheleg ignores this factor in claiming that the recession of Zionist ideology is a sign not of its inherent failures or weakness, but of its having been replaced by global ideologies.
  29. There are, of course, other classic sources for these values, for those both within and outside of the Rav Kook camp. Many of the sources are well-known, and have been cited in numerous sourcebooks and discussions. A key source for these values – the religious quality of the Land, as well as the importance of Jewish sovereign control over the Land – is the Ramban, especially his additions to the Rambam's *Sefer ha-Mitzvot, mitzvat aseh 4* and his commentary to Vayikra 18:25.
  30. Compare my discussion in "When Theology Knocks," *Tradition*, 39:3 (2006): 78–85. G. Blidstein, "Ha-Rav Yosef Dov ha-Levi Soloveichik ke-Hogeh Dati-Tzioni – ha-Amnam?" *Derekh ha-Ruah*, ed. Y. Amir (Jerusalem, 5765): 439–450, has offered a cogent explanation for the lack of classical Zionist themes in the Rav's thought, and has argued in consequence that he really should not be termed a Religious Zionist thinker. While the semantic point of how far one may stretch the bounds of Religious Zionist thought may be debated, I think that my argument largely parallels his. It should be noted that in some of his lectures and writings, the Rav did recognize the singular religious value of Eretz Israel; see, for example, *Five Addresses* (Jerusalem, 5743), 78, and compare my discussion in "When Theology Knocks," pp. 83, 139ff. and sources cited there. In *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, pp. 164–166, the Rav set forth the outline of a full-blown discussion of the halakhic view of the value of statehood, and I will return to his questions below. To the best of my knowledge, the Rav's published writings do not flesh out his views on the subject, but I think we may safely surmise that, to the extent that he accorded to the state "ideal" rather than "instrumental" value, he did not see the modern State of Israel as fulfilling this ideal. See also the Rav's comments on the "strangeness" of "the very idea of a State of Israel" in *Five Addresses*, pp. 76ff., and compare his remarks on pp. 138ff.
  31. See my "When Theology Knocks" (above, n. 30).
  32. See, for example, Dov Schwartz's contribution to this volume.
  33. Regarding Ah'av, see R. Yannai in Zevahim 102a and Menahot 98a. Regarding the Hasmonean kings, see Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Hanukkah* 3:1, and see further G.J. Blidstein, *Political Concepts in Maimonidean Halakha* (Jerusalem, 1983): 41–43.
  34. Rav J.B. Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, N. Helfgot, ed. (Jersey City, 2005), 164.
  35. *Ibid.* p. 165.
  36. *Five Addresses*, p. 139.
  37. Cited by R. Shlomo Aviner, "Veyatza Hashem ve-Nilham ba-Goyim" (my translation

from the Hebrew), *Morasha*, 7 (5734): 41–42. R. Zvi Yehuda’s formulation is reminiscent, of course, of R. Eliezer’s view that weapons are “jewels” that may be worn on Shabbat even in a public domain (M Shabbat 6:4). R. Eliezer’s view is rejected by poskim, but even if his view may not be authoritative in the realm of the laws of Shabbat, it may reflect a Jewishly valid outlook – especially for Rav Zvi Yehuda, who on another occasion referred to R. Eliezer approvingly as a genuine devotee of Eretz Israel. However, in my view, R. Zvi Yehuda’s formulation goes beyond that of R. Eliezer.

38. Arakhin 16b, based on Sifra, Kedoshim, Chapter 4, par. 9.

39. See “The Lonely Man of Faith,” *Tradition*, 7, 2 (1965): 62ff. (= *The Lonely Man of Faith* [New York, 2002], 98ff).



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# 4

## Religious Zionism and the Struggle Against the Evacuation of the Settlements: Theological and Cultural Aspects

*Dov Schwartz*<sup>1</sup>

### **INTRODUCTION**

Researchers have now hesitantly embarked in a concerted effort to examine how the evacuation of the settlements in Gaza and Amona has affected religious Zionism. Two obstacles, in my view, hinder this scholarly pursuit:

1. Religious Zionism as it developed from the late 1980s onward is essentially different from the movement known to us until then. During the last two decades, barriers have been broken so forcefully and frameworks expanded so intensely that the religious Zionist ethos has undergone fundamental changes. Several examples of these processes are the exposure to the media, the striving for senior positions in the army, the phenomenon of the “hilltops youth” (*no'ar ha-gev'ot*) and the spread of Hasidism and New Age movements in religious Zionist yeshivot. Research has not yet analyzed and documented these developments to the extent required for appraising their influence on the struggle against the evacuation of the settlements.
2. Many scholars from different disciplines have analyzed various aspects of the struggle against the evacuation of the settlements disregarding or, worse still, lacking basic knowledge of religious Zionist history and ideology. Opposition to the evacuation originates mostly in religious Zionist institutions, and the other groups (“hilltops youth,” Rav Kahana’s group, Chabad hasidim, and so forth) are marginal in their weight and in the strength of their resistance

But we cannot address specific behaviors at a given time without awareness of their historical and ideological background. The reactions of the spiritual and political leaders of religious Zionism during and after the disengagement deserve serious consideration. No less important, however, is to trace the historical and ideological background of the religious Zionist public in order to place these reactions in context, and my purpose here is to contribute to this effort. The roots of the resistance to the evacuation lie in the historical and theological character of religious Zionism and in the events marking this movement’s course since its establishment. In practice, two elements have shaped responses within religious Zionism from the outset:

1. *Distance from centers of action.* Due to the limited resources at its disposal and to its political orientation, religious Zion-

ism was perceived as an auxiliary movement rather than as a vital element in the fateful decisions made before and after the establishment of the State of Israel. Despite the unease of many religious Zionists with these circumstances, they failed to rebel against them until the early 1960s.

2. *The Land of Israel in religious Zionist theology.* Since religious Zionism relied from the outset on a theological justification, the Land of Israel became an essential component of its worldview and of its decisions. Historically, we find that the theological attachment intensifies the greater the challenge of external events. In other words, during crises with potentially unfavorable effects for the Land's borders, the theological foundation becomes deeper and further entrenched.

My intention is to show how the encounters between these two elements have molded religious Zionist responses in the sense that the struggle for the Land erupted at the very core of the movement. I will argue that two factors have shaped the struggle against the evacuation of the settlements:

1. *Compensation mechanisms.* Opposition to the evacuation of the settlements (in Gaza and then in Amona) arose from the religious Zionist bourgeoisie, which leads the movement and launched the settlement endeavor in an attempt to compensate for the absence of founding myths.<sup>2</sup> The evacuation was to shatter this achievement.
2. *The Land of Israel in religious Zionist theology.* The substantialist perception of the land, which has become the dominant view in religious Zionism, inspired confidence in the failure of the disengagement.

The discussion that follows is meant to shed light on these factors.

### DEFINITIONS

I begin by presenting a series of definitions and clarifications about two key concepts I will be using below and of their place within the



Zionist movement, as a background for my discussion of religious Zionism.

*Myth.* The role of myth in modern society has been considered at great length.<sup>3</sup> In this discussion, I draw a distinction between national and other myths, such as fairy tales or religious stories. A national myth, usually advocating extreme devotion to ideals, willingness to martyrdom, and so forth, tends to be based on what are at least claimed to be historical facts. Zionism strongly needed to rely on national myths for two reasons:

1. It was an ideology involved in a struggle against almost impossible odds, lacking financial resources and military power and enjoying limited support.
2. It strove for a new anthropological model, free from the constraints of exile (including religion, which was one of exile's typical features). A new myth was thus a must.

*Compensation mechanism.* The absence of (national) myths in religious Zionism led to the development of a compensation mechanism, which can be schematized as follows and is developed below:

1. Both secular and religious Zionists felt the time had come to redeem the Land of Israel, be it in the secular or religious meaning of redemption.
2. For various reasons, however, including insufficient means, lack of land for settlements, and so forth, only secular Zionists realized the goal of redemption.
3. Their aspirations thwarted, religious Zionists experienced a frustration that generated a store of hidden energies and potential.
4. The opportunity to overcome this historical loss and create a new myth emerged in 1967.

The myths and compensation mechanisms are thus unique to religious Zionists within Israel and, to some extent, create some distance

between them and religious Zionists in the Diaspora, who did not live through these experiences. Let us now consider the early days of religious Zionism.

### INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL UPHEAVALS

Since the very dawn of the movement, support for religious Zionism came from urban dwellers in general and from the bourgeoisie in particular. The official foundation of Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi (1922) as a religious workers' movement and its ongoing activity were accompanied by a consciousness of rebellion.<sup>4</sup> In the official ideological writings of the movement, the rebellion was against exilic traits and the exilic type.<sup>5</sup> The return to manual labor and to pioneering endeavors marked the pinnacle of religious Zionist rebellion at the time. But the rebellion was also taking place in the original movement, the Mizrachi. The activities of Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi's settlement division were delayed because the institutions of the Zionist movement, headed by the Jewish National Fund, obstructed religious Zionist settlement in numerous ways.<sup>6</sup>

In the perception of Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi members, the original movement had not been sufficiently helpful to them in their struggle. The 1924 split in Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi exposed the opposition to the Mizrachi and the disappointment with what members of the workers' movement interpreted as incompetence and as deliberate disregard. In 1956, the Mizrachi and Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi united and the workers' movement gradually took over. Settlement became the official goal of the Bnei Akiva youth movement and the urban bourgeoisie, which at first had not wished to make settlement an ideal, endorsed it fully. These struggles and tensions, however, reveal the bourgeois character of the core group within religious Zionism.

Although the involvement of the Mizrachi in the struggle for settlement during the 1920s is debatable, the movement had clearly not made settlement its top priority. For the Mizrachi, the establishment of Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi represented an attempt to shift the ideological and political focus in other directions. The creation of the workers' movement could even be presented as an internal upheaval within religious Zionism.

As this internal crisis was developing, the movement was busy absorbing an ideological shock from outside: the British White Paper of 1922 detached Transjordan from the Land of Israel. The Mizrachi's opposition to Chaim Weizmann's leadership hinged mainly on Weizmann's abstention from any genuine struggle against this British decision. During these years, the Mizrachi actually shifted to the "right." The moderate tone that its founder, R. Yaakov Yitzhak Reines, had stamped upon the movement, faded away. Internal and external disruptions in the early 1920s shaped the movement's direction: a bourgeois background and a right-leaning political orientation regarding the integrity of the Land of Israel. Despite some minor deviations, these would eventually become the essential characteristics of the religious Zionist camp, whether its leaders fully reflected them or convoluted political paths led them to make other decisions.

### **A PARADOX OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

How did settlement become so central for religious Zionism after 1967, and particularly after 1973?

Historical processes were at once a catalyst and an expression of the theological sediment. Religious Zionism developed a theology that views the present as a stage in a messianic maximalist process whose foundations are the following:

1. The Zionist awakening is a stage in the final redemption process of the Jewish people. Definitions of this stage changed over the years, but an almost unanimous consensus prevailed concerning the close link between this stage and redemption.
2. The Zionist awakening means a new era for the entire world. The movement is therefore a significant moral and religious development in universal history.
3. The secularization of the Jewish people is temporary, and actually the husk of a sensitive and stormy religious core. In the course of realizing the Zionist ideal, the religious fulcrum of the Jewish people will be exposed, and secularization will collapse and disappear.<sup>7</sup>

These assumptions created a sharp discrepancy between the actual impact of religious Zionism and its internal consciousness. As far as its influence was concerned, religious Zionism was far removed from centers of action and decision-making. It was perceived as a movement dealing with religious issues such as *kashrut* (dietary laws) and conjugal law. Its representatives did not determine policy on issues of defense, foreign affairs, or the economy of the Zionist movement or of the young State of Israel. In its own consciousness, however, religious Zionism perceived itself as the only movement capable of interpreting history correctly. Only its members could read the historical process and understand its inner motivations. The gap between its self-perception and its actual effect created enormous tensions.

The limited involvement of religious Zionism in the general Zionist endeavor resulted in a lack of specific myths. The movement had no stories of glorious heroism such as Tel-Hai or of pioneering activities such as draining swamps. The story woven around Birya will attest to this lack and to an acute need seeking fulfillment. A religious platoon participated in the establishment of a settlement at Birya, near Safed, and its twenty-four members were arrested by the British and later released. This event was then elevated to the rank of a "national myth." Tied to the Tel-Hai commemoration, Birya would become the locus of a day of pilgrimage for Bnei Akiva members. Religious Zionism also devoted intellectual and literary efforts to highlight the heroic deeds of religious Zionist communities during the 1948 War of Liberation.<sup>8</sup>

Stories about struggles to settle the land, then, are among the missing myths of religious Zionism. Members of the Mizrahi, as noted, were mainly urban bourgeois. Their previous lack of involvement in the settlement project<sup>9</sup> turned settlement into a key goal, which would eventually play an essential role in the compensation mechanism developed within religious Zionism.

### CONCERN ABOUT THE INTEGRITY OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Another key issue in the religious Zionist agenda was the integrity of

the land. The different approaches to the Land of Israel in religious Zionist thought can be located between two distinctive and polarized viewpoints. Both had already crystallized several years after the establishment of the Mizrachi as a faction within the World Zionist Organization (1902), and their signs had been evident even previously:

1. *An “earthly” land.* Supporters of the first outlook concerning the Land of Israel, to which I will refer as “instrumental nationalism,” approached it as a platform and a necessary condition for the full realization of halakhah, “purely” a national territory without metaphysical meanings. The Land of Israel is the only place able to ensure the wellbeing of the Jewish people and its religious and cultural development. These thinkers also drew on nineteenth century national and nationalist approaches, which had attached special significance to the homeland for the development of the “national spirit.” In their view, the advantage and the importance of the land are mainly instrumental, and are measured by the Jewish people’s attachment to it. The land is a factor serving religious nationalism, and its meaning is determined in light of this nationalism. The addition of the religious factor to the national characteristics turned the attachment of the Jewish people to their land into a covenant stamped with theological nuances. This attachment presents the land as the Jewish people’s natural location, given that Jewish religion is characterized by a broad system of commandments applying only in the Land of Israel. Advocates of the instrumental approach, therefore, cannot endorse the implications of a rational nationalism simplistically. They added halakhic categories to it, as well as the possibility of fully observing all the commandments. Most religious Zionists were attracted to the romantic version of the people-land relationship.
2. *A “celestial” land.* Supporters of the second outlook concerning the Land of Israel, to which I will refer as “substantialist,” held that the land has an independent mystical uniqueness that, in its encounter with the national uniqueness, leads to results far

exceeding the common national purpose. This approach begins at the peak of the previous one. The “spirit of the nation” motif in the romantic and organic sense of the nation’s component elements, including the homeland, is only the starting point. It also had close affinity with the national mystical nuance tinting the romantic approach of Herder, Fichte, and others, and even more so with the Hegelian metaphysical version of the “spirit of the nation.” This religious Zionist view, however, is far more radical than these doctrines. It views the combination of people and land as the encounter and even the fusion of two elements of independent significance and autonomous metaphysical standing, whose radical messianic implications are now patent. The meaning of the land is no longer exhausted through its very existence as an instrument in the development of the people. The settlement of the land and the expansion of its borders turn into the repair of the divine. According to this approach, the national homeland is presented as an independent personal entity, possessing a will and sanctity of its own.

Note again that this approach, to the extent that it is influenced by nationalist thought, draws on a romantic-mystical version of nationalism but goes beyond it. Its thinkers rely on kabbalistic sources that perceive the land as a personal and theosophical expression of hidden divine layers and concealed celestial depths, which are reflected in the material world. The actual earth of the Land of Israel is an external cover for seething underground contents, as opposed to other lands that are nothing but dust and ashes. The substantialist approach to the Land of Israel, then, draws mainly on the mystical kabbalistic foundation. This approach developed in the circle of R. Avraham Isaac Hacohen Kook and pervaded religious Zionist thought with astonishing strength.<sup>10</sup>

Any discussions concerning the Land of Israel become pointless in this context. If the Land of Israel is indeed an independent substantialist entity, the embodiment of the divine on this earth, all discourse about it is barren and even blasphemous. An ephemeral mortal creature is not allowed to decide on the destiny of an eternal

divine entity. In this way, many religious Zionists made the Land of Israel a metaphysical constitutive component of their *Weltanschauung*.

At several “stops” on this historical course, when the Land of Israel was at the crux of Zionist decisions, the substantialist approach flared up more dramatically and “released” repressed stormy feelings. The trauma of the detachment of Transjordan during the early 1920s was noted above. Another significant stage was the partition controversy that erupted in 1937. Following the Arab revolt in 1936, the British authorities established a Royal Commission of Inquiry headed by Lord Peel, which proposed partition. The Committee’s Report was published in 1937, and offered the Jews the north of the country (Galilee), the coastal area, and the Sharon plains. A long enclave from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was to be under British rule and the rest of the country was allocated to the Arabs.

Research reveals the spectrum of positions adopted by religious Zionists.<sup>11</sup> Scholars naturally seek to cover the broadest possible range, so they have also included moderate views consenting to the partition proposal (Shraga Kadari, Pinhas Rosenbluth, and others). The vast majority of religious Zionists, however, rejected the partition proposal outright since it involved a compromise on the integrity of the Land of Israel. Furthermore, certain religious Zionist circles viewed the establishment of the State of Israel as a mixed blessing. For the disciples of R. Avraham Isaac Hachohen Kook, for instance, international recognition of the new state was confined to a “thin” segment of the Promised Land, and hence the mourning beclouding their joy.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the stormy discussion that accompanied the partition controversy in 1937, the most violent outburst over the Land of Israel erupted after the Yom Kippur War (1973), with the activity of Gush Emunim (The Bloc of the Faithful). This topic and its implications are discussed below.

### THE YOUNGSTERS’ REVOLUTION

Let us return now to the contrast between the self-perception of religious Zionism and its actual and political weight. The paradox

of consciousness erupted in the early 1960s with staggering intensity. The opposition of many young members of the National Religious Party to the leadership's oligarchic structure began to evolve at this time, within the Young Guard (*Mishmeret Tse'ira*) established by Zevulun Hammer and Danny Vermus with the encouragement of Moshe Krone, one of the party's leaders. The youngsters' movement gained ascendance, much to the leadership's grief, since the youngsters were obviously striving to establish an opposition faction within the National Religious Party.<sup>13</sup>

One important trait of the youngsters ferment was their rebellion against the minor and one-dimensional character of the party's goals. They held that religious Zionism should be actively involved in all realms of life and, indeed, expressed resolute views on questions that were not specifically religious, such as opposition to Ben Gurion in the Lavon affair.

The demand for full involvement in Israel's public life is an expression of the compensation mechanism for the absence of myths. Rather than being its product, religious Zionism now vigorously wanted to make history. The movement rebelled against the passivity and the marginality that had been imposed on it, and sought a role at the center of the leadership. The youngsters' revolution focused attention on areas that had largely been blocked to religious Zionist youths, including careers in the military, the media, and the arts. But the main compensation mechanism was settlement.

The Gush Emunim story starts here. The current research consensus is that the reversal in the course of religious Zionism began with the Six-Day War in 1967. Some scholars delay this starting point to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, from the precedent of returning territories in exchange for peace.<sup>14</sup> My view is that the turn began with the youngsters' revolution, in the early 1960s. Henceforth, the movement's youngsters sought paths to the forefront of their camp and tried to determine history, shaping the events that determine the country's fate.

### THE STRUGGLE OF GUSH EMUNIM

To what extent was religious Zionism dominant in the rise of Gush



Emunim? Three centers of unrest can be pointed out as ultimately responsible for the creation of the Gush:

1. A large group from the religious Zionist bourgeoisie, such as the members of the “youngsters’ *minyán*” in Ramat Gan’s Hillel neighborhood, who discovered the charm of activism. These groups internalized the frustration of religious Zionism, which had been forcefully isolated from the centers of power during the *Yishuv* period and in the first two decades of Israel’s existence. Henceforth, *they* became the pioneers, and now appropriated the pioneering myths for themselves. Their methods, including their sly deviousness in their engagements with the army and their use of military language (see below) supposedly remind us of the Haganah, the Palmah, and the underground organizations. Conquering the land by creating facts against an establishment afraid of consequences, self-sacrifice for the sake of ideas, and creating a new type of proud religious figure, all became important motivations.
2. An elitist, underground group of idealist youngsters who studied at the Kefar ha-Ro’eh yeshiva in the 1950s and then arrived at the Mercaz ha-Rav yeshiva. This was the Bnei Akiva Gachelet group (a Hebrew acronym for Torah Studying Pioneers) that had originally sought to create a kibbutz of high level yeshiva graduates but ultimately came apart. Activist members of this group moved to Mercaz ha-Rav, proclaimed R. Zvi Yehuda Kook their leader, and saw him as no less than a sort of prophet and seer. The motivations of this group were distinctively messianic and theological. The process of settling the land was for them the realization of the promised redemption.
3. A secular group (which included Yitzhak Shamir, later Israel’s Prime Minister) that advocated the integrity of the Land of Israel and were willing to cooperate with the religious Zionist camp in order to implement this idea. Although generally not dominant in the leadership of the Gush, this group exerted significant influence on its development and on its tactical moves.

Some scholars, first and foremost Gideon Aran, have argued that the elitist group of Gahalet graduates became the power driving the Gush.<sup>15</sup> Others, however, hold that this group harnessed the Gush to its needs, ensuring it theological justification while taking over its activists and its resources.<sup>16</sup> Be it as it may, cooperation yielded successful results for the Greater Israel ideology and religious Zionism moved from the periphery to the center of Israeli consciousness.

Why did the Gush awaken after the Yom Kippur War? Jewish settlement in Gush Etzion, for instance, was renewed immediately after the Six-Day War, but no organized movement was yet ready to emerge. The transition from a consciousness of passivity to one of action is not necessarily sudden. The Yom Kippur War was the incentive to begin the struggle because a precedent of returning territory was adopted toward the end of the war. Furthermore, the shock of the war cracked the long-term hegemony of the Labor movement and of its political course. Zevulun Hammer later noted that settlement in the occupied/liberated territories (henceforth the territories) began to flourish with the initial formulation of peace accords prompted by Henry Kissinger. The attempt was to claim that true peace depends on Jewish settlement throughout the land of Israel. The trauma of territorial concessions is, on the one hand, a crisis and a threat to the constitutive myth. On the other, it will emerge as essential to the compensation mechanism. The historical fact is that the Gush began its struggles only toward the end of the Yom Kippur War.

Massive settlement began in 1975: the military post at Ofrah and the struggle to settle Elon Moreh against Yitzhak Rabin's first government, which ended with the widely publicized evacuation of Sebastia and the ensuing compromise (the Kadum camp). In the next two years, settlement activities become more entrenched and spread to further areas.

The endeavor of Gush Emunim analyzed in light of the compensation mechanism can now be summed up as follows:

1. The stories of heroic struggle [*bi-mesirut nefesh*] to settle the Land of Israel established the mythical foundation.

2. Until 1967, this foundation had existed only within secular Zionism and had been missing from religious Zionist ideology.
3. From 1967 onward, the struggle of religious Zionism to settle the territories is driven by a compensation mechanism.

### THE TEST OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Let us now consider the two central groups that shaped Gush Emunim, beginning with the bourgeoisie. Middle class members, such as Eliyakim Rubinstein, Nissan Slomiansky, and others, saw the Gush as a movement of Zionist realization, with themselves in the role of the leading pioneers. Gush Emunim emerged to fulfill a deep, unsatisfied need in the religious bourgeoisie. Its founders' upbringing in affluent urban neighborhoods is not a casual feature. It is precisely because they had been city-dwellers that they sought solutions to this yearning in the rocky hills of Judea and Samaria.

In operating this compensation mechanism, they endorsed the following modes:

1. *Effective use of the media.* Gush members, who were exposed to the power and charm of the media, learned how to use it to promote their aims.
2. *Militarism.* The language of the Gush members resorted to distinctively military terms ("campaign," "exercise," and so forth,) and their conduct vis-à-vis the army that tried to prevent them from setting up settlements relied on methods learned during their army service.
3. *The claim that they were correcting the distortion of the Zionist movement.* Gush members held that the Zionist movement had neglected the settlement ideal because of the leadership's reservations about settling in the territories.

The compensation mechanism developed a new consciousness within religious Zionism, as the movement that would henceforth determine the course of history. Religious Zionists are leading the redemption of the chosen land; news bulletins open with them; with brilliant tactics, they manage to circumvent army blocks. Not only

has the religious Zionist bourgeoisie manage to penetrate a realm that had so far been controlled by “secular” Zionist institutions, but is indeed leading them. The search for enterprises parallel to Degania and Tel-Hai is no longer necessary: the religious Zionist camp is at the forefront of the settlement endeavor: “A scarlet thread stretches from Tel-Hai to Elon Moreh.”<sup>17</sup> Given the highly powerful theological common denominator at work within religious Zionism, the religious Zionist bourgeoisie had to find a theological cover for this compensation mechanism. When the disciples of R. Zvi Yehuda Kook at Mercaz ha-Rav joined the initiatives of the Gush, they provided the perfect theological wrapping.

### **RAV ZVI YEHUDA AND THE GAHELET GROUP**

Unlike its bourgeois members, the followers of R. Zvi Yehuda viewed Gush Emunim as a movement of religious renaissance and related to its activities as the realization of a messianic process. This group, as noted, had congregated at the Kfar ha-Ro'eh yeshiva, headed by R. Moshe Zvi Neriah. The coordinator of the Gahalet group, appointed by the national executive of Bnei Akiva, was R. Hayyim Druckman. Among the members of this group that later shifted to Mercaz ha-Rav and made R. Zvi Yehuda their spiritual leader were R. Zefaniah Drori, R. Baruch Zalman Melamed, and R. Yaakov Filber, who are still considered influential figures among religious Zionist youth. Other students of Mercaz ha-Rav joined them, led by R. Israel Tau.

R. Zvi Yehuda laid the foundations for an acute messianic interpretation of contemporary events. Both R. Avraham Isaac Hacohen Kook and R. Zvi Yehuda Kook held that our era is a corridor to miraculous-apocalyptic redemption. According to messianic sources, the wars typical of messianic days will be followed by wondrous eras in which the people of Israel will shift to another, imaginary world, eternal and infinitely good. R. Avraham Isaac Hacohen Kook had held that the messianic process unfolds in esoteric ways, and requires cautious interpretation, whereas R. Zvi Yehuda held that the process had already been revealed. A further distinction between father and son might be that many of R. Avraham Isaac Hacohen Kook's writings support a perception of the messianic process as deterministic,

whereas R. Zvi Yehuda held that, even as redemption occurs, there is room for a struggle to hasten its end. These distinctions are important because human initiative and self-sacrifice play a key role in R. Zvi Yehuda's messianic doctrine. During the evacuation of Yamit, R. Zvi Yehuda's approach had not yet been fully acknowledged. By 2006, this was already the prevalent ideology among the leaders of the youth, who had been young rabbis at the time of Yamit.

R. Zvi Yehuda presented this period as part of an orderly messianic progression toward full, final redemption. The expansion of Israel's borders in the wake of the Six-Day War is an essential stage in the process of realizing redemption. The struggle for the integrity of the Land of Israel vis-à-vis the peace accords became a struggle for redemption, which revealed a somewhat paradoxical attitude. On the one hand, R. Zvi Yehuda saw in the State of Israel and in its government a display of divine will. State power (*mamlakhtiyut*) is a pivotal concept in his sermons and his brief writings. On the other hand, he fought relentlessly and used scathing language against peace governments.<sup>18</sup>

His disciples-admirers adopted the perception of a messianic progression as the interpretation of the evolving events, and proceeded to apply it. The Lebanon war that began in 1982 was for them a further stage in the redemption process, when the Jewish people "make order" in the world. R. Avraham Kook's attitude to the First World War as a refining messianic element was revived, this time with the people of Israel in the fighting role. This determined outlook concerning a messianic order, however, would eventually reach a crisis, as the struggle for the integrity of the Land began to wane and as their image changed in the perception of the Israeli public, as shown below.

We can now sum up the argument that explains the Land of Israel as a major element within this group's consciousness:

1. The Land of Israel is a substantial reflection of God (*sefrat Malkhut*).
2. God decided to begin the redemption process through the Zionist movement.

3. Redemption is irreversible.
4. Human beings cannot change divine decisions, including decisions concerning the Land of Israel.

The theological doctrine of R. Zvi Yehuda and his circle is another instance of the encounter between the compensation mechanism of religious Zionism and the Land of Israel. More precisely, the compensation mechanism was at the background of religious Zionist consciousness, together with the messianic religious myth.<sup>19</sup> In my books on religious Zionism, I developed a psychoanalytical-cultural theory arguing, that, on the surface, religious Zionism presented itself as a standard ideology. Its foundation, however, is Maimonidean messianism, and its deeper (*id*) structure is apocalyptic messianism.<sup>20</sup> Religious and national myths coalesce in the struggle of religious Zionism for the settlements.

#### **CONTINUING THE STRUGGLE FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL**

Following the Lebanon war that began in June 1982, and particularly the massacre in Sabra and Shatila, Zevulun Hammer, who represented the National Religious Party (NRP) as Minister of Education and Culture, declared that the peace alternative must be considered and the sanctity of human life is no less important than the sanctity of the land. For many in the religious Zionist camp, the behavior of the NRP under the leadership of Yosef Burg represented “capitulation” in the struggle for the integrity of the Land. In May 1983, R. Druckman left the NRP and founded a new parliamentary faction. Several months later, R. Moshe Zvi Neriah and Yosef Shapira joined R. Druckman in a call for support for this new faction, whose main ideology was the uncompromising struggle against withdrawal from the territories. Tsefaniah Drori, Yaakov Filber, and Yitzhak Levi did join this group, which was highly popular among those associated with the military yeshivot and their surroundings, but was doomed to disappear after gaining only one seat in the 1984 Knesset elections. The seeds of the shift to the right had already been sown, however: the NRP severed all ties with the Labor Party, dissociating from the

“historical pact” linking them until then. Seeking to bring back the elitist group that had seceded, the NRP adopted the right-wing line and advertised itself as: “The NRP to your right.”

The less support this struggle received from the public, the more extreme it became. Following the Six-Day War, a halakhic and ideological debate erupted on the question of whether military personnel should obey orders to evacuate settled areas. After the Yom Kippur war, R. Zvi Yehuda ruled that such orders must be refused, and his ban remained in place for many years, even after the Yamit precedent. In the early 1990s, as moves toward peace gained support in the Rabin government, the struggle intensified to the point of delegitimizing the government and all state institutions. R. Avraham Shapira (head of Mercaz ha-Rav and chief Ashkenazi rabbi), R. Shaul Israeli, and R. Moshe Zvi Neriah ruled that “as concerning all Torah proscriptions, a Jew is forbidden to take part in any act that assists the evacuation.”

All streams of religious Zionism appeared to have joined the struggle for the integrity of the Land of Israel. Against this image, an initiative supported by moderate religious Zionists, some of them academics, culminated in the foundation of the Meimad party. This party emphasized the value of peace, even at the cost of painful territorial compromises. Among its supporters was a small offshoot of religious Zionism (Oz ve-Shalom, Netivot Shalom) that already in the 1970s had opposed the settlements, which counted Prof. Aviezer Ravitzky from the Hebrew University among its leaders. Meimad chose as its leader R. Yehuda Amital, head of the Har Etzion yeshiva, who had supported Gush Emunim in the past and then changed his mind. In the 1988 Knesset elections, the party failed to pass the electoral threshold, and has not stood for election again as an independent body. The emergence of Meimad lent even greater support to the decision of religious Zionism to continue the struggle for the integrity of the Land.

On November 4, 1995, Prime Minister Rabin was murdered by an assassin that the Israeli public identified as a religious Zionist, since he had been partly educated in religious Zionist institutions. Religious Zionists found themselves on the defensive. Many rejected

the link between the murderer and the movement, but others called for self-examination. Protest activities ebbed significantly, but re-awakened when the government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak evinced readiness for large territorial compromises. This move was one of the reasons for Barak's dramatic loss to Ariel Sharon in the elections for prime minister. The next crisis was Sharon's decision to evacuate the Gaza settlements. These events created growing tension in religious- Zionist consciousness and need separate sociological and theological analysis. The threat to the compensation mechanism and the Land of Israel met again, but this outburst was short-lived.

### THE ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

The account so far has briefly outlined the parameters of the consciousness struggle within the religious Zionist public during the evacuation of the settlements, as it developed over a century. This outline enables us to understand the characteristics of the opposition to the disengagement and the evacuation as follows:

1. *The bourgeoisie.* With the evacuation of the settlements, the compensation mechanism of religious Zionism collapsed. Saving the settlements was perceived between the lines as a struggle for the image of the movement, both inwardly and outwardly. The symbolic value of settlement within religious Zionism explains why opposition to the disengagement did not originate in marginal groups but at the movement's very core – the urban members of the bourgeoisie. Religious Zionist youth struggled for the settlements in an attempt to preserve the movement's momentum in the contest for leadership and play a decisive role in the Zionist endeavor (as they perceived it).

The evacuation of Amona exposed this principle clearly: the more radical elements abandoned Amona even before the evacuation because they suspected a conspiracy within the Yesha Council (*Mo'etzet Yesha*). Leading the struggle were youth movement members (from Bnei Akiva, 'Ezra, and Ariel), most of them city dwellers. For many youngsters, this was a



social event no less than a determined ideological struggle, an issue that, as noted, awaits serious sociological inquiry. Moreover, the struggle for the settlements was for them no less than a struggle for the constitutive myth. But many similarities are already evident concerning the essential role of the bourgeoisie in the foundation of Gush Emunim and in the evacuation of the settlements. Preserving the compensation mechanism is an important motivation in this context.<sup>21</sup>

2. *The rabbis.* The certainty that the settlements would not be evacuated inspired by many rabbis – who are the leaders, teachers, and halakhic authorities for this youth – and by part of the religious Zionist leadership in general, was extraordinary. Post factum, this may even have involved an element of irresponsibility, as the rootlessness of many evacuees until the present day will attest. But their deep belief in the substantialist perception, together with the messianic interpretation of history that characterizes religious Zionism, tilted the scales. Since the Land of Israel is the embodiment of the divinity, it is absolutely subject to Divine Providence and a human government cannot make decisions in its regard. The disengagement, therefore, could not take place.

This amalgam between consciousness and theological elements created the religious Zionist reaction to the evacuation. A typical reaction from the spiritual leadership of religious Zionism to the disengagement may be found in a special edition issued on the occasion of the disengagement by rabbis from “Tzohar,” a mostly moderate group of rabbis to whom the image of the movement gives cause for concern (*Tzohar*, 23 [Tishrei 5766, September 2005]). Most of the articles in this publication (such as those by Rabbis Yakov Ariel, Rafi Feuerstein, and Uri Sharki) rely on messianic terminology or on exegeses based on the language and the style of R. Avraham Isaac Hacohen Kook. Obviously, this reaction is even more common among rabbis in the settlements, such as Dov Lior and Eliyakim Levanon.

Let me emphasize again: without an understanding of the broader background, including the various layers and the mechanisms that make up religious Zionist consciousness, any research on this question will, at best, prove partial and lacking. These brief remarks concerning the background of this consciousness are meant to stimulate and encourage serious inter-disciplinary research on this question.

### NOTES

1. My deep thanks to Prof. David Shatz. I learned a great deal from the dialogue between us concerning the matters discussed in this paper.
2. Such as the settlement project accompanying secular Zionism.
3. See, for instance, Gregor Sebba, "Symbol and Myth in Modern Rationalistic Societies." in *Truth, Myth and Symbol*, ed. Thomas J.J. Altizer et al. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.1962): 141–168; Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
4. On Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi see Nehemiah Aminoah, *A Religious Workers' Movement* [Hebrew], 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Torah va-Avodah, 1931); Moshe Ostrovsky, *The History of the Mizrahi in the Land of Israel* [Hebrew], (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1944); Aryei Fishman, *Hapoel Hamizrachi (1921–1935): Documents* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1979); Yitzhak Alfasi, ed. *Torah va-Avodah in Vision and in Action: The History of Hapoel Hamizrachi and the Story of its Founders' Endeavor 1922–1932* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Histadrut Hapoel Hamizrachi, 1985); Idem, ed., *Torah va-Avodah in Vision and in Action: The History of Hapoel Hamizrachi and its Endeavors on its 70th Anniversary* [Hebrew], (Israel: n.p., 1992); Yosef Salmon, "Combining Socialism with Religion: Notes to the History of the Hapoel Hamizrachi Federation" [Hebrew], in *Religion and Zionism: First Encounters* (Jerusalem: wzo, 1990): 340–352.
5. See Dov Schwartz, "The Revolutionary Consciousness of the Religious Zionist Movement since 1902," *The Annual of Rabbinic Judaism*, 3 (2000): 175–184.
6. See Hayyim Yair Peles, "The Struggle of Hapoel Hamizrachi for the Right to Settlement" [Hebrew], in *The Book of Religious Zionism*, eds. Yitzhak Raphael and Shlomo Zalman Shragai (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1977): 58–149; idem, "The Struggles of Hapoel Hamizrachi for Settlement in the Land of Israel Between the Two World Wars" [Hebrew], *Shragai*, 4 (1993): 73–81.
7. Dov Schwartz, *Faith at the Crossroads: A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism*, tr. Batya Stein (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 156–192.
8. On the battle at Gush Etzion, for instance, see Dov Knohl, ed., *Gush Etzion in its Struggle*, [Hebrew], (Jerusalem: wzo, 1957); Yohanan Ben-Yaakov, ed., *Gush Etzion: Fifty Years of Struggle and Action* (Alon Shevut: Yad Shapira, 1983).

9. The main reasons for distancing religious Zionists from the settlement project were not necessarily ideological. Areas available for settlement were rather limited, and all factions wanted to settle their members and supporters on the land that had been acquired. Allocations tended to reflect the political power structure within the Yishuv.
10. See Dov Schwartz, *The Land of Israel in Religious Zionist Thought* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997). See also idem, "Kol Dodi Dofek: A Religious Zionist Alternative," *Tradition*, 39:3 (2006): 59–72.
11. See Shmuel Dothan, *The Partition Controversy during the Mandate* [Hebrew], (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, 1990); Yitzhak Galnoor, *The Partition of Palestine: Decision Crossroads in the Zionist Movement* (Albany: SUNY, 1995). Dotan's study includes a detailed analysis of religious Zionist positions concerning partition.
12. See Dov Schwartz, *Challenge and Crisis in R. Kook's Circle* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2001). Most religious Zionists did make peace with the fact of partition when Israel was established. See, for instance, Eliezer Don-Yehiya. "Leadership and Policy in Religious Zionism." [Hebrew], in *Religious Zionism: The Era of Change*, eds. Asher Cohen and Israel Harel (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2004): 140.
13. See Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Stability and Changes in a Sectorial Party: The National Religious Party and the Youngsters' Revolt" [Hebrew], *State, Government, and International Relations*, 14 (1980): 25–52; Yehuda Azrieli, *The "Knitted Skullcaps" Generation: The Political Revolution of the NRP Youngsters* [Hebrew], (Jerusalem: Avivim, 1990); Jonathan Garb. "The NRP Youngsters and the Ideological Roots of Gush Emunim" [Hebrew], in *Religious Zionism: The Era of Change*, eds. Asher Cohen and Israel Harel (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2004): 171–200.
14. See Zvi Ra'anan, *Gush Emunim* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1980); Danny Rubinstein, *Gush Emunim* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1982); Gideon Aran, *Eretz Israel: Between Politics and Religion*, Position Paper No. 18 (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1985); Gideon Aran, "From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion: The Roots of Gush Emunim," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 2 (1986): 116–143; Gideon Aran, *From Religious Zionism to a Zionist Religion: The Origins and Culture of Gush Emunim, A Messianic Movement in Modern Israel* [Hebrew], (Ph. D. dissertation: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987); Eliezer Don Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism, Religious Zionism and Israeli Politics: The Impact and Origins of Gush Emunim," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 23 (1987): 215–234; Gideon Aran, "Redemption as a Catastrophe: The Gospel of Gush Emunim," in *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, eds. Emmanuel Sivan and Menahem Friedman (Albany: SUNY, 1990): 157–175; Idem, "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)," in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 265–344; Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
15. See previous note.
16. See Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz, "From Pioneering to Torah Study: Another

Perspective” [Hebrew], in *100 Years of Religious Zionism*, vol. 3, *Philosophical Aspects* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003): 73–75. This is a rejoinder to Gideon Aran’s article, “From Pioneering to Torah Study: Background to the Growth of Religious Zionism,” *ibid.*, 31–71.

17. *Haaretz*, 2 August 1974, quoting “The Pioneers of Elon Moreh.”
18. Schwartz, *The Land of Israel in Religious Zionist Thought*, ch. 6; Schwartz, *Challenge and Crisis in R. Kook’s Circle*, 38–71.
19. According to the above division between religious and national myths, messianism belongs in the former category.
20. See, for instance, Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism between Logic and Messianism* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1999), 71–82.
21. The large opposition of the religious Zionist bourgeoisie to the evacuation of the settlement was not fully known to the security forces, who held that resistance would be limited to radical marginal groups. At times, this situation evoked harsh reactions.



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# Part 3

## Which Way for Religious Zionism



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# 5

## The Demise of Self- Negating Religious Zionism

*Moshe Koppel*

Walk into many *yeshivot hesder* today and you will find young men from religious Zionist homes with *peyot* (sidelocks) and dangling *tzitzit* (fringes) with *tekhelet* (azure dye), often combined with unruly hair and tee-shirts. Talk to them about their political experiences and you will likely hear tales of being beaten by police and soldiers in Amona. Ask them about their short-term plans and they'll tell you about the elite army units they hope to join. Join them at a wedding and you'll see them dancing with a sort of uninhibited abandon that might make you slightly uncomfortable. Engage them in Jewish philosophy and you'll be as likely to hear an insight from the classics of Hasidut as from the classics of religious Zionist thought. Hang with them on a Friday afternoon and they'll take you for a



pre-Shabbat dip in a natural spring they uncovered in the hills of Judea and Samaria.

What are we to make of these kids? Some observers fear they are becoming haredi-ized. Some think they have become over-politicized. Others think they value experiential thrills over dedicated learning. All these analyses miss the point completely. In fact, these young men – and their female counterparts<sup>1</sup> – represent the end of the self-negating phase of religious Zionism.

The rest of this essay consists of my own admittedly subjective narrative of events leading up to this phenomenon and some thoughts on its significance.

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When the prospect of the return to Zion began to gain momentum in Europe in the nineteenth century, it aroused considerable resistance. This resistance to the promise of Zionism was often attributed to a conservative reading of the “three oaths” (Ketubot 111a), but in fact it was rooted in substantive concerns. After all, Jewish tradition survived and flourished under difficult circumstances by being resistant to change. It was well adapted to the circumstances of *Galut* (Exile) and threatened by an unfamiliar set of circumstances.

First, in galuti (Diasporic) Judaism, the life of the spirit was paramount. Diaspora life offered Jews the opportunity to develop a self-definition divorced from territory and political sovereignty. Jews redefined power in terms of cultural autonomy, the power to live their lives according to their own traditions and to pass on their cultural and intellectual legacy to their children. The power to move armies was not among their aspirations. Working the land or soldiering were regarded as unfortunate burdens and not acts of personal redemption. The return to Zion required respect for a definition of power in which economic and military self-reliance would be paramount.

Second, the prevailing galuti version of Judaism was wary of any political authority, if not downright subversive. This was both a matter of principle – *avadai heim ve-lo avadim le-avadim* (“they are *My slaves and not slaves of slaves*”) – and a matter of bitter political

experience. The vision of return to self-rule in *Eretz Israel* was thus typically regarded not as the basis for a political program but rather as a distant beacon, its unrealized potential serving as an endless source of sustaining hope.

Third, Halakhah had adapted itself to a lack of political, economic, and judicial autonomy. It would function best at the level of individuals or communities not at the level of the state – and certainly not at the level of a modern state conceived in secular terms. Hence, the restoration of Jewish self-rule, especially in *Eretz Israel*, would prematurely create challenges for which religious Jews might be unprepared.

For these and other reasons, many *rabanim* (rabbis) in Europe rejected Zionism as being inherently incompatible with tradition. In some sense, this blanket rejection offered an elegant means of avoiding difficult challenges. Such rejection was ultimately self-validating. For, once the Zionist project was left to their secular opponents, religious anti-Zionists could plausibly relate to a secular Zionist government with the same subversive contempt as they would to any other government.

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But for the typical tailor or shoemaker in Eastern Europe, the problems with Zionism were related primarily to social or economic uncertainty rather than to ideology. On the level of principle, he did not need to be persuaded that it was better to be part of a self-ruling Jewish majority in *Eretz Israel* than to be part of a persecuted minority in Poland. Such a Jew could imagine in his mind's eye what the alternative to his own existence might look like: Jews would be able to identify fully with their surroundings instead of feeling alienated and threatened. As a community, they would be economically self-sufficient rather than feeding off the margins of others' economy. The public square, the flow of time, the modes of dress and self-presentation would reflect their own values. Government institutions would protect Jewish freedom instead of threatening it. The legal system would reflect Jewish values. Jews would identify with their government. The fact that all this would take place in

Eretz Israel would add a sense of permanence, of return to early glories, and of opportunity to live a fuller life of Torah. In short, a Jew could dream of a life in which Jews could live their own culture organically, confidently and unselfconsciously.

For a tailor or a shoemaker, or anybody with healthy instincts and a bit of common sense, the ideological objections could easily be countered. The disdain for concrete forms of power and political establishments were a response to centuries of powerlessness. As circumstances changed, Jews would adjust accordingly. If Halakhah had not evolved public law, it would begin to do so as the need arose. In short, the potential rewards of self-rule were great enough to justify the challenges. Jews would muddle through.

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Unfortunately, it was not tailors and shoemakers who ultimately determined the ways in which Zionism and religion would be reconciled. Rather it was theologians and polemicists. And, as is often the case, the polemical approach to proving compatibility of Judaism and Zionism ended up going well beyond what was actually called for. Rather than simply discounting over-heated ideology, polemicists countered ideology with more ideology. Not only were Zionism and Judaism compatible, it was argued, they were one and the same.<sup>2</sup>

The return to Eretz Israel shifted from a distant goal to a permitted act to a desirable act to an imperative and ultimately to an immediate overarching imperative more important than any other *mitzvah*. In fact, by this account, the faraway redemptive process of which Jews had dreamt was already under way and that process was an irreversible one.

The three key points of contention between religion and Zionism were turned on their heads.

First, the new definition of national power was embraced. The necessary tools of state-building – agriculture, military, industry – were not simply necessary burdens but sacred endeavors worthy of the kind of veneration earlier reserved for matters of the spirit. Army uniforms were the new priestly garments.

Second, political subversiveness was replaced by its polar opposite, *mamlakhtiut*: the doctrine that whatever apparent flaws the products of this redemptive process – the state and its institutions – might suffer from, they and their proximate agents should be regarded as endowed with a divine imprimatur.

Third, the state was designated as the appropriate authority for deciding and regulating religious matters. The state would appoint *rabanim*, enforce religious legislation, and fund religious services. Voluntary religious community organizations would be upgraded to state institutions. Secular officials, by virtue of being agents of the state and hence the bearers of profound religious and nationalist longings of which they might be unaware, could be trusted to manage religious affairs.

Thus was created an entirely new creature. Where once there had been religious Zionists – people committed to religion and to Zionism – there was now a highly ideologized and institutionalized, hyphenated concept known as religious Zionism.<sup>3</sup> This religious Zionist ideology is the polar opposite of the instinctive reconciliation of religion and Zionism of the tailors and shoemakers. In fact, rather than helping Jews to live their own culture organically, confidently, and unselfconsciously, religious Zionist ideology has ensured that every political act is burdened by religious ideology and every religious act is burdened by political ideology.

This religious Zionist ideology also made life simple in a way. By validating the state-centered aims of Zionism, religious Zionism also validated the secular oligarchy that, at the time, best embodied and executed those aims. Although the relationship between Zionism itself and any particular Zionist leadership is only a contingent one, the conflation of the state with the oligarchy that runs it became one of the hallmarks of religious Zionist thought.

This conflation has determined the character of religious Zionism in two crucial ways.

First, religious Zionism is unwittingly self-negating. For the very concrete qualities that it sanctifies are ones that its own adherents – committed still to traditional values – are least in possession of. Ideological religious Zionists have internalized the idea that the

iconic macho *sabra* is the true Israeli. Their self-image is that of foster children. They do not take themselves seriously as policy-makers.

Second, ideological religious Zionism functions in a virtual reality. The state to which it ascribes divine imprimatur, which is indeed *yesod kisei hashem ba'olam* (the foundation of God's seat in the world), which is the embodiment of the national spirit, looks nothing like the actual state of Israel. The actual state is merely a poor reflection of the virtual state that is the focus of ideological religious Zionism's veneration.

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Because religious Zionism takes neither itself nor the actual state of Israel seriously (although it takes the virtual state exceedingly seriously), religious Zionist politics function almost entirely on the symbolic plane. Several examples might help to clarify this point.

Mamlakhtiut – and its economic twin, socialism – both involve centralizing in the hands of the state powers and resources that would otherwise be left to the free market or to voluntary associations. In the name of these principles, Zionism effectively destroyed the elements of civil society by co-opting them to the state. Schools were nationalized, religious organizations regulated by a duly formed ministry, small guilds subsumed by the Histadrut, and charity organizations marginalized by the welfare state. The hopelessness of such large-scale attempts at social engineering is well attested and the Israeli case has proved to be no exception. Anyone not in the grip of seriously debilitating ideology must have noticed by now that the atrophy of those informal associations that had in the past been the source of Jewish communal vitality has led slowly but inexorably to the depletion of those qualities required for self-government: social trust, public responsibility, and respect for legitimate authority. Unfortunately, the last vestiges of ideological support for Big Government are found among the religious Zionist establishment. If you ignore the fact that the actual government of Israel is largely dysfunctional and focus your attention only on a wholly virtuous virtual government, you can persuade yourself that the bigger the government the better.

Religious Zionists have been deeply involved in the debates surrounding the Law of Return and the laws concerning marriage and divorce. Under the current Law of Return, several dozen American Reform converts and several hundred thousand Russian non-Jews have immigrated to Israel. A number of proposals to amend the law are now being considered (in the context of drafting a constitution for Israel) according to which the government of Israel would not take a stand on the religious question of who is a Jew but only on the political question of to whom it wishes to grant rights of residency and citizenship. The result would be a considerable reduction in the number of non-Jews eligible under the Law of Return; Reform converts would continue to remain eligible under the Law of Return but the state would be taking no stand on the question of their Jewishness. The compelling logic of the proposed amendment, along with its likely consequences, is such that it has broad support from all sides. The opposition comes from religious Zionist ideologues who are less interested in the consequences (which they agree are desirable) than in the principle: they do not wish to separate between the political question of eligibility for citizenship and the religious question of “who is a Jew” because they believe that in principle there is no distinction between politics and religion. The same situation exists with regard to proposals to amend the marriage laws in a manner that would reduce the number of *mamzerim* (children of adulterous or specific incestuous relationships, who are excluded from the Jewish community) in Israel while distinguishing between religious marriage and government-recognized marriage. Here too the opposition comes from religious Zionist ideologues for whom the symbolic desideratum of government involvement in religion is more real than that of any of its actual consequences.

One final example. In the debate over disengagement before and during the summer of 2005, there was only one strategy at the disposal of opponents that had a realistic chance of scuttling the plan. This strategy involved uniting secular and religious opponents of the plan behind a security-based argument and defeating the disengagement plan in the legislature. Instead, religious Zionists led a largely symbolic and hopeless ideology-based campaign that alienated

potential secular allies. But in the legislature, where something might actually have been accomplished, the best opportunity to turn the tide against disengagement was missed due to the indecisiveness of the National Religious Party.<sup>4</sup>

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The conflation of Zionism with a particular oligarchy was a convenient fiction so long as that oligarchy did in fact embody the Zionist values to which religious Zionism was committed. But this was only the case for a short time, if at all.

The secular Zionist elites' commitment to Jewish nationalism was rooted in shared memories and ethnicity. As these bonds have inevitably weakened, Jewish nationalism, the very basis for secular Zionism, has come to be seen as atavistic. Moreover, the pool of Jewish knowledge available to young secular Israelis is inadequate to facilitate any significant resistance to global trends downloaded almost directly into their brains through the Internet and television. Since religion abhors a vacuum, the empty rhetoric of human rights and post-nationalism has become the new religion of the otherwise unrooted. Unlike more established religions, this new religion has not been around long enough to have been forged by reality into something viable.

Many of those who have inherited the status of secular Zionist elites have turned against the very definition of Jewish power that religious Zionists adopted from them. The deepening conflict between religious Zionism's commitment to Zionism as represented by these elites and its commitment to Zionism as an ideology now rejected by these same elites is the source of considerable cognitive dissonance.

The major recent trends in religious Zionism are reactions to this dissonance. Some have been overwhelmed by this dissonance and have suffered a crisis of faith. Some have rejected the actual state as now being an impediment to the redemptive process (which they still believe is under way). And some have simply gone native in the firm belief that one can only remain a Zionist by following the Zionist elites wherever they may lead.

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If viewing the state through the lens of ideology has led to this impasse, perhaps we might consider an alternative. Let's now consider what such an alternative might look like.

As self-proclaimed spokesman for the tailors and shoemakers of healthy instincts, I am probably ill advised to attempt to articulate a coherent anti-ideology ideology. Nevertheless, I'd like to at least expose one lazy habit of thought that is the source of much surplus ideology: the tendency (all too common in our circle, especially among the chattering classes) to think in terms of some immutable ontology of ideology communities (e.g., Religious Zionists, haredim, and associated sub-sub groups of each), and to trumpet the, often imaginary, differences between the node in the ontology where one locates oneself and the nearest neighbors of that node.

If we are to avoid this habit of thought ourselves, let's begin by not exaggerating the proper operative significance of theological disputes regarding the foundation of the state. The determination that the state is *yesod kisei hashem ba-olam* or a manifestation of the *sitra ahra* ("the Other Side"), or something in between, should certainly influence the degree of gratitude its existence might evoke in us. Choosing sides on this question might be of supreme religious importance. But such determinations are entirely retrospective in nature. If our experiences in Israel teach us anything, it is that theological determinations regarding the state are of no predictive value. The assumption that the state is headed inexorably down a particular path is a poor foundation for making policy, especially when your adversaries refuse to play along. If, for example, you believe that disengagement will not happen because it is theologically impossible, you will likely damage the cause of those who believe that disengagement should not happen because it will bring undesirable results.

Thus, whatever importance we wish to assign to theological considerations, such considerations ought to be bracketed for purposes of making policy. (If such bracketing diminishes the gap between Religious Zionists and haredim, let us consider that a blessing, not a threat to our identities.) Removing theological considerations



from the policy-making equation does not mean that religious Zionists are doomed to relating to Israel in the same way Jews once related to Poland. It means that Jews should relate to Israel the way Poles relate to Poland. I am unfamiliar with the various theological positions of Poles on the metaphysical significance of Poland,<sup>5</sup> but I assume that regardless of such, most Poles see it as their duty to defend their state and contribute to its political and economic welfare. The same principle could work in Israel as well.

By relating to Israel the ways Poles relate to Poland, religious Zionists would actually considerably increase the chances of advancing a religious and Zionist agenda. The first necessary step if we wish to influence policy-making in Israel is to reassess our actual situation. That is, we need to distinguish between the virtual state that we think we wish to see and the actual state such as it is.

In the actual state, religious Zionists are a small but growing minority with many potential allies in the political arena, provided that we judiciously pick our battles and the methods we use to fight them. We can, for example, pursue a more Jewish public square provided that we define our objectives in cultural terms that are sufficiently broad to carry meaning for those who are outside our community but share with us the rejection of the high-minded idea that, all else being equal, it is the “enlightened” secular vision of the public square that must always prevail. Stable compromises superior to the deteriorating status quo regarding the public nature of Shabbat, government recognition of marriage, and other points of conflict can be reached provided that religious Zionists regard compromise as an option.

In the actual state, government regulation and sponsorship of religious institutions hamper the independence of these institutions. Jewish communities in Morocco and Poland, Yemen and Lithuania maintained *mikvaot* (ritual baths) and *batei kneset* (synagogues) under far worse financial circumstances than ours, but only in Israel does a *mikveh* remain closed for a week because the appropriate government agency has failed to pass on the funding. Not every rav in those places earned the respect of his *balebatim* (congregants), but only in Israel could such a rav, as a tenured government bureau-

crat, maintain his position for life. Surely, mikvaot and rabanim are entitled to public funding no less than the opera, but we ought to carefully consider what we really want.

In the actual state, there is little sympathy for religiously motivated settlement and security policies but there is strong support for essentially the same policies when couched in (and actually motivated by) considerations of defense. Ironically, religious Zionists choose to promote rational security policies in irrational terms, while our opponents promote irrational security policies in rational terms. The tables should be turned.

In the actual state, the courts and prosecution, the army, the police, and the public press are in the grip of a self-perpetuating elite hostile both to religious aims and to Zionist aims. The one effective way for this grip to be loosened is via the passage of legislation changing the method of appointments to these offices. If religious Zionist legislators really wished to see these elites dislodged – and I have reason to doubt that they do – they would propose such legislation and advance it on liberal grounds.

To sum up, a coherent religious Zionist agenda can better be achieved by bracketing theology and pursuing politics than by bracketing politics and pursuing theology.<sup>6</sup>

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The above program requires a radical change in mindset, a change in the way we perceive ourselves and the way we perceive the state. We have internalized the idea that we are foster children in the actual state, living in it at the sufferance of mercurial guardians. We choose to believe that our guardians are benevolent and loving, we pout and threaten rebellion when it becomes evident that they are not so, and we conjure a fantasy world in which we inherit the manor at the expense of the “real” children. The irony of the situation is that if we could truly overcome the feeling of being foster children, we actually would inherit the manor; many of the “real” children tend to dissoluteness. But we can’t simply choose to feel to the manor born; such a sense develops over generations.

We might be getting there. Some grounds for optimism may

be found among the young people I described at the beginning of this paper. To be sure, I have little interest in the immature political or religious views of these youngsters. But I have a great deal of interest in their instincts.

Consider this. Their teachers have tried to convince them that they, the students, have had their faith sorely tested by recent events and are operating in crisis mode. And indeed it is true that, especially among the youth, anger over disengagement, the shabby treatment of those dispossessed, and state-sponsored violence against nationalist demonstrators is still very great, and understandably so. In some cases, enthusiasm for joining the defense forces, which still might be used for unworthy political purposes, has indeed diminished. But what is most remarkable, under the circumstances, is how little this enthusiasm has diminished. By and large, students in yeshivot hesder and *mekhinot* are blithely unaware of their alleged disillusionment and are fighting to get into combat units.

To the extent that they are indeed disillusioned, it is in the very best, and most literal, sense of the word: they do not share their teachers' illusions. The next generation of religious Zionists do not feel like foster children whose fantasy of being heirs to the manor has just taken a kick in the teeth; they feel like true heirs to the manor dealing with alcoholic parents. Unlike their teachers, whose hollow self-conscious talk of taking over the country is self-evidently false bravado, these youngsters are genuinely confident about their collective future role in Israeli society. Precisely because they do not conflate the Zionist State with the Zionist oligarchy, religious Zionist youth are liberated from the debilitating conflicts from which their parents and teachers suffer. They are free to pursue authenticity.

As a result, these young people do not share some of their teachers' earnestly monochromatic attitudes toward Judaism. They suffer from no feelings of inferiority vis-à-vis secular Zionism and do not see haredi opponents of Zionism as their enemies. To pursue my metaphor, they no longer see haredim as rebellious siblings who are going to get all the foster kids in trouble. (They may justifiably resent their haredi siblings for not pulling their weight, but that is

a lesser form of resentment.) They are not afraid to grow peyot or to adopt other modes of in-your-face Judaism. Their outward appearance emphasizes those accessories that are distinctly Jewish and deemphasizes those that are the products of particular historical experiences. They are interested in learning from books that tow the religious Zionist line as well as those that tie them to their pre-Zionist heritage. They express spirituality in a freewheeling manner; the notion of a religious establishment is for them an oxymoron.

In short, there are some grounds for optimism about the future of religious Zionism. Its self-negating phase is drawing to a close. Instead of living by the ideology of polemicists, the new generation of (unhyphenated) religious Zionists is at last living the dream of their great-grandparents, the tailors and shoemakers. They are Jews in Eretz Israel living their own culture organically, confidently and unselfconsciously.

#### NOTES

1. I speak of boys only because I am more familiar with their situation. My own children of relevant age are boys.
2. As is well known, a vast array of ideological viewpoints on these matters have been articulated over the years. It is not my purpose in this essay to survey these views, to attribute views to particular individuals, or to hand out grades. I have chosen one mainstream view and deliberately over-emphasized it to make a point.
3. I discussed many of these points in an earlier paper, "Mamlachtiut as a Tool of Oppression: On Jewish Jews and Israeli Jews in the Post-Zionist Era," *Democratic Culture*, 3 (2000). Similar points have been made by my colleagues, Michael Abraham and Nadav Shnerb. See M. Abraham, "The Third Way or Religious Zionism without a Hyphen" [Hebrew], *Tzohar*, 22 (5765) and N. Shnerb, "The Wrong Donkey" [Hebrew], *Nekuda*, 293 (5766).
4. On October 26, 2004, the Knesset voted in favor of disengagement. Four Likud ministers considered voting against the bill, which would have entailed their resignation from the government and the government's likely fall. They ultimately decided against doing so in good part because the National Religious Party chose not to leave the government "for two more weeks."
5. Here is a lesson in the dangers of sarcasm. Since penning the first draft of this paper, I have been informed that there is indeed a considerable literature on the metaphysical significance of Poland.
6. It is perhaps worth emphasizing that this is not to say that the development and

promulgation of theological foundations for religious Zionist thought are not important for social, educational, and religious purposes. My claim is only that the nature of politics is such that, invariably, better policy is achieved when based primarily on more concrete considerations.

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# 6

## Which Way for Religious Zionism?<sup>1</sup>

*Kalman Neuman*

When asked to reflect on “Which way for Religious Zionism,” I was reminded of the story about a person lost in the forest who found someone whom he thought would show him the way out. “I am lost myself and can not tell you how to find your way out,” said the man, “but at least I can tell you of all the unsuccessful attempts I have made, and you will be able to attempt new ways.”

### **BACK TO THE BASICS**

Of course, this metaphor is not totally accurate. It would be unfair to say that Religious Zionism has always taken the wrong path. Many of its central ideas have passed the test of time. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that together with justified pride of its numerous achievements, many religious Zionists are confused about the prospects for its future. This is compounded by the fact that the forest we are trying to navigate is constantly changing, and paths that looked promising a generation ago may no longer direct us to our goal.

Recently, the *hitnatkut* (Disengagement) has touched at raw nerves and has revealed that many basic questions have yet to be clarified. The fact that the disengagement raised doubts about the nature and scope of the Religious Zionist commitment to the State of Israel as it is presently constituted, shows that a reassessment is called for.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Religious Zionism is searching for its way. I refer to “Religious Zionism” and to “Religious Zionists” as opposed to mere “religious Zionists.” The latter, Torah Jews who are Zionists, may see no connection between their commitment to Torah and their Zionist convictions. The Religious Zionist rejects such tight compartmentalization and instead of seeing the relationship to the State of Israel and the commitment to Torah as two independent orbits, he charts an elliptical path in which these two foci are constant references.

The reflective Religious Zionist is aware that Zionism as a political movement is a phenomenon that grew out of modern reality and the contemporary predicament of the Jewish people and not just an application of *mitzvot yishuv Eretz Israel* (the mitzvah to settle Eretz Israel). This awareness differentiates between Religious Zionism and what Gidon Aran has called “Zionist Religion,” an approach that sees the State of Israel as legitimate only to the extent that it facilitates the implementation of a specific understanding of Torah.<sup>3</sup> The danger of such total fusion has been all too evident in the wake of the withdrawal from Gaza, which has brought some to question their Zionist commitment to the state as it exists and not to some utopian regime.

The wish to formulate a vision for the State of Israel and to implement a public agenda is essential to the very nature of Religious Zionism. It is a direct conclusion of a resolution to see the State as the center of the Jewish people and to see itself as a full participant in its establishment and development.

True, most non-Zionist haredim vote in Israeli elections, do not call for civil disobedience and, to the best of my knowledge, would not prefer that the state be replaced by the British Mandate or a UN protectorate (not to speak of the “secular, democratic state” envisioned in the PLO charter). The claim that Orthodox non-Zionists

are “against the State of Israel” (ignoring fringe elements who are marginal in their influence) is somewhat devoid of meaning as most haredim prefer keeping a comfortable ideological difference while enjoying many of the benefits of living in a Jewish state. Religious Zionism has chosen to differ. It sees itself as a full participant in the State and not just as a mildly interested bystander. The sense of belonging and participation is grounded in conviction that Israel has a central role in the Jewish world and should not be treated as just one more Jewish community, which happens to be located in the historic and sanctified territory of Eretz Israel. For the Religious Zionist taking an active part in the public life of the State reflects a basic ideological commitment. This commitment requires a realistic assessment and a positive appreciation of the requirements of statehood. The process of nation building through the creation of a national ethos was such a need. The reality that a majority of Israelis, coming from different cultures, were not observant Jews made it inevitable that this ethos would not be identical to those of an ideal “Torah state.” Nevertheless, Religious Zionism took part in much of this nation building and its ideology included identification with the symbols of the state.

These symbols, as inevitable parts of the constitution of the Jewish people as the nation of a modern (some would say 19th century) nation-state, are analogous to *makhshirei mitzvah* (tools which enable the performance of a mitzvah) or perhaps to *tashmishei mitzvah* (sanctified objects). The exaggerations of those who saw every aspect of the State as *tashmishei kedushah* are certainly not representative of the mainstream of Religious Zionism, although civil religions of all kinds have an air of transcendence about them.

The participation of the Religious Zionist community in the liturgical calendar of Israeli civil religion (whether by adopting the symbols and ceremonies of dominant Israeli culture, or by crafting religious versions of them such as unique prayers) is therefore, not incidental, as well as the principled opposition of the haredi community to celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut or to commemorate Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Memorial Day (or even Yom Hashoah!).

Even more so, for the Religious Zionist, for whom Halakhah



is inevitably a central aspect of religious life, the existence and well-being of the state of Israel will be taken into account when assessing halakhic issues. Therefore, for example, the implications of utilizing or not utilizing the *heter mekhira*, which by temporarily selling the land to a non-Jew allows to continue farming it during the *Shemittah* (sabbatical year), on the well being of the State will be factors in halakhic decision-making (as opposed to non-Zionists who will not see this as a legitimate consideration).

An attempt to define the boundaries of Religious Zionism in Israel can not ignore the disturbing gap regarding army service. Occasional apologetics to the contrary, the fact that the haredi community does not posit an *a priori* value to army service (even before discounting the value of Torah study and the dangers of the army environment to religious commitment) suggests the lack of a basic feeling of participation at the most rudimentary level of cooperation.

These sticking points are precisely the points in which nostalgic talk of returning to a pre-Zionist “*yiddishkeit*” that would avoid ideological definition is not an option.<sup>4</sup> One has to decide if he or she is an active participant in the project of the Jewish State or only a kibitzer.

Religious Zionism can justly claim that its basic theses have been validated by history. It is difficult to deny that the establishment of the State of Israel has been enormously beneficial to the continuity of the *Klal Israel* (the Jewish people) and of Torah. One shudders to consider the state of the Jewish people otherwise. Given the perils facing Jewish continuity in the Diaspora, Israel’s existence is pivotal in fostering Jewish identity all over the world and has contributed greatly to the flourishing of Torah life and study, even among those who do not identify with the state as such.

This is not to say that all of the haredi fears about the establishment of the state were unfounded. The rosy picture often presented by the messianic school, that the inevitable process of redemption is unfolding before our eyes, seems hardly tenable given what the unaided eye seems to behold. In order to claim that the return to the land has been the first stage of a process of *teshuva*, as Rav Kook

and many of his disciples would have us think, they find themselves enmeshed in dialectical sophism.<sup>5</sup> The aspirations of some of Israel's founding fathers to create a "new Jew" have, alas, been successful inasmuch as many Israelis are intellectually ignorant and existentially alienated from their own heritage and prefer searching for spirituality and meaning in the Far East. The feeling of solidarity with world Jewry has receded and Israel suffers from many of the ailments of 21st century society all over the world.

Religious Zionism's criticism of a Zionism bereft of a spiritual dimension and of a deep connection to Jewish tradition has been confirmed. The attempts to create a sustainable secular Jewish identity cannot be said to be successful. Numerous attempts of Jewish cultural and spiritual exploration (without accepting halakhic norms) within the non-*dati* community in Israel are fascinating but are as of yet limited to a small elite which may not be able to make a mark on society as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Religious Zionism has thus been right about the need for a State and about the need for it to reflect continuity with Jewish tradition. What policies should reflect these ideas within contemporary Israeli reality?

### **ROADS WE HAVE TAKEN**

As is well known, mainstream Religious Zionism has undergone a change in orientation since 1967.<sup>7</sup> Until then, its political activity had two foci: preserving the needs of the religious community (such as insuring the status of religious education) and, in line with the arrangement known as the "status quo," ensuring certain Jewish/halakhic conformity in the public sphere, such as the monopoly of halakhic marriage and divorce. The strategy of the status quo has often been attacked, both without and within Religious Zionism. The use of political leverage to promote religious coercion often created alienation and animosity towards Torah. The status quo with all its inherent paradoxes (buses on Shabbat tolerated in Haifa, but prohibited elsewhere) engendered the impression that "Jewish values" were nothing but opportunism, while confrontations between religious and secular over religious legislation, it made the attempt to address the hearts of secular Israelis difficult, to say the least.

It is futile to speculate today as to what would have been the outcome of choosing the road not taken, of avoiding all religious legislation and rejecting government support for religious institutions.<sup>8</sup> Given the homogenizing secularist ideology of the early years of the State, religious Jews would have found it difficult to see themselves as full participants in the public square without political clout. The legacy of the Ben-Gurion years, when groups such as the veterans of the Etzel and Lehi, the olim from Arab countries or the haredim were marginalized, underscores the need of Religious Zionism to use political means to establish a public presence.

While the principle of using political leverage to achieve a voice in the public square can be justified, that leverage was not always used with a view to the long term, and often symbolic “achievements” replaced true impact on society. One gets the impression that there was rarely a consideration of gain versus loss, but ad hoc opportunism. A number of examples will suffice to illustrate the limitations and deficiencies of this path.

Regarding Shabbat laws, there was opposition to a national Shabbat Law which would include the status quo in order to avoid being seen as “acquiescing” to transgressions of Halakhah (such as the buses in Haifa). In the meantime, transgressions of Shabbat in malls all over the country have made the holy day into a national day of shopping. Despite this, much of the rabbinic leadership opposes the Meidan-Gavison Covenant which (among other things) would not prohibit all public *hillul Shabbat* (desecration of the Sabbath) but only proscribe commercial activity, because that would be a tacit acceptance of lack of Shabbat observance in other areas.<sup>9</sup>

A striking example of shortsightedness that has had inestimable effects on the Jewish character of the state is the scope of the Law of Return. When the law was revised in 1970,<sup>10</sup> the “achievement” of the National Religious Party (NRP) (at the time, the only religious party in the government) was defining a Jew as one “born to a Jewish mother or converted.”<sup>11</sup> At the same time the law was “balanced” by the inclusion in the law of any child or grandchild of a Jew, as well as a non-Jewish spouse of a Jew, his child or grandchild. These

rights apply even if the Jewish family member (parent, grandparent, or spouse) did not come on aliya him- or herself.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, this clause has allowed entire families to become Israeli citizens even when all of the family members are not halakhically Jewish. As recently documented by Asher Cohen, the absorption of hundreds of thousands of these immigrants into the Jewish society of Israel has created a gap between the definition of Jewishness accepted by the majority of Israelis and that of Jewish law.<sup>12</sup> This reality was unforeseen by the leadership of Religious Zionism and the crisis it will engender in the future is already evident.

Whatever the need for the status quo in the early years of the state, it, by its very nature, has not been able to deal with changes in Israeli society. Prohibition of public transport on Shabbat has a different impact in a society with few privately owned automobiles than in the present situation, which denies mobility only from the young and poor. Similarly, the non-existence of civil marriage has become largely symbolic. This is because Israeli law accepts the status of thousands of Israeli couples that choose to marry outside of Israel, whether or not they are eligible to be married under Halakhah.<sup>13</sup>

By now, it is clear to many Religious Zionists that legislation as such is not the preferred course to strengthen the Jewishness of the State and that the status quo must be revised. A number of attempts have been made in this direction but at this point in time it seems unlikely that politicians, both religious and secular, will be able to reach an agreement which would avoid using conflicts over religion for partisan purposes.

Whatever the merits and demerits of the status quo, it (together with the "historic covenant" with Labor Zionism, the dominant force in the country until 1977) relegated religious Zionism (to use a popular metaphor) to the role of the "kashrut supervisor" in a train whose direction was determined by others. Ultimately, a new generation of religious youth demanded a front seat in the train and claimed a right to influence all aspects of life. This was to happen after 1967. Religious Zionism has taken sides in the debate on the

issue which defines the contours of public discourse in Israel, the question of the future of the territories. Especially since 1977, the Religious Zionist community has become identified with the opposition to any territorial concessions and with support of the settlement project as a means to Yishuv Eretz Israel and to ward off any possibility of compromise. This metamorphosis has proceeded by steps and bounds, culminating (so far) with the National Religious Party running in the 2006 Knesset elections together with the right-wing National Union, underscoring the identity between the agenda of the Religious Zionist mainstream and the cause of Eretz Israel.

I wish to emphasize: adherence to the doctrine of *Eretz Israel Hashleimah*<sup>14</sup> not only became the political stance of the majority of religious Zionists. It became *the* common denominator of Religious Zionism, the “campfire” around which all gather. While regarding many theological and halakhic questions, the *dati-leumi* community could tolerate a variety of positions, (often exhibiting more of a “broad church” than American Orthodoxy) breaking ranks on the “question of Eretz Israel” (as it is often phrased) could bring one beyond the pale. Religious and political leaders holding other opinions were marginalized and often discredited.

Why and how did this metamorphosis within the Religious Zionist community happen? Answering this question requires extensive study and thought. I would like to note a number of factors:

1. The powerful influence of Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook *z"l* through his students who played important roles in the religious educational system. Those holding other viewpoints did not make an effort to clearly formulate an alternative ideology and did not have agents to spread their hashkafa.
2. This agenda, although articulated by spiritual leaders in theological terms, could allow cooperation with right-wing secularists, thus eliminating the isolation of Religious Zionism. Mobilization on behalf of the political agenda enabled Religious Zionists (and especially the settlement movement as their avant-garde) to influence Israeli reality in ways that the strategy of the “historic covenant” could never dream of achieving.

3. Although spearheaded by an ideological elite, the settlements offered a practical goal, which could be translated into “quality of life” for many Religious Zionists, including many who wished to live in homogeneous religious communities and escape the secular influences of the city. As a significant proportion of the *dati-leumi* community (and especially its younger generation) moved over the Green Line, support for them became a communal interest and not just an ideology.
4. The idea took hold that the political struggle over the future of Judea and Samaria is actually the cultural battleground between the forces of light and the forces of evil, between the heirs of Zionist idealism and the hedonistic *anomie* of those who have betrayed the dream. Thus the conflict within Israel is a struggle for the very soul of the State, and perhaps for its very existence.<sup>15</sup>

The commitment to the enterprise of Eretz Israel has become the central issue on the public agenda of Religious Zionism. I am aware that Religious Zionists as individuals and Religious Zionist groups and organizations are involved in innumerable endeavors which serve the common good. However, when push comes to shove, when there is a need to prioritize, then nothing takes precedence over the need to preserve the control of all of Eretz Israel. All projects of religious Zionism are enlisted then for the service of Eretz Israel.

This was especially obvious in the period preceding the *hitnatkut* when all the educational and social institutions of Religious Zionism were called to devote all their energies to the struggle against the government. Those who did not do so were called to order.

The question of the territories has so predominated the religious community that it alone determines the attitude towards any public figure, regardless of the person’s attitude towards Judaism and of his or her moral standards of behavior. Any bedfellow is fair game, as long as such a relationship serves the cause. Only when a politician who was the darling of the settlers changed his political feathers was he accused of being corrupt. Before then, such criticism was seen as part of a leftist conspiracy.<sup>16</sup>

Another example of the primacy of the opposition to any withdrawal is the formation of the second Sharon government after the elections of January, 2003. In order to prevent the entrance of the Labor party into the coalition, which would require concessions on the issues of settlements, the NRP reached an agreement with *Shinui*, which had based its campaign on hatred for haredim in particular and Jewish religion in general. In this agreement the NRP agreed to major changes in the status quo such as the abolition of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the local Religious Councils and for the first time agreed to consider recognizing “civil unions.” Without discussing the pros and cons of these changes, such a volte-face occurred only because of the prioritization I have described.

There may be ways to justify placing this one issue in the focus of the Religious Zionist public agenda. These could run from a mystical understanding that this is “the mitzvah of our generation” (an opinion attributed to Rav Ya’akov Moshe Harlap) to the aforementioned belief that the very future of the State depends on the retention of the territories. In addition, the case could be made that this mitzvah is transitory (*mitzvah overet*), and that failure on this front would be irreversible, while other priorities could be made up in due time.

This last justification has to be tempered by the fact that this “transitory” situation has already lasted for forty years with no end in sight. In the meantime, the Religious Zionist community has put all its political capital into one basket. It has lost all room for political maneuvering and in the process endangered existential interests (such as funding for its educational institutions and appointment of such *dayanim* (judges) who would help solve some of the problems that exist in the rabbinical courts). Journalist Yair Sheleg has gone as far as suggesting that *de facto* there exists a tacit trade-off with the dominant secular establishment (including almost all of the Israeli governments), by which the dati-leumi community is given a great degree of free reign to continue the project of settling the territories in exchange for refraining from an attempt to influence “little Israel.” Whether or not such a quid pro quo is in place, it is obvious that the intensity of opposition to the settlements (even among the

Zionist Left) is miniscule compared with the emotions that would be unleashed if, for example, the shopping malls in the *kibbutzim* were to be closed on Shabbat.

The ideological confusion in the wake of the hitnatkut is a result of this priority. While for decades the love for the state was able to cover all its iniquities, the destruction of Gush Katif engendered rhetoric previously only heard from the anti-Zionist camp. True, when the test came (most dramatically at Kfar Maimon) the leaders of the struggle chose to avoid a violent confrontation with the army and by extension with the state, but (as they themselves explained after the fact) this was because the battle was already lost, and any violence would only cause more damage to the cause. In addition, that leadership (especially that of *Moetzet Yesh'a*, the Council of Settlements) has been subjected to vociferous attacks for its restraint at Kfar Maimon as well as its lack of support for refusal of soldiers to obey orders during the disengagement. Positions which take universal and democratic values into account are seen as contradictory to the Torah.

I would suggest going one step further. The primacy of Eretz Israel has not only changed priorities within Religious Zionism but has also affected its substantive positions. The imperative to retain control of all of Eretz Israel has influenced positions in mainstream Religious Zionism concerning issues such as moral obligations towards non-Jews, the commitment to the democratic system and the support of civil rights.<sup>17</sup>

The struggle against the hitnatkut has spawned a new symbol of Religious Zionist identity, the color orange (which can be exhibited by female and male alike). The “orange community” (*hatzibbur hakatom*) has replaced the “generation of the knitted *kippot*.”<sup>18</sup>

Political scientist Asher Cohen has claimed that the hitnatkut has not been critically traumatic for the dati-leumi inhabitants of the cities within the Green Line who constitute the “silent majority” of the Religious Zionist community. They experienced the event as a political setback, but not as a crisis of identity.<sup>19</sup> Even if this true, their silence creates a situation where the only voice heard, in the religious media and in educational institutions is that which sees



the disengagement as akin to the destruction of the Temples and the expulsion from Spain.

As long as the critical question of the territories remains unresolved, I see no way of directing Religious Zionism on other paths. Any attempt to suggest other priorities will be suspect of diverting energies from the most important challenge. Although I claim no special ability to forecast political events, I would hazard to speculate that the question of the status of Judea and Samaria will not be resolved one way or another within the near future. Barring catastrophic events compared with which the withdrawal from Gush Katif would pale, I find it likely that Israel will continue to agonize over the issue and that Religious Zionism as a whole will continue to be identified with one side of the debate.

I am therefore pessimistic about the possibility of creating a new Religious Zionist agenda. Here I have to disagree with Rabbi Cherlow who thinks that it is possible to do so while continuing to preserve the monochromatic political position.<sup>20</sup>

### **THE FAILURE OF HALAKHAH AND OF THEOLOGY – HOW NOT TO FIND “THE WAY”**

If nevertheless we could formulate a new agenda, how would we begin to proceed? One would think that we would investigate Halakhah, but until now halakhic discourse has not shown itself competent to deal with these questions. The project of “*hilkhot medina*” as reflected in the volumes of *Hatorah ve-Hamedina* and *Tehumin* has at most given a certain *post facto* legitimacy to the institutions of the state (with the notable exception of civil law) and has made it possible for a religious soldier to serve in the army but has been unable to be a guide for legislation and policy making.

The hope that if applied to a modern Jewish state, Halakhah would address new areas of life and relate to all contemporary questions, that there would be a tractate on the economy or a code of environmental halakhot, is far from being realized. Regardless of the theoretical question of the possibility of creating an ideal “halakhic state,”<sup>21</sup> little progress has been made towards creating a corpus of law relevant to the State as it is. Whether this is due to limitations of

the halakhic system in dealing with political questions, to the failure of formulating a new halakhic methodology, or to the timidity of the halakhists, is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>22</sup>

Not accidentally, the only issue on the public agenda regarding which there was a broad consensus among the great majority of Religious Zionist rabbis was the opposition to the disengagement. The use of *piskei Halakhah*, and especially those which demanded that soldiers disobey orders, illustrated how political ideology is presented as “pure Halakhah.” It was *mori verabi* Rav Lichtenstein who characterized the position of Rav Avraham Shapiro as not taking in account “the authority of the government to make decisions, to determine between alternatives, and to judge the situation the country is in, taking into account risks and opportunities.”<sup>23</sup>

Halakhah therefore, and perhaps not surprisingly, is insufficient in presenting a road map for Religious Zionism.

Can theology provide the basis for public policy? As is well known, labeling the state as *Reishit tzmihat Ge-ulateinu* has been overwhelmingly accepted in Religious Zionist liturgy and rhetoric. Nevertheless, can messianism be an important element in creating a Religious Zionist agenda?<sup>24</sup>

Until 1967, messianic theology took little part in formulating its public policy. Since then the ideology of Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook and his students has become the dominant hashkafah within the educational and rabbinic leadership of Religious Zionism in Israel. However, messianic ideology in and of itself does not necessarily lead to specific practical conclusions. The belief in the inevitability of the process of redemption may lead to different practical conclusions, to quietism as well as activism. Even among those who have drawn political conclusions from their messianic beliefs there have been widely disparate practical conclusions, as the internecine polemics since the hitnatkut have shown.

Thus, messianic belief can not create a “road map” for the future of Religious Zionism. Personally, I would not join those who wish to totally eschew the language of messianism which has become part and parcel of its rhetoric,<sup>25</sup> but I would suggest that messianic considerations not participate in formulating policy, and especially

not be allowed to provide a justification for avoiding confrontation with complex social, religious and political reality.

**RELIGIOUS ZIONISM AND ISRAELI SOCIETY:  
ADVERSARIAL, ACCOMMODATING, OR DIALOGICAL**

If religious Zionism calls for involvement with the community as a whole, formulating its public policy requires an understanding and analysis of Israeli society.

Here the difficulty of ideology distorting our vision is clear. The Religious Zionist perception of Israeli society is often manic-depressive. Often there is a wish to exalt the essential idealism and the deep-rooted Jewish identity of secular Israelis. Other times we sense rejection, frustration, and alienation, similar to the well-known depiction of the *Hazon Ish*, who referred to secularism as “an empty wagon.”

Much of the worldview of classic Religious Zionism was grounded on a specific perception of Israeli society, one which has undergone dramatic change. The partnership of Religious Zionism with secular Zionists in the Zionist enterprise and later in the State was based on shared values. It was clear to all that Israel was the political embodiment of the Jewish people and was to act for the good of the Jewish people. Its leaders fostered a collectivistic nation-building ethos of *mamlakhtiut* (statism), which characterized the early years of the State. Each individual must contribute his part and even sacrifice his life for the general good. However, it was also clear that Israel is part of the family of nations and conforms to the norms of the international community. The economic corollary of this ethos was a welfare state, albeit rife with chronic inefficiency and cronyism, but fostering a strong feeling of solidarity among Israeli Jews,<sup>26</sup> certainly necessary for a country constantly at war. Classic Religious Zionism of the “historic covenant” type saw itself as part of this ethos.

One can trace the changes in Israeli society from the 1970s when the strains in many of the traditional structures of the Zionist enterprise began to be manifest. Israel today (or at least its secular elite) is more Western and more individualistic. Its cultural icons

are no longer army generals and Hebrew authors but media celebrities and high-tech entrepreneurs. Even someone with little belief in Marxian dogma can not resist connecting this change in *mentalité* with the economic transformation which falls under the rubric of “globalization.” Those parts of society who celebrate the opening of Israel to the global economy are often those who participate in a global culture and feel no longer dependent on local traditions.<sup>27</sup> As in other countries, becoming part of a worldwide market has created a tension between those who celebrate this cosmopolitan culture and those who, in reaction<sup>28</sup> turn to a life based on communal and tribal insularity and a rejection of universal values. The conflict between these two tendencies has been encapsulated by journalist Tom Friedman as that between “The Lexus and the Olive Tree” and by political theorist Benjamin Barber as “Globalism and Tribalism” or “Jihad vs. MacWorld.”

How does this conflict play out in Israeli reality? It is sometimes said that there are two alternative cultures competing for hegemony in Israel, the particularistic and the universal, both of which are different from the classic Zionist worldview. Post-Zionist social scientists suggest that the synthesis that saw Israel as both a democratic and a Jewish state is no longer tenable. Israel must therefore choose between being democratic and being Jewish, between Post-Zionism<sup>29</sup> and Neo-Zionism, which is characterized by a rejection of rationality and Enlightenment values and an adoption of Romantic nationalism. Post-Zionism is the corollary of globalization and neo-Zionism is the Israeli version of localism. Tel Aviv is the incarnation of the first, and Jerusalem the second.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Anthropologist Oz Almog, in his voluminous book, *Farewell to Srulik: Changing Values Among the Israeli Elite*,<sup>31</sup> describes the two cultural systems which he sees as alternatives to the veteran Zionist system: one, ethnocentric and conservative, and the other capitalistic, liberal, and global.

Where should Religious Zionism stand? It is indicative of the myopia of Religious Zionism that these economic and social transformations were not taken note of by those who see themselves as the successors of *Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi* until the Oslo process was

blamed on the rootless individualism of the post-modern personality. Many Religious Zionists agree with this characterization of the alternatives facing Israel. They see a stark dichotomy between Jews and Hellenizers, or between “Jews” and “Israelis,” and call for all “Jews” (including haredim and traditionalist Jews, such as olim from Asia and Africa and their descendants) to join together to wrest control of the country from the enemy.<sup>32</sup>

This adversarial orientation describes the situation a zero-sum game and calls for a *kulturkampf* against universalistic values (personified by the Israeli Supreme Court and its former President Aharon Barak), replacing them with “Jewish” values.

This analysis of the situation was described vividly in a programmatic essay by Rabbi Elyakim Levanon, *Rosh Yeshiva* of the hesder yeshiva at Elon Moreh, which was widely distributed in the wake of the disengagement. In it, he describes a transition which he calls “from three to two” in which secular nationalism has disappeared leaving only two ideological forces in Israel: those totally alienated from Judaism, whose only wish is to assimilate into a “new Middle East,” and on the other hand, those committed to Torah and who wish to strengthen *Am Israel* to provide direction for the entire world and for the Middle East specifically. As a result, Rabbi Levanon calls for the religious community to assume leadership of the state.<sup>33</sup>

The most prolific adherents of this position are the Moshe Feiglin and Motti Karpel, the leaders (until Karpel’s recent break away) of the “Jewish Leadership” movement. The movement describes the present situation in Israel as one in which a minority which wishes to “erase the memory of the historic Am Israel” has taken over all power against the will of the “Jewish majority.” The platform of the movement includes the establishment of an upper house in the Knesset for Jews only and the withdrawal of Israel from the UN. Feiglin has formulated a strategy of taking over the Likud as the first stage in the process of “Jewish Leadership” taking over the country. Some of these opinions are prevalent beyond those who subscribe to Feiglin’s political strategy. Many, especially among some of the younger rab-

bis, are frustrated by their inability to prevent the disengagement and agree that Religious Zionism must end its cooperation with secular Zionism. "Faithful Zionism" must itself assume the leadership of the country. Only this will protect Eretz Israel from the supporters of territorial compromise who have betrayed Zionism. Their strategy is "if they won't join you, beat them."<sup>34</sup>

The dream of religious rule is seductive but placing it as the goal of our public activity will ultimately marginalize Religious Zionism as an exotic counterculture. It also implicitly rejects the teaching of Rav Kook that all movements within the Jewish people have value, and that secularism in general and secular Zionism in particular contain elements which can be a corrective to deficiencies which exist among religious Judaism.

An alternative to the adversarial stance is accommodation.<sup>35</sup> Its adherents are willing to accept the marginal place offered it by the dominant secularist ethos and shirk from confrontation with it. Instead, accommodationists translate politically correct ideas into "religious language," and thus seem to create a common denominator with secularists, who benefit by becoming Jewishly legitimate in their own eyes. Thus "Jewish values" are subsumed as part of a humanistic social gospel ("left-wing accommodationism") or as nothing but Israeli militarism ("right-wing accommodationism"). The danger of this strategy is erasing the unique message of Torah by absorbing anything that will prove popular. Ultimately, "Jewish values" consisting of nothing more than the "flavor of the month" will not be recognized by anyone as authentic Judaism.

At the risk of sounding somewhat bland, I suggest that Religious Zionism take a middle path. Less blandly, it might be labeled "dialogical triangulation."

The historic role of Religious Zionism should be to take part in recreating a vital center in Israeli society. Religious Zionism should position itself neither as exotic opposition to Israeli society nor as a collaborator with all intellectual or political fads. It should formulate an image of a Jewish state which can find common ground with the "silent majority" of Israelis who often have no one to articulate their

worldview. The ability of Israeli society to withstand crises such as the bombings of the recent intifada shows that when it sees itself endangered, Israel is more resilient than critics from left and right suggest. Such a center would mobilize the majority of Israeli Jews who are deeply committed to the Jewish state, but neither believe in the vision of the halakhic state nor in the imperative to save the settlement project at all costs. Against the two camps, which direct Israel either to a Macworld globalism or to a Jihadist insularity, Religious Zionism must play a role, along with other elements in Israeli society of articulating a new Zionist synthesis which will formulate a clear commitment to the strengthening of the Jewishness of the Jewish state.

On one hand, Religious Zionists cannot return to the position of the national *shamash*. We must speak in our own voice and should not leave the public square naked. On the other hand, we must realize that our commitment to the State of Israel assumes a partnership and thus must engage in real dialogue, without automatically accepting the position of the dominant majority and without insisting that others accept ours.

The insular wing of Religious Zionism which would want either to take over Israeli society or to disengage from it can allow itself the luxury of speaking its own language, disregarding the way it sounds to other ears. It may engage in Lubavitch-style *kiruv* which may attract individual seekers but will not touch Israeli society as a whole. In order to engage in real dialogue, we must have a renewal of leadership. How many *bnei-Torah* (and *bnot-Torah*!) can formulate and present positions on the issues of the time in a relevant manner and engage in serious conversation with Israel's foremost public intellectuals? I think that we would all conjure up the same names, a good number of who are participating in this Forum.

Dialogue with other parts of Israeli society will necessarily mean engaging in coalitions in order to create common ground. The Medan-Gavison Covenant and the draft constitution proposed by Prof. Koppel and others are examples of such attempts.<sup>36</sup> Such dialogue will necessarily require expanding the horizons of the kind of Jewish identities that we will encourage, and avoiding the politi-

cal considerations that make cooperation between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews in the Diaspora so difficult.

Engaging in dialogue should not allow us to ignore the somewhat unpopular concept of concern for our own community. We have no reason to deny that our commitment to *Torah u'Mitzvot* makes demands on us as individuals and generates unique needs as a community. Some accommodationists have described the separate religious educational system as an “original sin”<sup>37</sup> and suggested that the way to eliminate tension between religious and secular and to remedy the ignorance of Judaism in the secular community is create a uniform “Jewish democratic” educational system in which there would be no education toward *shmirat mitzvot*.<sup>38</sup> Accepting such an arrangement, whatever its attractiveness, could undermine the very edifice of religious education that has been pivotal in flourishing of the dati-leumi community. Here we should learn from our haredi brethren who have put their educational institutions at the forefront of their agenda.

What then is the way for Religious Zionism? Before giving the Torah, God gave the people of Israel three mitzvot. According to Rashi these included *Shabbat*, *dinim*, and *parah adumah* (the laws of the red heifer).<sup>39</sup> I remember hearing from Rabbi Yehuda Amital that these mitzvot are a sample of the Torah, a representative taste of what they were about to receive.

In what way are these mitzvot a microcosm of all the 613? *Dinim* represent the striving for justice that is a central Torah value. I would suggest that these values include creating an alternative to a materialist culture, in which communal solidarity has been replaced by the competition of the market and which the gaps between rich and poor endanger the very fabric of society. Religious Zionism should try to present an alternative: not one that withdraws from modern society like the “youth of the hills” and not like the haredim who would have Israel join the third world. Religious Zionism should endeavor to craft a society which does not divorce itself from globalism without succumbing to its dangers.

The second of the three, *Shabbat*, reflects those mitzvot which can be justified (as *Shabbat* is in both of the versions of the *Aseret*



*Hadibrot*, the Ten Commandments). As Rambam was so aware, the project of *ta'amei hamitzvot*, finding reasons for mitzvot, assumes the ability to communicate the values of Torah to those who are not committed to the observance of mitzvot.

Parah adumah is the quintessential *hok* (a statute with no rational justification), it reflects the fact that ultimately our commitment to *avodat hashem* (the service of God) is totally irreducible to any human understanding or value. We must not forget this aspect of Torah even at the price of sometimes finding ourselves politically incorrect and out of step as we follow the pace of a different Drummer.

All these three elements should take part in creating a new agenda.

### IS RELIGIOUS ZIONISM AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME – AND GONE?

Having expressed pessimism in the first part of the essay, I must end it on a skeptical note. The existence of “Religious Zionism” as a clearly defined entity remains elusive. The *dati-leumi* community in Israel, partially as a result of its successes and self-confidence, has allowed itself to lose the internal solidarity that characterized the early years of the State, when it felt endangered by the forces of secularism. Its manifold educational trends, the animosity and alienation often articulated between different groups within Religious Zionism (and especially the opposing camps of *hardal* [haredi national religious] and “Modern Orthodox” and lately those of “*mamlakhti*” [statist] and “non-*mamlakhti*”) and the fragmentation of leadership may destroy whatever common denominator is left. On the one hand, many of the younger generation are unsatisfied with defining themselves as a “sector” and wish to integrate totally into Israeli society (one young man recently told me that he sees himself as “an Israeli of the Mosaic religion”). Others are increasingly alienated from that society and prefer to distance themselves from it. This may create a situation in which Religious Zionists as individuals pursuing different agendas will replace the feeling of belonging to a collective.<sup>40</sup>

Where would such a development lead us? Doesn't the State of Israel need a clear Religious Zionist voice to provide spiritual depth

to its vital center? As I already stated, I have few solutions to offer and am uninspired by those suggested until now. The times call for new direction.

### NOTES

1. This paper refers to Religious Zionists in Israel. Other participants have addressed the role of Religious Zionism outside of Israel, of which my familiarity is certainly insufficient.
2. For example, Benzi Lieberman, Secretary of *Moetzet Yesh'a*, called recently (with unwarranted optimism) on all the rabbinic leaders of the movement to get together and reformulate the beliefs of Religious Zionism. See <http://www.makorrishon.co.il/show.asp?id=16106>
3. "From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion: The Roots of Gush Emunim," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (1986): 116–143.
4. I agree therefore with Rabbi Yuval Cherlow ("*Mamlakhti lekhatilah*," *Hatzofeh* [March 16, 2006]) and disagree with Moshe Koppel who refers to reacting to the "mindblowing inanity and vapidity of these pompous, imitative, goyish ceremonies [of Yom Hazikaron]." Does Koppel think that *kapparot* is preferable as a ceremony? See "Yiddishkeit without Ideology: A Letter to my Son," *Tradition* 36, 2 (2002): 45–55, specifically at 51.
5. See the writings of Rabbi Zvi Tau, probably the most profound interpreter of the thought of Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook and especially *Neshama La'am Aleha*.
6. See Charles Liebman, "Secular Judaism and its Prospects," *Israel Affairs*, 4, 3–4 (1998): 29–48.
7. The National Religious Party, founded in 1956 from the merger of Mizrahi and Ha-Poel ha-Mizrahi has historically been the dominant Religious Zionist party. This is not to say that there have not been people who supported other political parties while continuing to see themselves as belonging to the larger "family" of Religious Zionism.
8. See for instance the reflections of Rav Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, ed. Nathaniel Helfgot (Jersey City, 2005), 210–211, 224–226.
9. See <http://www.gavison-medan.org.il/english/>
10. In the wake of the Shalit case in which the Israeli Supreme Court ordered the registration of children of an Israeli navy officer and his non-Jewish wife as Jews.
11. For years, an unsuccessful battle was waged to add the word *kehalakhah* to the law, so that Conservative and Reform conversions would not be recognized. As it transpired, Israeli governments would not risk the rift with the non-Orthodox movements that would result from changing the law.
12. See Asher Cohen, *Non-Jewish Jews in Israel* [Hebrew], (Jerusalem, 2006).
13. This conclusion, that the insistence on preserving the present arrangements regarding personal status is based on symbolic and not on halakhic considerations,

- is also that of Shachar Lifshitz, *The Spousal Registry* [Hebrew], Israel Democracy Institute (Jerusalem, 2006).
14. Obviously, I am not referring to the biblical-halakhic concept of the sanctity of all of the Land of Israel, but to the political stance that under (almost) no circumstances can territorial concessions be justified. This is quite different from the position of the secular right (such as the Likud), which opposes some concessions in some situations on pragmatic-security ones. The fact that the secular ideological right has virtually evaporated over the last thirty years serves to emphasize that this position is the exclusive domain of the religious right.
  15. See Gadi Taub, *The Settlers and the Struggle Over the Meaning of Zionism* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv, 2007).
  16. The fact that supporters of concessions on “the left” manifest a mirror image of this phenomenon does not negate my point.
  17. See the brave words of Gerald Blidstein after the Hebron massacre in “Symposium: Religious Zionism Revisited,” *Tradition*, 28:4 (1994): 11–15.
  18. Just a few anecdotes to illustrate my point: advertisements in the religious media for a new singles group “only for *ktumim*”; a car dealership which advertises, “All you have to do after buying it is to add the orange ribbon”; the winner of the 5768 Bible Quiz, Tzurit Berenson, who was awarded the prize while wearing an orange bracelet. The orange ribbon on the masthead of *Hatozfeh*, which I mentioned in the original version of the papery was omitted when the paper merged with *Makor Rishon*, which is right-wing but not necessarily religious.
  19. Asher Cohen, “Religious Zionism, the disengagement and the crisis – whither?” [Hebrew], *Akdamot*, 16 (5763): 23–29 and idem, “What do they want from Religious Zionism” [Hebrew], *Ha’arets* (November 29, 2005).
  20. See Rabbi Yuval Cherlow, “A New Agenda” [Hebrew], *Meimad*, 30 (December 2005).
  21. See Aviezer Revitsky, *Is a Halakhic State Possible? The Paradox of Jewish Theocracy*, Israel Democracy Institute, (Jerusalem, 2004)
  22. For a survey of some of the statements on this question see Yedidya Stern, *Rabbinical Rulings on Policy Questions*, Israel Democracy Institute, Policy Paper no. 19 (Jerusalem, 1999).
  23. See <http://www.etzion.org.il/hitnatkut/response-h.rtf> The exchange between the rabbis has appeared also in *Tradition*.
  24. See Rabbi Yehuda Amital, “What is the Meaning of ‘Reishit Zmichat Ge’ulateinu.’” *Tradition*, 39 (2006): 7–14.
  25. Such as Yoske Ahituv, one of the foremost thinkers of the Kibutz Hadati movement. See his “Towards a non-illusionary Religious Zionism” [Hebrew], in *One Hundred Years of Religious Zionism*, eds. A. Sagi and D. Schwartz (Ramat Gan, 5783): 7–29.
  26. Or at least those who saw themselves as Zionists. The haredi community was not part of the culture of the early state and, to a great extent, only became visible to the public eye in the wake of its greater participation in the political system after 1977 and especially after 1988.

27. See Zygmunt Baumann, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, 2000).
28. Manuel Castells calls this “resistance identity.” See *The Power of Identity* (1997).
29. Post-Zionism calls for the elimination of the definition of Israel as a Jewish state in any sense of the term. The term was bandied around extensively in the heady years of the Oslo experiment but even then was the provenance of a small intellectual clique. As a result of the collapse of the peace process, these views have become discredited. See the recent survey of the literature by Ram and his attempt to claim that reports of its demise are premature. Uri Ram, *The Time of the ‘Post’: Nationalism and the Politics of Knowledge in Israel* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv, 2006). Of course, in certain circles of the religious right, post-Zionist “fellow travelers” are to be found everywhere. For a recent example see Erez Tadmor, “Zionism Isn’t Dead, It’s Attacking Itself” [Hebrew], *Nekuda*, 297 (January, 2007): 53–55 where Shlomo Ben Ami and Ehud Barak are described as part of the club.
30. See Uri Ram, *Globalization in Israel: Macworld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv, 2005).
31. Haifa, 2004.
32. See Yisrael Harel, one of the leaders of *Yesha* quoted in Taub op. cit. pp. 30–31.
33. The essay can be viewed at <http://www.yeshanews.com/?id=45318andc=opinion>
34. See Kalman Neuman, “At Kfar Maimon the State of the Faithful Was Founded,” *Haaretz*, (July 28, 2005).
35. Here I am accepting the nomenclature of Moshe Koppel in his article “Mamlakhtui as a Tool of Opression,” *Democratic Culture* (2000).
36. <http://israelconstitution.blogspot.com/>
37. See Haviv Retig, “If the Torah isn’t for everyone, it isn’t for anyone,” *Jerusalem Post* (September 7, 2006) <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFullandcid=1154526029359>
38. See for example <http://www.meytarim.org.il/default.asp>
39. For a discussion of the rabbinic sources for this list see Chaim Milikovsky, “The Red Heifer Commandment Before Sinai – Early Tradition or Scribal Error,” *Jubilee Volume in Honor of E.Z. Melamed* [Hebrew], (Ramat Gan, 1982): 270–276.
40. See the prognosis of Anthropologist Tamar El-Or that we are now witnessing the end of Religious Zionism as an distinct sector which will fragment into one group alienated from the state, another of religious people who see their religious beliefs as secondary to their civic duties, and a group that will attempt to continue the tradition of the NRP and see themselves as “the *gabbais* of the state.” Itamar Mor, “The Wall” [Hebrew], *Makor Rishon*, (September 1, 2007) <http://www.makorrishon.co.il/show.asp?id=11196>



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# Part 4

## Religious Zionism and Modern Orthodoxy – Educational Challenges



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# 7

## Walking a Tightrope: The Attitude of Religious Zionist Adolescents to the State of Israel after the Disengagement

*Zehavit Gross*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this research is to describe the attitude of adolescents in the state religious education system to the State of Israel after the disengagement. It is too soon to come to definite conclusions, but about eighteen months after the disengagement, it is interesting to see how religious adolescents throughout the country reacted. The



issue cannot be understood without presenting two fundamental contextual issues: the main dilemmas that occupy the state religious educational system in the context of the processes of selectivity that religious Zionism in general and state religious education in particular are undergoing. The findings of a study I conducted recently will be presented in light of both issues.

### THE MAJOR DILEMMAS OF STATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

State religious education (SRE) in Israel is currently tackling five major dilemmas:<sup>1</sup>

*Secular studies in the religious education system:* How to cope with Western values, lifestyle and culture while trying to maintain a full religious way of life.

*The ideal educational model:* Should the ideal model continue to be the traditional *talmid hakham* (religious scholar), or perhaps the modern “pioneer,” or the religious Jewish engineer, pilot or scientist?

*Selectivity versus education for all:* Should schools be open to anyone seeking religious education, or should they be religiously selective?

*Organizational structure:* Should the SRE system remain under secular State organizational sponsorship, or should it establish a separate educational organizational framework with a religious character?

*Attitude toward the state and its institutions:* How should the SRE system regard the State of Israel, its secular-democratic regime and laws based on secular legitimacy?

Most literature on state religious education and practice tackle the first four questions;<sup>2</sup> the fifth has been neglected in the literature and in practice, and was explicitly dealt with (though only in understatement) after a small Jewish underground terrorist organization, consisting of SRE graduates, was uncovered. This dilemma is complex, because the Torah and the Halakhah, which proscribes a religious Jew’s behavior, deal with how people should behave in their private or communal lives, but not their political lives.<sup>3</sup> The

halakhic literature does not discuss foreign relations, economics or running a country with a secular, democratic Jewish regime because the Jewish people lived in exile for 2,000 years under foreign rule and their civic experience had no significance in the religious-Jewish context.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, with the establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel, full participation in political life meant accepting shared responsibility and granting legitimacy to public decisions that are secular in nature, which may contradict Jewish law. The SRE perceived the State of Israel, Zionism and Jewish nationality as phases in the development of the redemption, and “the religious education system is charged with the task of demonstrating that it is possible to live as a Jew in a democratic country.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the practical partnership with the secular elements in this country constitutes a serious theological and ideological problem.<sup>6</sup>

### THE DISENGAGEMENT PLAN

*Background:* For fifteen years, Israeli governments have aspired to a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the advancement of the peace process. In 2004, when it became clear to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that there was no Palestinian partner with whom Israel could work toward achieving a bilateral peace process, he developed the disengagement plan. The plan involved evacuating Jews from the Gaza Strip and Northern Samaria and removing the Israeli settlements there in the hope that the Palestinians would take advantage of the opportunity to break out of the cycle of violence and to re-engage in a process of dialogue and peace negotiations.

*Implementation:* To the amazement of most of the Israeli population, the evacuation process, though extremely painful, took a relatively short time. The reasons for this should be analyzed in a separate paper. There were a few areas of resistance, like on the roof of the synagogue in Kfar Darom, but most people left without violence. The process of the relocation was traumatic also because the government was not well prepared and the evacuees remained in hotels for long periods, and then moved to temporary residential areas where there was high unemployment. The evacuees faced daily psychological problems<sup>7</sup> including post-traumatic behavior,

sleep disturbance, undermining of parental authority, problems of adjustment and integration in educational institutions, concentration problems, hasty marriages (due to the need to build a home), an increase in the divorce rate, severe illness, and psychiatric hospitalization.

Prior to the implementation of the disengagement plan, there was concern in some circles, and threats in others, that the soldiers would not obey orders and would not carry out the plan. In fact, the number of soldiers who refused orders during the disengagement was so small as to be insignificant. Related to this was the number of adolescents who said that they would not go to the army because of its part in the disengagement plan. Here too, recent findings published in the press indicate that to date, there is no change in the response of adolescents to being drafted. However, there is an increase of those who declare that their occupation is Torah studies, which allows them to postpone or avoid army service. This may have an impact on future drafts.

*Security:* In terms of security, the general situation after the disengagement worsened. Terrorists in the Gaza Strip improved their military positions and missile attacks increased on Sderot and even reached Ashkelon. The message that the Hamas seems to have received was that Israel surrendered to force, and more force would make the Israeli government start dismantling more settlements in the south, like Sderot.

## THE STUDY

The main questions that occupied the religious Zionist leadership, prior to and after the implementation of the disengagement plan, was what should their attitude be toward the State of Israel that has taken such a political action. Is the State still legitimate? Can we, as religious people, continue to cooperate with it? During the special prayer for the country, can we pray for the government and wish them success in what they are doing?

To find answers to these questions, I conducted a qualitative research study among seventy-eight male religious Zionist adolescents between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. In interviews,

I asked them what impact the disengagement plan had on their attitude to the State of Israel. The analysis does not include those who were serving in the army or residents of Gush Katif. It also does not include girls, on whom I will report in a separate paper. The analysis in this paper will be based only on fifty-two interviews. The participants are adolescents from all parts of Israel, center and periphery, who studied in different educational frameworks, high schools and yeshivot. I also interviewed fifteen teachers and asked them if they dealt with the disengagement in their classrooms during the 2005–2006 school year.

It was extremely difficult to interview them. Many did not want to participate or answer questions. In a qualitative study, the researcher is the main instrument and his feelings and intuitions are the main guiding forces.<sup>8</sup> Most of the interviews started in a loud voice and ended so quietly that I sometimes had to ask the participants to speak up, as I could not hear them. This was a recurring phenomenon, which should perhaps be investigated further.

## RESULTS

The interviews yielded five basic reactions, although sub-categories and mixed categories were also found. The categories were indifference, integration, separation, confrontation, and containment (one who holds a religious messianic worldview but behaves according to accepted norms). Excerpts from the interviews are presented below.

### Indifference

The largest group of adolescents said that the issue didn't bother them at all. When I asked, it took them few moments to answer, saying,

What? The disengagement? Who remembers it at all? Practically speaking, it didn't bother me at all. I saw the dismantling on TV, but as they say, "Life goes on."

The disengagement? Who remembers it? In a country where you have news every two minutes, how can you remember at all? It is not an easy story for our country

but I think we overcame it – it didn't have any impact on me.

The disengagement? That was long ago. Nobody cares in this country about anybody. Who remembers the missiles on Sderot? Until missiles hit the center of the country, nobody will care. It is sad to say but none of my friends here cares about it and it didn't change our attitude to anything. We will continue to serve in the army and love our country. We don't have any place else to go.

The Gush Katif story is over. Some people made a lot of money there. OK. Now they are suffering but they will build beautiful houses again. All of them will benefit from it, although there are many who suffer. Did this have an impact on my attitude to the state of Israel? Of course not. Life goes on.

It should be noted that this kind of answer was prominent mainly among adolescents who live in the center and the north, but not in the south. It was typical of those who graduated from the state religious high schools, but I heard similar answers also among those who studied in yeshivot.

### Separation

Another kind of reaction was found among very religious people who saw the disengagement as betrayal by secular people or by the State or by democracy. Democracy had become the enemy of religion and of religious people, and the conclusion was that they have to exclude themselves from the state:

They took the idea of democracy and turned it into their God. They worship this God, sacrificing *Eretz Israel* and other high values on its altar. The Supreme Court became their Temple. In such a situation, the banishment is a precept of the democratic religion. Religion becomes the enemy of democracy. We used to speak about ways

to combine democracy and Judaism. Now we see that democracy betrayed Judaism and Eretz Israel.

The banishment from Gush Katif was a sign that we were wrong when we thought that the secular state is part of the messianic dream. It is not part of the redemption and of course not the beginning of it...Such cruelty and viciousness cannot be part of a pure spiritual process of redemption. This is not Jewish at all. A Jew doesn't banish a Jew. The minute we are part of the state we give it legitimation. We give legitimation to the Gush Katif devastation and this may prevent the redemption. This *pogrom* at Gush Katif is proof that we misinterpreted Zionism. We gave it a *hekhsher* (legitimation) that it doesn't deserve. We were used by the State...The army of deportation just threw us away. The cruelty of the soldiers – I cannot stop thinking about it. It took me time to get back to reality after the banishment. Whenever I saw a soldier, I felt terrible... They violently evicted innocent Jews from their homes. My friends when they saw a policeman, they reacted to him like a *Capo*. A few of my friends damaged police cars. They are not violent people, these guys. They are wonderful guys, really idealistic but they thought that the policemen deserve to be punished. We have to punish them. To give them moments of grief. It sounds terrible. But they are criminals. The State is a State of criminals. All is corrupted. It's a problem of the total breakdown of basic moral values and of Jewish values. They are immoral. We cannot be friends of criminals who banished Jews from the holy land and pray for them – how can I pray the prayer for the State?...Eretz Israel is our home. We own this land...We will never forget and never forgive. We are talking about eternity but they are stuck in the here and now. They want immediate pleasures – they don't have the remotest notion what the holiness of this land means. Of course, I'm going to postpone my army service after this pogrom. I don't want and cannot be part

of the Zionist story anymore. The state became the enemy of the people. Eretz Israel and the Torah law are beyond everything. The law of the Torah is above the law of the State. The law of the State tells you how to commit crimes. The soldiers should have disobeyed their orders – this is a precept and those who violated it are traitors.

We are better than the secular population. That's why they hate us – they resent us out of jealousy. Look at their adolescents – they are addicted to drugs, they drink, and most of them do not serve in the army. If we leave them, they will see the truth. Suddenly they will understand that without us they are lost. Who will serve in the army?... See what has happened. Everyone connected to the banishment was punished... This is direct punishment for those who betrayed Eretz Israel. You should know one thing: Those who betray Eretz Israel will be banished from this country and punished. See what happened to Jonathan Basi, the head of the Minhelet? He caused the deportation of those virtuous people from Gush Katif and now he was evicted from his home on the Kibbutz and had to go and live in a caravan. Isn't that a sign of the finger of God? The conclusion we must draw from this banishment is that we have to separate ourselves and disengage from the State of Israel. There is no point continuing this phony connection between us and the secular population. They betrayed us. In the banishment, they proved that they are not our brothers. It was an illusion. It was a mistake to see the establishment of the State as the beginning of the redemption. Let's admit it and stay apart. We will cultivate our own community, our children, and let them – the enlightened secular people – drown in the swamp they have created. Let's see them recruit soldiers. We want a Jewish State.

Rabbi Tal of Gush Katif recently published a manuscript entitled “To the Right Way” in which he explicitly encouraged hatred for secular

Jews, especially leftists. Rabbi Tal claims that at this time, which is the time of redemption, the evil forces rise up to fight sanctity (*kedusha*). Tal claims that the evil forces of the world are the leftists who act against sanctity. Therefore, it is permitted to hate them. The impact of this manuscript on some of the religious Zionist youth is apparent in a blog by Reut on the Katif.net website:

I was looking for a clearer worldview and then I read a manuscript called “To the Right Way” (by Rabbi Tal) and there I found myself. The words spoke to me as though I knew them all the time. No more slogans and sentences that the heart cannot accept, but a smooth systematic method that describes reality and defines it in such a true manner that you can actually feel it.

### Confrontation

Some of the adolescents believed that the religious community needed to take over the country, and not necessarily in a democratic fashion.

It is only a matter of time until we will run the State. The Jewish *transfer* [forced transport] was a slap in the face. We treated the secular population with tolerance, like a prodigal son. This son worshiped democracy. The secular population will become demographically extinct. We will be the political, social and military leadership of this state. It is just a matter of time. We don't have to wait. The banishment has taught us that we must take over the army, the Supreme Court. Our graduates have to take the lead everywhere. It's a matter of survival – a war over existential space. We should change the priorities of the state by force. We don't have time for political correctness. That was our mistake. We demonstrated, sat in protest tents, and neglected the main thing: we have to take over the top positions in this State. That's an existential issue... They [the secular people] want normalization.



We will never be accepted by the nations. We will never normalize. We will continue our long journey towards redemption but from power, not from weakness. We can do it. It is in our hands. We must take over. Eretz Israel is our main goal. It is the end and the means... We don't have to be the nice religious people – we should be the brave pioneers. The Zionist movement is in the process of decay. They are the past; we are the future. We are good. We were socialized to be the best and we are. If the army decides that it is important for the security of Israel to desecrate the rules of the Shabbat, will you obey this? We have to change the rules by force. With all our strength. It is the survival of the fittest. We will not be generous and gentlemen anymore.

### Integration

Other adolescents expressed the belief that the religious community had itself disengaged from Israeli society. They felt that the religious should “settle in the hearts” of the general population in order to change the situation for the good of the State.

The disengagement is proof that we are still not part of Israeli society. We haven't settled in the hearts of *Am Israel* [the People of Israel]. We were too concerned with Eretz Israel and we neglected our true and natural connection with Am Israel. We have to gradually change the conscience and mindset of Israeli society. We have to give up now. It is a holy compromise. This is the essence of *Mamlakhtiyut* [behaving for the good of the State] these days. In our yeshiva, our Rabbi claims that the military is the embodiment of redemption in our time, that the army is holy, every tank is holy as Rav Zvi Yehuda said, and that every commander is holy. In our yeshiva, the army service is considered to be religious service. This is not a time for the cultivation of divisions. We have to postpone our arguments. Am Israel is not mature enough

to understand the greatness of the hour. We should move step by step. To jump is a mistake. The State of Israel is the throne of God's honor in this world. But the redemption is a gradual process. The problem with those who are disappointed with the State is that they want the Messiah now. It doesn't work that way. They want to translate the redemption into immediate practical actions. If we want to make the State a "kingdom of priests and of holy people," we must become closer to them. One of the solutions is door to door explanatory meetings and discussions. We must create a new language in order to change the Israeli mindset. We got a slap in the face. There is a halakic prohibition to disobey military orders. We must continue to obey and perform our civic duties. We must respect the law and the national symbols. The Prime Minister is an honorable man no matter what he thinks. This is part of our religious conviction. Army service is a religious precept. The State is a top priority. This is clear. It comes from pure religious conviction. We are very realistic. Our time perspective is eternity. There were many people who believed that God would perform a miracle and the banishment would be prevented. This was inconceivable. Every national symbol is holy. Raise the Israeli flag. The deportation is a government decision and as such, we have to accept it. Gush Katif was a safe place. Who said it was dangerous? The ties between the people strengthen us. When Am Israel is united, danger doesn't penetrate your consciousness.

### **Containment**

Some of the interviewees, though they opposed the deportation and viewed it as immoral, actively participated in it. They walk a thin line. Democracy and the law are top priorities. They sing *Hatikva* [the national anthem], raise the flag, obey the law, and view army service as a supreme value, yet are critical of them. They live in permanent cognitive dissonance.

The evacuation was a real tragedy but it was the government's decision. As religious people we have to believe that we don't know all the explanations. Perhaps there was a real danger and it was really *Pikuach Nefesh* (critical to saving life). Who knows? There was a dispute among the rabbinical leadership. My rabbi said explicitly we must not refuse military orders. We obeyed him but publicly he was punished. Suddenly they questioned his rabbinical authority and purity. As his student, it was difficult for me to see my rabbi repudiated publicly, just because he had a different political point of view. Does this make him not kosher enough to deal with other religious questions? That's a scandal. But my rabbi is a saint and he said that in spite of it all, we have to be engaged with our people and continue to love them. Only love will save Am Israel and Eretz Israel.

I see the evacuation as an immoral act, yet I will cooperate with the army. I admire those who hugged the soldiers, and I will do whatever the army asks me to do. The evacuation is against my moral convictions. But I believe it is necessary as it was the State's decision. I want to be an obedient citizen – this is also an integral part of my religiosity, of *dina de malkhuta dina* (The law of the land is the law). This is a crucial moment in our life. The evacuation is a test – a moral test as well as a religious test. The question is how we can succeed in it. I don't know yet. I know what I cannot do and what I must do and they are contradictory... It is as if we are living simultaneously in two worlds with two sets of commitments.

I believe that God promised us Eretz Israel and I believe that the Gaza Strip is included in that promise. But if we want to live in this country, we must obey the democratic decisions of our government. The State of Israel will exist only if we help it to exist through the official laws. We must learn how to cope with those conflicts. How not to cross the line... We are walking on a tightrope and one

careless step will send us directly to the abyss. We can live or die – it is in our hands. There are people who doubt my religiosity, saying I'm not consistent and that I'm a hypocrite, that I enjoy both worlds and am not committed to either one – this is not true. In terms of my beliefs and practicing mitzvot, I'm above average. But I allow myself to doubt, to question things, and that is a threat to some people around me who were brought up in the conventional religious Zionist school system and know only one answer to all questions. I chose a hard life but I gained from it. I think that I read a lot more than the average and my answers are rooted in knowledge. Ignorant people frighten me...It would have been wonderful to be like all the others, but they don't understand that their way is only one alternative – there are many others.

### The Teachers

All the teachers I interviewed told me that they tried to raise the issue in their classes during homeroom lessons, but to their amazement, the pupils didn't cooperate or participate, so they had to move on to another topic. This was the case in high schools and yeshivot throughout the country, except for few schools connected to the *Noam* network. The teachers said that only those students who actively participated in the resistance (*shababniks*) took part in the discussions, and the rest were not interested. Below is a sample of the teachers' responses.

Immediately after the disengagement, I tried to talk with my class but it didn't work. I tried again and again, and after half a year it was irrelevant. Only a small minority was interested to discuss and elaborate on it. I don't know how to explain this but this was the situation in the classes.

I thought that this would be a hot issue at school and I tried to raise it but there was no cooperation. I was even angry with my class and told them that this was a

sign that they were badly educated in the religious Zionist school system, but it didn't work.

I asked a few teachers and stakeholders how they explained this indifference and received various answers:

The evacuees are the "Other" and therefore people like to hate them, even "our people."

We were too arrogant and we didn't make our way into the hearts of the majority.

The settlers didn't understand that they are a minority. They had the illusion that everybody was with them.

The religious Zionist education system can only deal with simple questions like "is there a God or not?" "Is it important to practice mitzvot or not?" The average teacher in the religious education system is not ready to cope with complex questions in general and with questions to which there are no answers at all, in particular. We are not prepared for this stage and it's a big problem.

I think that the beautiful big houses with red roofs and a high standard of living caused people in the city to be jealous and aloof. It is hard to explain this. It was a hidden jealousy also of the wonderful educational achievements of these beautiful communities in Gush Katif. To the average "light *Dos*," the Gush Katif settlers represent what he is not and that hurt some people in the city. You saw the reaction of the Israelis to people in the north in the second Lebanon war. In the newspapers, it said that 80 percent of Kiryat Shemona left the city after the terrible missile attacks. A million citizens ran away from the north during the war yet they were considered heroes. Nobody blamed them for it. And in Gush Katif, people were attacked every day by thousands of missiles yet nobody left (perhaps here and there a few people under the pressure of their family or other problems) and nobody made a fuss or said, "*Kol hakavod*, you were great." People

said, “OK, they chose to live there. That is part of their choice.” This is shocking for me. It is like the story of Josef. In Gush Katif, they had a dream so they have to pay. They had a wonderful time – now they can come back to their normal size... This is so vicious. Jealousy is a terrible thing. It is like an evil eye on these people. People who think that way are small people – small ants who cannot understand these heroes, these giants who sacrificed their lives for the sake of our existence. They couldn’t and wouldn’t understand the process of the redemption.

The indifference of the children reflects the general indifference in our country to human suffering. Everyone cares for himself, and at most for his own group – I’m not surprised to hear that this is our youth’s reaction – it reflects real life.

This is the price that religious Zionism is paying for being sectarian. Now even the sectors within it are indifferent to each other. The religious Zionists were always indifferent to the Mizrahim. They taught indifference and the students internalized this and now they are indifferent to their own people.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to determine the attitude of religious adolescent graduates of state religious education in Israel to the disengagement and to see whether the disengagement changed their attitudes to the State of Israel. Five different reactions were elicited. Most of the interviewees were indifferent toward the disengagement and did not rethink their relationship with the State. Fewer took the position of integration, fewer still of separation and confrontation, and only three of the interviewees took the position of containment. The fact that there is such a range of reactions implies that graduates of SRE represent many facets of Religious Zionism, rather than one monolithic voice. Whereas the haredi community separates the State from the Land of Israel and treats the State in a functional manner, the religious Zionists combine them; they attribute

religious meaning to the secular State and view it as a necessary evil.<sup>9</sup> Religious Zionism attributes religious value to settlement in Eretz Israel, to *aliya* and *hityashvut* but the question is whether these are necessarily State functions. Among the religious Zionists, there seem to be various voices.

The indifferent does not attribute religious meaning to the State in his discourse. He sees himself as committed and subordinate to the state law. He perceives the State as a bureaucratic instrument for achieving security and basic rights for its citizens and cannot harm or enhance the process of redemption. Hence, the State does not have religious meaning but rather an instrumental meaning. This approach challenges his religious world as it raises a fundamental question: Can anything in the Jewish world be separated from its religious meaning? The indifferent type does not deal with this question at all.

Two approaches exist. One views the State the way Rav Kook saw it, as necessary to the redemption process, and the other views it as separate from the redemption processes. Can one attribute religious meaning to every event in history? If so, the Six-Day War can be viewed as a religious revival and a sign of the enhancement of the messianic vision, and the disengagement can be seen as a withdrawal from the redemption vision.

The separatist, the confronter and the integrator view the State as an ideology that enhances the religious process. Hence, both separatists and confronters are disappointed with the State. The separatist distances himself from the State and its obligations. He sees himself mainly as a consumer of the benefits the State can offer him in his everyday existence. However, there is a basic difference between the confrontation, integration and containment stance.

There are two distinct paths to separation: passive, by simply moving away; and active confrontation, by violating the law and striving to destroy the State and replace it with the Judean state. The confronter and the integrator are ready to change the State to fulfill its original religious goal but in two different ways. While the confronter wants to do it immediately by force and impose the religious goal on the State, the integrator wants to do it gradually

with love so that gradually they will settle in the hearts of the Israeli citizens and change the State. The container doubts if the state can be part of an identity discourse or whether it should be part of a discourse on rights.

Y. Liebman lists four strategies for dealing with modernity: Rejection, adaptation, compartmentalization and expansion.<sup>10</sup> This typology was not enough to describe the population in relation to the research question; however, some aspects of it are relevant. Those who favored separation use Liebman's rejection strategy. Liebman claims that this characterizes the ultra-orthodox movement. The separatists can be defined as new nationalist ultra-orthodox. Some of them use compartmentalization mechanisms where they differentiate between the State as a religious entity and as an instrumental function to be used for existential needs. The same reaction was found among some of the integration types. The confrontation type is characterized by Liebman's expansion strategy; namely, the religious conviction is expanded to every part of life. Thus, their confrontation is seen as part of their religious commitment. The adaptation strategy, namely those who adjust themselves to modernity, was not used explicitly in this sample, although among the indifferent types it was implied in a few cases. The containment type is not represented at all in Liebman's typology and that is perhaps a sign of *Ziestgiest* where religious Zionist education and society is torn between a dogmatic, monolithic one-dimensional ideology,<sup>11</sup> aiming at rapid social and ideological differentiation,<sup>12</sup> due to the inevitable exposure of its graduates to post-modernist ideas.

The three strategies of confrontation, integration and containment can be explained through Rand's<sup>13</sup> triadic model, which is based on Fromm's theory,<sup>14</sup> to have and to be. The three options can be explained with the theoretical paradigm that deals with the manner in which people define their identity along dimensions that can predict their behavior in the realms of education, employment, human relations and a variety of everyday life situations. Fromm claims that beyond the endless variety that can characterize human behavior, the individual manifests great consistency regarding the way in which he reacts to his external and internal worlds. The ways



he reacts to outer and inner stimuli are called Modes of Existence (MOE). The MOE does not refer to any specific content (What) but rather describes the way (How) a person reacts to specific stimuli. According to Fromm,<sup>15</sup> two basic MOEs direct human behavior: Being (the individual's tendency to grow, love and advance towards self realization) and Having (the individual's tendency to relate to the world and his relations with people in an acquisitive and controlling manner. Rand<sup>16</sup> added a third MOE, Doing, that refers to the tendency to act and the derivation of satisfaction from the actual process of doing. This tendency is based on the individual's need to change his surroundings or the world of stimuli confronting him in order to adapt it to his own purposes, needs and aspirations. Rand claims that the three MOEs exist concurrently in each individual's personality but that one mode generally dominates the other two. The existence of these tendencies and the dominance of one of them is not limited only to individual behavior, but constitutes an array of universal forces that have directed the development of human society in its entirety and characterized a range of diverse religions and worldviews throughout human history.<sup>17</sup> The types described above can be characterized according to the three MOEs.

The confrontation type is a Having MOE. The integration (*mamlakhti*) type is a Doing MOE. He integrates the messianic vision into practical actions. The containment type is a Being MOE. He differentiates between his ideological convictions and practical actions, while simultaneously accepting both; the two faces are used for growth and self-realization in their spiritual-religious ideological aspect.

The three types use the religious ideology of redemption differently. The chief aim of the messianic ideology of a person who is characterized by the confrontation strategy (the Having MOE) is to acquire strength through ideological knowledge to control other people who think differently from him. He believes they are incapable of understanding the purpose of our staying in the Land of Israel and that the others are undermining and damaging the messianic process. He wants to control their worldviews just as he controls material possessions using ideology as an instrument for increasing his ability to control others or to acquire possessions for

himself and impose his messianic vision upon the State. In contrast, the messianic ideology of a person characterized by the containment strategy (the Being  $\text{MOE}$ ) is the acquisition of ideological knowledge for the sake of enriching his inner self so that he can reach a higher and more varied level. He uses the messianic vision as a general guideline to help him cope with the cognitive dissonance he faces in its positive post-modernist meaning. The person with the engagement strategy (the Doing  $\text{MOE}$ ) tends to turn his knowledge mainly into a tool for accomplishing his tasks more effectively. For this type of person, the acquisition of messianic knowledge provides him with the means for doing things in a better and more efficient way in the framework of his effort to alter his surroundings and the society in which he lives and operates. The messianic knowledge is turned into practical human actions. Both the confrontation and the integration types translate the Messianic vision into a practical mode. However, while the confronter sees the messianic vision as an end, the integrator sees it as a means. For the integrator, the end does not justify all the means; he sees the redemption as a long linear path. For the confronter, the end justifies the means and the main thing is to gain control now in order to save the Land of Israel from devastation.

The findings can also be analyzed from the perspectives of time, place, and language.

#### **TIME**

Time is a fundamental dimension in this context. The participants live in a non-realistic time orientation (eternity).<sup>18</sup> From a psychological point of view, this may endanger the coherence of their ego identity, because the dilemma between actual and vague time is a key issue in the construction of the healthy “self.”<sup>19</sup> From the theological point of view, the vague time is the traditional redemption which will come about in a time “which is not a day and not a night.”

The fact that for the interviewees, the only meaningful time perspective is the future, implies that they are committed to long-term goals rather than to short-term purposes. Hence, the rejection of the peace process and peace education is regarded as part of the

rejection of the here and now in favor of the perpetual future. The peace process implies the withdrawal from perpetual values in favor of temporal ends. It is connected to hedonism and secular considerations rather than to altruistic, religious, eternal values.

Lamm distinguishes between goals that can be achieved and goals that will never be achieved.<sup>20</sup> Goals that can be achieved are rational goals. According to Lamm, one of the main differences between political and ideological education is that political education deals with rational, attainable goals, whereas ideological education deals with utopian, unreachable goals. The aim of political education is to provide the students with means that enable them to expose the interests that lie behind the goals. In this case study, many participants reject rationalistic goals and prefer to stick to Messianic goals, whereby they have different time perspectives and irrational horizons.

#### **PLACE**

The second dimension is place. Do the interviewees relate to a real place or to a visionary-mystical place?<sup>21</sup> Schwartz claims that throughout Jewish history, Jews walked a fine line between fact and fiction concerning the land of Israel as an integral part of their existentiality.<sup>22</sup> The conquest of the sacred historical sites in Jerusalem, Hebron and Bethlehem during the Six-Day War in 1967 was considered a theological change rather than a political one.<sup>23</sup> The political outcome of the war was regarded as compatible with the original messianic worldview. The victory was a sign from God that ushered in the messianic age. The beginning of the peace process in 1978 was seen as a retreat from this messianic vision and led to a split between the dream and reality, and consequently, religious confusion. The interviewees of the separatist, confrontational, and integrative stances did not view the Gaza Strip as a dangerous place because of its religious significance. In their eyes, the peace process was not part of an international agreement between nations but rather a theological war against God and his commandments.

Silberman-Keller,<sup>24</sup> following Lamm<sup>25</sup> and Sholem,<sup>26</sup> writes that one of the ways to combine eternity and history is mystifica-

tion. According to Sholem, mysticism is “the will to experience God here and now.”<sup>27</sup> In this study, the separatists, confronters and integrators use mystification to cope with the gap between ideology and reality.

Schnell and Mishal view place as a focus for identity construction.<sup>28</sup> Following the terminology of Redfield<sup>29</sup> and Scott<sup>30</sup> on “great” and “little” traditions, Schnell and Mishal distinguish between the “great place” with ideological visionary attributions and the “little place,” which is a realistic space for daily life. Using this terminology, the indifferent type treats Gush Katif as a “little place,” whereas the separatist, the confronter and the integrator types relate to it as a “great place.” The container juggles between the two.

#### *LANGUAGE*

The discourse that developed in religious Zionist society since 1967, especially among the settlers, included the shaping of a new kind of (ahistorical) language with clearly marked idioms. The correlation between language and identity has been examined extensively. Although language as a communicative tool must strive for universality, it also includes deeper layers that reflect beliefs, emotions and personal preferences, enabling identification of the speakers’ personal or group characteristics.<sup>31</sup> Foucault claims that text, images, emphases and frames of reference in discourse are reflections of social structures and institutions of a political and ideological culture and especially of the power relations originating therein.<sup>32</sup> Peleg maintains that words form connections and combinations among people for purposes of social dynamics and arrangements, enabling discourse to reinforce existing social structures or spur the construction of new ones.<sup>33</sup> Ahituv notes that religious language is simultaneously reflective and formative, reflecting the possible worlds embodied in it, while building the common world of its speakers.<sup>34</sup> Some of its words and the behavior patterns thereby engendered become codes of identification and represent identities.<sup>35</sup> A similar process occurred in religious Zionist society’s treatment of the peace process. The Six-Day War altered territorial demarcation, differentiating between the boundaries of Israel’s control and those

of its sovereignty. Furthermore, the question of whether the territories were conquered or liberated is not merely a matter of semantics but also a substantive ideological issue. Relating to the territories conquered in 1967 as liberated territories reflects a conception of a utopian permanent nature according to which these territories always belonged to the State of Israel and were returned to it and are therefore not subject to negotiation. "Conquered territories," by contrast, reflects a contemporary realistic view of a tentative nature. Effectively, religious Zionism was determined to transform the collectivity's boundaries of control<sup>36</sup> into boundaries of sovereignty, a mission perceived by its adherents as a religious obligation and a national necessity.

Another example of language as a tool for shaping identity is reflected in the two Hebrew words used to identify settlements within pre-1967 Israel and those in the territories (*hityashvut* and *hitnahalut*, respectively). The latter expression, that entered Israeli public terminology as of 1977, constitutes a religious replacement for the former one that was in use since the earliest days of Zionism.<sup>37</sup> The difference between the two terms is the difference between the sacred and the profane: *Hitnahalut* functions as part of a biblical theological conception linked with Joshua's conquest of the Holy Land and embodying an act that is a direct consequence of fulfillment of prophecy according to Divine command, whereas *hityashvut* reflects dwelling in a certain locality for residential purposes. While *hityashvut* has a civil connotation, *hitnahalut* is of religious significance.

Another prominent semantic difference resulting from political changes is represented by the concept of the "Land of Israel" vs. the "State of Israel." The former expresses the theological context of territory and the latter its civil dimension. These differences, too, reflect the sacred vs. profane dichotomy, ultimately causing substantive damage to the national ethos among religious Zionists. The conceptual mingling of sacred and secular and the attempt to introduce sacred language into secular discourse and thereby subjugate it are of formative significance regarding identity. Note that the language differences cited are not expressed explicitly in discourse but are

latent and encoded. It is precisely this latency that accorded power and validity to the changes in terminology, enabling a gradual shift from potential (theoretical-ideological) to actual (practical political protest).

The different typological reactions to the disengagement can also be examined in light of language. Thus for the separatists, the disengagement is deportation from Eretz Israel to the secular State of Israel. Hence, this is an opportunity to separate himself from the State of Israel. For the confrontation type, the disengagement is a banishment and has a devastating physical meaning. For him, it is a pogrom; therefore, in order to save other parts of the Land of Israel, he has to take the lead and control the deeds and mindsets of Israeli citizens and force them to take the right path of salvation and redemption. For the integration type, the disengagement is an act of uprooting, stemming from various mistakes made by the settlers since 1974. Hence, the correction will come when the religious Zionists are understood differently by the public. For the containment type, the disengagement is a process of evacuation, carried out by the Israeli government in order to protect Israeli citizens. He feels obliged to obey Israeli civic law and thus he has to accept the inevitable transgressions driven by the democratic decision of the government. Only those who believed in separation and confrontation used derogative language.

The ideal type, in my eyes, for state religious education, is the containment type. The fact that most of the religious Zionist population is indifferent to the story of the disengagement can be interpreted as a sign that religious Zionism is sectorial; each group cares only for his own select group.

A religious Zionist website called “Kippa” reported that on the anniversary of the Amona riots, all the internal *dapei parashat hashavua* (weekly Torah newsletters) wrote about Amona and the Gush Katif story except for those distributed in the center of the country. The fact that they ignored such a central issue reflects the indifference of the center of the country to the story of Gush Katif. The fact that this fundamental issue was also not dealt with in the

SRE system is a reflection of the inability of the system to deal with complex issues that have more than one dimension.

Dagan claims that one of the main problems of SRE is that they never coped seriously and systematically with ideological issues.<sup>38</sup> The result was that the official policy of most schools was a rightist policy. Though the school didn't deal with political questions because it is a state system and politics within the school system is forbidden, they informally encouraged the rightist point of view. Because usually those who are religious are also rightist, there is a view that those who are secular are leftist. What happens to those who are religious and happen to hold so-called leftist political opinions? In this case, their religiosity is suspect. In a study I conducted among religious Zionist girls, when they had to reflect retrospectively on their socialization process which was during the period of the Oslo treaty, some of them complained that they felt terrible when the hidden and sometimes explicit message of the teachers was that they have to participate in the demonstrations against the peace process.<sup>39</sup> They recalled how difficult it was for them to hide their real leftist worldview as they were afraid to be excluded or suspected of not being religious. Those who dared to talk about their leftist opinions explicitly were condemned and excluded. These girls felt that in the long-run, this terrible experience damaged their religious coherency.

The fact that religious Zionism cannot hold other ideas than this linear Messianic approach is developed by Schwartz.<sup>40</sup> He claims that those who dared to oppose the official path were marginalized. This is exactly what happened to Rabbi Aviner when he dared to rule against disobeying army orders. He was immediately considered suspect and not considered able to rule on personal religious questions (*Nidah*). When Jonathan Basi agreed to take on the government responsibility as head of the administration to deal with the settlers, he was persecuted by the religious right and finally had to leave his home, Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu, that was considered to be a relatively liberal religious Zionist kibbutz, because he could no longer bear being ostracized. Almost no religious Zionist Rabbis, except for Rabbi Benny Lau (who is considered to be a promising liberal

modern orthodox rabbi) stood up and protested. The fact that Basi was banished from his kibbutz was interpreted in the mainstream as a punishment from God. He banished innocent people now he was banished.

This is another indication that religious Zionism cannot hold different ideas.<sup>41</sup> The fact that religious Zionism cannot hold political leftist ideas creates many unvoiced voices and that is extremely problematic from the point of view of socialization. The main problem of SRE is that it cannot accept other opinions. Another facet of this issue is the surprising large number of adolescents in this study who were indifferent to the story of the disengagement after it took place. This may be the direct result of the fact that it was a non-issue within SRE. On the other hand, the discourse that was represented in this research by the separatists, the confronters and the integrators was also attributed by the participants to their education in the SRE system. It seems that the SRE system was torn by two opposite forces. The tendency not to react because they did not have the educational tools to cope with the situation, or when holding a discussion, to use essentialist one-dimensional discourse based mainly on a messianic vision, interpreted into action.

The fact that SRE educates to one specific ideal type<sup>42</sup> and does not encourage systematic exploration as a legitimate educational process<sup>43</sup> is what Bar-Lev, Leslau and Neeman<sup>44</sup> claim is one of the main reasons for the high rate of religious drop-outs (*Hazara Beshela*). This monolithic approach left the SRE almost without tools to confront with the issue of the disengagement. There was a rumor that the disengagement caused a great crisis among state religious education graduates and adolescents. But this study indicates the opposite. A majority of graduates claimed that, practically speaking, the disengagement didn't cause any fundamental crisis; according to teachers and students, it was a non-issue in the classrooms after the disengagement. This has far-reaching implications.

In a recent poll conducted on the katif.net website concerning dedicating a special day to memorialize Gush Katif, only 53 percent said it was a good idea, 27 percent said that every teacher should decide on his own, and 20 percent said it is irrelevant. These



findings are amazing when you take into account that the website is run by Gush Katif settlers and their supporters. There were huge advertisements in the newspapers asking teachers to dedicate the 22nd of Shvat to the memory of Gush Katif. It will be extremely interesting to check how many schools in the center of the country will participate in this initiative.

It should be emphasized that there was a difference between the attitude of the adolescents to the disengagement and to the riots in Amona. The riots in Amona were more significant for those who participated there, but this requires a different paper. However, among those adolescents who actively participated in the struggle against the disengagement, there were basic two reactions: among the separatists, there was an increasing tendency to postpone or avoid the army service. Some of them told me explicitly that they doubted that they would go to the army unless forced to by their parents or others. The confrontational types were also split into two groups: those who said that the solution is to postpone the army service for a later stage until the nation understands that we are needed and begs us to take the lead; and those who wanted to go to the army and excel there in order to be able to “capture” key positions in the army and in the State, and conquer the State of Israel by force. Among the integrators, there were also two groups (minimal effort and maximal effort). Almost all of them went, or planned to go, to the army but one group said that the disengagement was a real trauma and that they would invest the least possible effort in their military service, not go to the dangerous and prestigious combat units as they once would have, and not to become officers. However, others of this type said that the disengagement was proof that there should be a change in the Israeli consciousness and this could only be done from within. Their conclusion was that they should go to the army, be more engaged with the secular population through the army, and settle in the hearts of the people. They felt they had to strive for top positions and excellence in order to change the worldview of Israeli society willingly.

There are different ways to cope with conflict. The indifferent and the separatists ignore the conflict. The confrontation and

integration types view the conflict as an aberration. All have an essentialist approach. The conflict is perceived a priori as bad and dangerous; hence, you either separate yourself or fight against it or postpone your reaction to it and consider it a ruling from above. The negotiator views conflict as a positive and necessary good. This can show how a religious world can cope with modernity. The position of containment enables to avoid giving the messianic vision an immediate real and practical interpretation, yet takes the messianic vision as a guideline.

Davies criticizes schools that tend towards “equilibrium” and enhance “frozen struggles.”<sup>45</sup> She claims that conflict has a prominent positive facet as it promotes dialogue and active exploration, which is necessary for human development. The SRE conception that conflict is bad should be changed. Conflict should be encouraged as an integral part of the healthy exploration process of adolescents that is needed for the construction of a coherent identity.<sup>46</sup> The disengagement was a great opportunity for the SRE to examine the dilemma. This could have been a great learning experience for the entire system. The SRE should have concluded that it needed to prepare a new curriculum that deals with unsolvable questions. Hence, it seems to me that the ideal type that can cope with both the realistic and visionary dimension of religious Zionism is the containment type. He can simultaneously hold a religious messianic worldview in his mind, but behave as part of normal life within the State. The construction of the containment type is the future of SRE, of religious Zionist society and of Israeli society as a whole, and the sooner the better.

## NOTES

1. Z. Gross, “State-Religious Education in Israel: Between Tradition and modernity,” *Prospects* 33(2) (2003): 149–164.
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# 8

## The Disengagement Plan as Reflected in Virtual FAQ

*Yuval Cherlow*

### **BRIEF INTRODUCTION**

One novel channel of communication between rabbis and very large communities which was introduced in the last decade is the “Ask the Rabbi” websites. Thousands of questions and appeals are addressed to rabbis over the Internet through these sites. Many of the queries and the rabbis’ answers are posted on the different sites, thus constituting a mass study of Torah and a common asset. One of the surprising advantages of these sites is the vast pool of knowledge they offer, indicating public views and concerns. Just by perusing the questions one can learn quite a lot about the state of affairs.

When the disengagement plan was at hand, about 1,000 queries about the disengagement and its implications were presented before me. The questions suggest a very intensive public state of mind, and point to a fundamental disagreement, schism, and internal conflict, and to the tremendous forces at play. This essay includes only a

minute portion of the questions referred to and addressed by me, but it may help to portray the fascinating collage of issues on the public's mind at the time. It was difficult to pick out and to sort the different questions, and I have invested a great deal of time and effort in it. I hope readers are provided with an interesting perspective in this essay, a perspective which involves both public concerns and my positions as reflected in my responses. The questions and answers are brought as posted on the website, even when crudely articulated, except for minor grammar corrections. I wish to make clear that I have not assorted the most esoteric questions for this essay, but the most frequent.

With God's will, I shall succeed in finding a way to publish all the questions and answers in a book about the disengagement.

The topics of discussion in this essay are:

- A. The attitude toward the disengagement: many questions were asked about the religious credence regarding the disengagement; is it a religious duty or a duty by Halakhah to oppose? Is it permissible to support?
- B. The attitude toward the State of Israel, given its decision to disengage: These questions troubled many people since the State of Israel seemed to have betrayed one of its moral foundations – the precept of inhabiting the Land of Israel. The matter of attitude involves numerous issues such as whether to persist in the custom of praying for the state's good or not.
- C. The State of Israel has been perceived by various Zionist-religious factions not only as an important and significant component of the Jewish experience, but also as a realization of the vision of redemption. Does the disengagement prove that the movement of redemption has failed?
- D. This plan had been given many names: disengagement, deportation, devastation, The Pogrom, etc. I shall exemplify the importance of this issue and contemplations concerning it.
- E. The attitude toward the military: the IDF was perceived as the chief instrument of evil deployed to execute the disengagement. This feeling was so bad that some have asserted that IDF

stands for Israeli Deportation Forces. The questions about this matter were by and large of two sorts: one about the attitude to be taken toward the army in principle, and the other about the proper way to treat the soldiers who participated in the demolition of Gush Katif.

- F. Restriction of protest: what ways of opposing the plan are allowed and what ways are forbidden.
- G. The (military) insubordination was one of the major issues in question, and a profound contention revolved around it. I published a summary of this discussion in Hebrew on <http://www.mizrachi.org/ideas/view.asp?id=219> and in English on <http://www.mizrachi.org/ideas/view.asp?id=218>
- H. Where have all the prayers gone – an integral part of the deep religious experiences people had during the disengagement was soul-searching prayer. Many were disappointed by the prayers not being answered and some piercing questions were raised about prayer in general as a result.
- I. The eminence of great rabbis: besides the many practical actions taken in order to stop the disengagement, there were many acts of belief. Many have proclaimed that the virtue of confidence means that utter denial is the proper disposition toward the plan, derived from faith in the plan not being realized. Some said one should not pack nor cooperate etc. All these assertions have failed. This failure elicits very difficult questions. On the other hand, some rabbis ruled that insubordination is prohibited, and some of the youths have deemed those rabbis collaborators and traitors. The hardest thing to endure was the disagreement which greatly undermined the rabbis' authority, for there was no single take on the matter that many rabbis could agree with.
- J. Religious Zionism has always strived to bridge between different sectors of the nation, and to act legally and as decently as possible. This approach could not stop the disengagement. Does it go to show that the religious Zionist way was equivocated altogether?
- K. Has the way of "love of Israel" reached its end?



- L. The issue of youth education.
- M. Orthodox Judaism has let down those who oppose the disengagement. On top of not participating in the campaign against the disengagement, it refrained from toppling the government in parliament votes. This gave rise to many questions regarding our relation to Orthodoxy.
- N. Internal revision: we do not have any exact numbers, but many religious Zionists concluded that a new way of thinking may be called for in light of the disengagement – focusing more on social issues, forging society, aspiring for justice and grace.
- O. Personal crises: aside from big ideological issues, the evacuation of Gush Katif has brought about many personal crises to those who have fought against it.
- P. What does the good Lord expect of us?

**EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR RELIGIOUS  
ZIONISM AND MODERN ORTHODOXY,  
ESPECIALLY AFTER THE DISENGAGEMENT**

A precise reading of the questions that were asked provides us with a fascinating picture of the major challenges that face religious Zionism for the coming years. In order to understand these challenges, we must go backwards a few decades, to become aware of the very significant change experienced by religious Zionism, a major portion of which was expressed in the responses to the disengagement cited below. This insight will also aid us in defining our future goals.

Religious Zionism is intrinsically bipolar: religious Zionism; national-religious; military service-yeshivah; religious-kibbutz; Torah-and labor, and so on. As a hyphenated movement, it was historically characterized by moderation, both religious and political. Religious moderation (and many would say, making light of Judaism) is expressed in different ways – from laxity in personal observance to the low status of rabbis and the few yeshivot of classical religious Zionism. As proof of political moderation, we need merely mention Mizrachi's support of the Uganda scheme, and the National Religious Party ministers' opposition to entering the Old

City of Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria in the Six-Day War. As a bipolar movement, it usually found it possible to exist as a Jewish and democratic society; it viewed the State of Israel as the “first flowering of our redemption,” despite being a secular state; and it was involved in all aspects of Israeli society.

In the 1960s religious Zionism encountered the school of Rav Kook, and in many senses, fell under his sway. Many erroneously identified Rav Kook’s teachings with religious Zionism, but this is a major mistake. Rav Kook’s teachings draw upon a kabbalistic-mystical conception that all is sacred; its main innovation lies in its subsuming nationalism, culture, general education, and even sport under the heading of “sacred,” and in this it diverges greatly from the ultra-Orthodox conception. This is so, however, only if they all fundamentally serve the holy, but they cannot exist as an independent pole. Consequently, this notion externally resembles religious Zionism (since it includes numerous mundane concepts), but its conceptual foundation is extremely disparate, and is closer to the ultra-Orthodox understanding.

The match between the movements gave birth to a wonderful religious Zionist generation whose path is illuminated by the holy, redemption, *Eretz Israel*, and the like. Obviously, the return to all parts of Eretz Israel greatly intensified the consequences of the meeting of the two camps. But that is the problem: this encounter did not prepare itself for a situation in which the Jewish state and society would not appear to be serving the holy, but the opposite – as acting against it. The primary crisis was generated when the state does not even serve its fundamental *raison d’être*, as perceived in the thought of those who regard themselves as the exclusive successors of Rav Kook’s teachings: the settlement of Eretz Israel.

Consequently, the disengagement plan created a staggering series of educational challenges that face us, of different sorts. One type pertains to ideology. The restoration of the ideas of religious Zionism concerning the supreme importance of the Jewish collective in the national political organization, and the methods that obligate this collective – decision making, fairness, recognition of institutions, and the like – poses a complex educational challenge, especially after

the span of a generation in which the attitude to the state focused on its “sacred” nature. A second type pertains to the ability to conduct oneself in a reality in which matters do not proceed according to a worldview which the individual perceives as exclusively correct and just. A complete response to the shattering of the dream entails a different comprehension of life, and a singular understanding of the “process of redemption” as conditional. A third type is the question of the attitude to authority, either rabbinical-religious, or political and judicial. This is a lengthy process of learning civics, the relationship between democracy and conscience, and numerous other relevant topics. Above all, this is a very profound examination of our belief: with a deeper understanding of the trait of trust in God, the relationship between man’s actions and Divine Providence, and, mainly, man’s limitations and his inability to comprehend the divine goal of world affairs. As a continuation of this issue, the basic question arises, especially regarding youth, concerning the relation between adopting the radical vision of *tikkun olam*, “fixing” and changing the world and not accepting it as it is, on the one hand, and, on the other, adopting the democratic idea and the decision of the majority, even when replete with injustice.

These are some of the main educational issues raised by the reactions to the disengagement. They teach of the educational challenge in the reevaluation of several of the leading principles that guided religious Zionism in recent decades. This article presents a real time analysis of the issues troubling the religious Zionist public, on the one hand; and, on the other, a few educational guidelines that I composed as a response to questions directed to me. These guidelines are a sort of blueprint for the comprehensive educational program in which we must invest great effort.

### **A. Attitude toward the Disengagement**

Q: Honored Rabbi,

Hello and happy holidays!

I find it hard to make up my mind about the disengagement over the past few days. People keep telling me that as they are religious, it seems pretty obvious that they should oppose, seeing as

most of our rabbis and the great teachers of our generation decided to oppose.

There is however one question that haunts me: Have all those hundreds of rabbis and scholars who have passed judgment against (including your honor) the plan, perused and scrutinized its objectives and have they delved into the security-military aspects of the plan and into the possible good that might come of it, according to its contrivers (such as counteracting against the possibility of an Arab majority in Israel, maintaining the concentration of settlements etc.) and the halakhic considerations with respect to these benefits, and only then ruled? Or have they rendered a general Halakhah forbidding the handing over of territories without considering those important desirable outcomes I mentioned? If the latter is not the case, it makes things far simpler for me. Among my many vices, of course, I find it hard to take for granted that the rabbis have thoroughly investigated this matter.

Sorry for the cumbersome question, I'd be glad to receive an answer.

Thank you very much and may you continue enjoying a kosher and happy holiday!

A: Greetings,

I cannot answer empirical questions. I do not know who has read the plan and its justifications (mind you the prime minister never once put forth the reasons behind the plan nor the nature of his decision, so the rabbis can hardly be blamed for not perusing it). Neither do I know whether it would be accurate to say that an absolute majority of the Torah greats are against it – I'm not quite sure as to your idea about who they are, and chiefly – how do great scholars of Torah of the Orthodox persuasion stand with respect to the disengagement, and so forth. I suggest you look into the teachings of Rabbi Abraham son of Maimonides. In the beginning of his book, *Wars of the Lord*, he speaks – referring to the book's main subject – of the duty to be loyal to one's truth and not to decide by counting "greats" in favor or against any book.

As for the matter itself, I have no doubt in my mind that this

plan has some advantages. Several times and in this website too, I have written about our duty to face the disengagement not by an internal discussion among ourselves where we persuade one another, but to listen and be very attentive to arguments in its favor, and then to try and find a different non-military way to attain the good that may come of it without having to incur the heavy cost of the disengagement.

Speaking for myself I can tell you this: I have been looking for the disengagement's benefits for long and I think I know what the main ones are. Moreover, I find those advantages very important. My stand against the disengagement stems from two reasons that are intertwined: just as the inquiry you have brought up regarding the rabbis' considerations, so I find the government's considerations to be amiss – they have neglected to consider our duty toward the Land of Israel. This is why their conclusion is inherently erroneous even in theory, because not all facets have been weighed in. And besides all that, I find that the pragmatic assumptions on which the plan is based are wrong (like the change in the European attitude toward us), both in spirit and in practice, and of course this is not only due to an objective discernment of reality but from the grave predicament this plan should inflict upon us which makes one view the state of affairs with much more acumen and skepticism than the government does.

## **B. Attitude toward the State of Israel**

Q: Rabbi Cherlow, good week!

Since the deportation I have been agonizing and disturbed about how we should relate to the State of Israel which has done this.

First off – one of my friends was among the firsthand executors of the disengagement. I cannot face him. How can a man who had studied in a *Mekhina*, a religious military preparatory program, in the West Bank perpetrate such a crime? So he was weeping, so what? Some people cry in the movies too.

On the other hand, I know some people who have found various ways to dodge the army service. We must stop hiding by

saying, “Oh I am convinced our marvelous youth would continue to enroll in the army.” This week I was trying to hitch a ride dressed in uniform near my settlement which is very temperate in terms of religious vigor. The first driver to pull over said, “I don’t give rides to soldiers” and drove off. The second driver, “If you participated in the deportation I won’t take you” (I would like to say that I would do the same).

The crisis is not constrained just to the matter of the Land of Israel. It has to do with a falling out between Torah and state. The state is run by internal interests where the Torah is not even regarded as a marginal interest with any respect. The state’s attitude toward the Torah is no different than its attitude toward the Koran or any other scripture, as Herzl put it, “Let the rabbis stay at the halls of Torah.” The country’s institutions are managed according to an utterly western doctrine. The Supreme Court, for instance, persists in ruling against Halakhah credence, banishing anything that’s Jewish, from marriage to funerals. Why should we regard it as an authority of any kind?

I am not referring to the judges who reside there, some of whom are good and some are bad, but to the system. Did those who established Israel’s national systems do so with the notion of the State of Israel as “the throne of God’s honor in this world” in their minds?! Obviously they didn’t. I was raised to believe that we should influence, and today I am not so sure. One cannot have influence on a system which is fundamentally estranged to Judaism.

The non-religious public, who we were always taught to think of as a “prodigal son” we can learn a lot from, has revealed its true nature in the deportation. You can count the secular people who expressed essential opposition to the deportation on one hand: cold hearted, insensible, laughing at us. I stopped blaming the government a long time ago. The government is merely the public’s delegate. It is entitled to act as it sees fit. The problem is with the voters – the non-religious population which as a whole lacks moral values. Stop the hypocrisy!! To settle in people’s hearts is infeasible. The secular public simply wants a non-Jewish state. True they have a Jewish soul and a Jewish flair but eventually they will become demographically

extinct, like the Hellenists and the Sadducees. Why don't we engage in internal fortification like the orthodox do? We should not involve ourselves with building the state for the simple reason that this building is liable to tumble down like a house of cards, and we are destined to seize the power by sheer demographics.

I am not saying one should hate the state, but that one should realize that this state is not the one referred to in the Torah as "a kingdom of priests and of a holy people." We should pay our taxes and perform our civil duties, but generation, construction, volunteering – what for?

Thank you very much.

A: Greetings,

I know no one among us who is not in the midst of a great turmoil. You are mistaken in the way you treat your friend. Your friend has made the profound choice to adhere to the reason saying that for the sake of the Israeli nation, the IDF cannot be put at risk of internal deterioration and that the order must be obeyed in order to save human life. The struggle against the disengagement should not have involved the military, but public and political affairs only. And by adhering to this dictum it has saved the Israeli nation from grave misfortune. Moreover, many soldiers reasoned that since the disengagement is inevitable, they had better be there and make it easier for the settlers, because they can be sensitive about it, rather than leave this delicate task to troupes who might be much more violent or emotionally indifferent about it.

I do not understand what you mean by "hiding by saying..." I think the first driver who did not give you that ride committed a serious wrong by alienating the army and seeking to dissolve it, the second driver with whom you sympathize was also severely wrong in my opinion. What you would have done is no lesser a crime – disassembling the army, hurting those who sacrifice their lives to defend you and others, and continuing to constantly batter the army and the police for having done what they should have. Those who do that are jeopardizing the national life, so to speak, and I know not by whose permission they do so.

It is true that Torah considerations are not included in the state's management. But we cannot but assume responsibility for that and ask what our part was in bringing this about, and what more can we do that we have not already done. There is plenty to be done, and instead of plunging into great despair, we should reassure ourselves in great faith and take our missions head on. There is no such thing as a circumstance in which one cannot make any difference. The capacity to influence always exists – it's just a matter of finding the way. And since we are full of tremendous energies, as our campaign has demonstrated, we must not direct these energies toward despair and revenge (as manifested in the behavior of the drivers you spoke of), but to use them to march forward.

As far as judging the non-religious population with respect to opposing or supporting the deportation goes, you are right. But is it an appropriate criterion to judge them by? Most of them were not cold hearted, insensible, mocking etc. And I don't know by which data you find that they were. Most of the population was very sorry, but thought and still think it was in our nation's best interest. Most Israelis would like to have a state of Jewish characteristics and of safe recognized borders within which a Jewish majority prevails, end to that end, so they think that the government's action was warranted. We are furious about their mistake, but your denunciation goes much too far. You are certainly not conforming to the Torah way when you bad mouth the Israeli nation so strongly, and wrongly at that.

Do not speak of demographic extinction, and do not treat the secular public this way. It is not in compliance to Torah; it is not true. It is condescending, arrogant, and uncalled for. Do not prophesize the downfall of buildings for we shall "seize power" or the likes because it is unfounded. One had better work hard rather than utter such statements.

Best regards.

Q: Honored rabbi, hello,

When I began giving serious thought to the inevitability of the disengagement being carried out, Jews being cruelly and violently



evicted from their homes (which even the anti-Semites of the Diaspora did not do so often), graves dislocated, synagogues shattered...deeds which are like a blow in the face of the entire Zionist feat and of the Torah, I came to the conclusion that I may find it really difficult to rekindle my sympathy with our national symbols! How can I sing *Hatikva* and raise the flag of the country whose actions stand against all my moral standards and are directed against the people and the Land of Israel? What would I have in common with this state?

I shall thank the rabbi for a prompt response, lest I join Neturei Karta.

A: Greetings,

I cannot tell you how you can sing, but I can tell you how I would:

If the State of Israel were not more than a place of refuge for the Jews – let us be content.

If the State of Israel were not more than a place where we can protect ourselves – let us be content.

If the State of Israel were not more than a place that made possible the restoration of history – let us be content.

If the State of Israel was not more than a place where we can exhaust our talents – let us be content.

If the State of Israel was not more than a place where our spread nation has gathered – let us be content.

If the State of Israel was not more than a place where we can live as Jews without fear – let us be content.

If the State of Israel was not more than a place where we can eventually persuade the entire nation to follow suit with us – let us be content.

If the State of Israel was not more than a place where the greatest epoch of Torah study in history can be had – let us be content.

If the State of Israel was not more than a place upon which the state of redemption is based – let us be content.

And let us be content many times over for the good bestowed

upon us by all of the above and much more. Of course this does not cover up the disastrousness of the pulling out scheme's consequences, should it be executed God forbid, and it does not cover up the fact that it would abate the things you mentioned. By the way, there is no need for exaggerations – the anti-Semites of the Diaspora may not have evicted us out of our homes so often, no, they just slaughtered us therein...and aside from that, no policeman or soldier departs with cruel or violent intent.

Best regards.

Q: (no greeting to begin with)

Knowing the rabbi's political stands regarding the plan to banish and extirpate the settlers of northern Shomron and Gush Katif out of their homes, while killing, injuring, incarcerating, and emotionally and physically handicapping them, ruining their life's enterprise of three generations, digging their loved ones out of their graves and scattering their corpses throughout the country, sending thousands of men, women and children to refugee camps, to trailers or tents perched in the middle of the desert, plundering the property for which they toiled for over thirty years to attain, banishing elderly people off their beds, pulling youth away by their hair, tearing babies from their mothers' arms and handing them to strangers, exerting force against righteous helpless Jews who have harmed no one, hurting disabled people, converters to Judaism, widows and orphans, destroying thousands of their homes, hundreds of their synagogues, schools of Torah, yeshivas, ulpan, schools, kindergartens, demolishing their factories and hothouses, destroying the crops in their fields, and delivering all of their belongings to the murderers who have murdered their families, I wanted to confront the rabbi with some tough but imperative questions:

- A. Does the rabbi undertake full responsibility, in this world and in the next one, over the ramifications of his assertion that "the law is the law" and that "orders must be obeyed?" For clarification, by undertaking responsibility I mean over all the

eventualities listed above as well as some which might occur but we cannot yet imagine, should the extirpation take place, God forbid.

- B. Does the rabbi find that the decision was democratically made, that it is in keeping with the principle of protecting minorities' basic rights, or whether the exact opposite was the case?
- C. Does the rabbi think that the decision to disengage was made with the nation's good in mind, or that the decision-makers were guided by irrelevant considerations (such as various perks, the legal circumstances the prime minister is under, hostile media and attorney general, tycoons looking after their interests etc.)?
- D. Would the rabbi have pronounced that this order should be obeyed if it had been given in a communist country ruled by a despot whose decisions are categorically accepted, even when the people clearly object as manifest in the last "elections"?
- E. Would the honored rabbi call to obey these orders if only the names of the settlements to be legally evicted were changed (for instance Um el Fahem instead of Gush Katif, Sachnin instead of Homesh, Sa-Nur, Ganim, and Kadim)? And, in short, would he have sanctioned the deportation of Arabs by the same law?
- F. This is merely a hypothetical question. If the honored rabbi's parents lived in Gush Katif, and if (God forbid) he had grandparents buried in the cemetery there, and they had to go through all of the horrors listed above, would the rabbi, in this case too, call to blindly obey the order of deportation?
- G. Is it true that "different aspects can only be seen from different angles," and it is all just a matter of perspective, unless it involves one personally, and that as long as one is not directly afflicted, they should allow other Jews who are not close family to undergo the same atrocities inflicted upon the people of Israel by the meanest peoples over the past two thousand years?

Excuse me for the long and direct questions, but I would like to know whether the rabbis of Israel assume responsibility for their words

and actions, or whether when it comes to the lives of Jews who are not their relatives, blood can be shed under the pretence of obeying the sanctified Israeli “law.”

A: Greetings,

Before I answer, I wish to ask his honor one tough but necessary question: Do you think the language you use is called for? Do you think it has anything to do with reality or truth?

Before answering my question myself, I would advise you to refrain from such language. Firstly, because what you say and the way you put it is not true and therefore dismissed altogether. And secondly, this kind of expression yields all possible damages and no good can come of it whatsoever. You had better stop.

As for your questions:

- A. I never said that the law is the law and orders must be obeyed. On the contrary, this kind of statement is fascist, anti-halakhic, and inhumane. The law has limits and orders have limits. So said Maimonides in his well known book about the Rules of Kings, Chapter 4, Halakhah 1. Therefore, I am of course exempt from answering the first question.
- B. The question of whether minority rights have been observed is indeed difficult to answer in the context of the outcome. In such cases the inverse question may be of use: suppose the government had decided to expand the settlements (I wish) and in order to pave a new highway, it would evacuate the settlement of Kerem Shalom against the settlers will – what would we have said then? That is to say that in principle, the government is authorized to abate individuals’ rights for the greater good. The question is, of course, how far this authority goes.
- C. I presume some of the considerations were irrelevant, and even corrupt. However there are three points to be taken: first, not all of our reasoning is relevant either. Second, irrelevant considerations are a fact of life, and a decision supported by a large majority cannot be invalidated because such considerations

were in play. And third, there are also many relevant considerations in this plan. Rest assured, I think that reasoning is wrong and that the plan is very bad, but one cannot say it is devoid of any reason.

- D. As for obeying the law in a communist country, refer to answer A.
- E. This hypothetical question concerning the parents naturally applies to you too, only inversed: would you have discerned differently if you found good reason to carry out the disengagement? I hope you would not have, and would have stayed loyal to your beliefs. As am I. First off, not only that I have very tight relations with some residents of Gush Katif and northern Shomron, but I also believe that this bad policy will be extended to all of Shomron and Judea, and there I have siblings. And second, I too was in this reality during the campaign to keep the Golan, and that was my position then too. One should not assume that others would think differently if matters concerned them directly.
- F. First of all – tone down. None of the government’s actions bear even the slightest resemblance to the deeds of the meanest peoples (let alone the evil ones) over the past two thousand years, and I suggest we read again the preface to my response. And secondly, of course different angles allow you to see different aspects. This is exactly Arik Sharon’s rebuttal, namely that if you were in his shoes you would do the same. However, this is precisely what we have to deal with and we should be men of truth and not ones who succumb to their heart’s desire.

The rabbis of Israel most certainly assume responsibility for their actions. This website must be responsible for human life rulings in cases which are far worse than the worst case scenario for Gush Katif and the northern Shomron. The likes of this keep one awake at nights, and afraid of the Day of Judgment and day of reprimand. This is exactly why they are undertaking the responsibility of saving the Israeli nation, as little as their chances are to succeed in that. And many of the rabbis (an absolute majority I think) see it as their

mission to save the people of Israel from the horrible dangers that statements such as yours give rise to – both dangers related to the terrible articulation, and to the conclusions you draw thereof, as can be read between the lines, about what measures should be taken. The question of responsibility in this world and the next world is therefore addressed back to you: how can you undertake the responsibility of saying such terrible things and for the conclusions you would like to have inferred thereof?

Best regards and God save us.

### **c. The Dawning of our Redemption**

Q: To the attention of the honorable Rabbi Cherlow may he live long and prosper,

The recent events were hurtful for any Jewish soul, but the well known teachings of Maimonides, in the *Rules of Fasting* decree by which saying “let bygones be bygones” is a form of cruelty, meaning reflection and deliberation of painful events are warranted so as to prevent their recurrence. I find it difficult to fathom how many of my fellow religious Zionists persist in regarding the state as the beginning of our redemption and persist in attributing an air of sanctity to it. Should one not distinguish between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel who ravel tremendous divine powers, and the state which was founded upon heresy to begin with? Surely all that has transpired here in the last sixty years is God’s will and part of a divine contrivance for true and whole redemption, but the question is what is the holy platform upon which we as faithful Jews must build the Lord’s throne in this world, rather than what are the reasons by which the maker of reasons delivers our redemption.

Should we attribute sanctity to the United Nations since without their vote in favor, the State of Israel would not have been founded? Is attributing sanctity to the state not tantamount to deeming the vermin Kosher? Our Torah is pure truth! Are we to delude ourselves by believing it can be built on a crooked foundation? This horrible plan is a blow in the face of religious Zionism. The army we so glorified is evicting Jews from the Land of Israel under the pretence of the sanctity of democracy, as if there is a “holy” duty to

abide by governmental decrees even when they reek of wrong doing and of corruption and danger!

Maybe God is implying something by having what we deemed holy turn against us? Maybe the point is the mistake we made because of unjustified naivety or because it was convenient to enjoy the benefits bestowed by the government. The Rabbi of Chabad taught us that the mere reciting of praise and mentioning the dawning of our redemption in prayer on Israel's day of independence defers the coming of the Messiah, and his teachings probably mean that these prayers employ elements which are not sanctified, i.e., they intensify the darkness of exile...

Should we not alter the way we perceive the state and just regard it as a practical reality rather than ascribe to it qualities it does not possess? Should we not direct the wonderful forces of our public to beckoning our brothers closer to the truth of Torah and developing of the land instead? I am not suggesting we should become orthodox, but that we should be more disillusioned in our cause, and, God willing, we shall be able to fundamentally change the state! Until then I think we had better delete the words "the dawning of our redemption" from the prayer for the state's well being and regard the Day of Independence as a day of reckoning in which we can hold seminars and so forth, rather than as a holiday by Halakhah, and refrain from assigning a Kosher cachet to the state, which it could exploit for doing deeds that conflict with our holy Torah.

Expecting response with due respect.

A: Greetings,

It is definitely time to become disillusioned, and those who haven't yet, had better do so as soon as possible.

It is bad to avert internal revision in difficult times.

It is puzzling how some people still do not see the State of Israel as the dawning of redemption. It is puzzling how some people still haven't relinquished their self-delusional desires to dictate to the Lord how to deliver the redemption, and because the Lord does not do as they expect, they deny the good of His deeds.

We were given a state by the Lord. And because we are not

doing right by this state, we must open our eyes and start doing what's right. Maybe God's insinuation is that we have not given enough attention to the state and by not doing so we are unable to elevate it.

Our duty by Halakhah is to thank the King of All Kings for the grace bestowed upon us, and those who refrain from doing so because it might be a blessing to no avail are snared in a trap of not recognizing the good which is a far graver vice. This does not mean one should not search his soul. This is the correct nature of halakhic holidays – giving praise and thanks for the blessings, and contemplation to that which is yet to be attained.

Best regards.

#### **D. The Correct Terminology**

Q: My question follows up on a response you have published where you assert that the term “banishment” is most suitable for the coming eviction of Gaza and Shomron. I do not fully understand what you mean. First you say that the decision to evacuate settlements is “not banishment” and then you say that since the word eviction is too gentle and you would rather dub it “banishment.” I am not clear as to why you have skipped over the term “rooting out” and have gone to the most extreme term.

But moreover, I do not understand how you – who have agreed that the arguments by which we are to be excluded from the rest of Israel are not valid – still find it appropriate to call this eviction deportation. Because by doing so you exclude yourself from Israel too: deportation is what those in power do to those who are devoid of power, whereas in this case the settlers or the religious-patriots or orthodox-patriots are all part of the entity of power (the state/government of Israel). We have all reached a certain decision together, and those whose opinion was rejected should not cry to high heaven for the wrong done to them when the decision is implemented. This is an outright lie and an undignified and indecent deception.

I sympathize with the distress of the public who is about to endure a very difficult disaster and that public's attempt to articulate its feelings with harsh words and imagery, this is why the term



rooting out seems appropriate to me, seeing as it honestly conveys their feelings without distorting the truth. Namely, a settler can root himself out of his home, with grief, pain, and tears, but with acceptance of the ruling he took part in rendering. This is the essential difference between rooting out and banishing. A man cannot banish himself out of his own home; it is always another, a hostile party that banishes. As for your argument that “some people think that the society does not have the authority to make a decision such as this,” I say all the more reason! This is exactly why you should make clear that this is not a transfer nor banishment and that a decision such as this is legitimate. And the other way around, by endorsing terms like “transfer” or “banishment” you give them reason to think that the society is not authorized to make such decisions.

I understand the rabbi’s wish to convey his sympathy and support of the settler’s struggle by using these harsh words to describe the events, but it is improper and inappropriate to do so. A rabbi and leader in Israel, of all persons, should be meticulous about his choice of terminology and the terminology he suggests be used.

Therefore I ask again, do you still find it appropriate to use the term “banishment” to describe the eviction of settlements in Gaza and the Shomron?

And if you think I want to banish Jews out of their homes, how can you even speak to me?? For I condone a real crime!! Are you aware of the (implied) allegation you are charging me with? The allegation that I, a religious man who was educated in religious Zionist institutions, support the banishment of Jews from their homes! This is inconceivable! What do you take me for, a Nazi???

Please take back what you have ascribed to me and those like me. It is important to me that you explicitly do so (ignoring this letter of mine, as you have ignored the response posted in that link above, would suggest that you really think that’s true). (Did the rabbi intend that if Sharon can use the euphemism “disengagement” to refer to the rooting out of settlements so can we, by the same token, refer to it as “transfer” or “banishment”?)

Thank you for your serious response.

A: Greetings,

- A. The term “rooting out” is a euphemism, and it does not convey the intensity of emotion which the evicted settlers are liable to feel.
- B. The matter of the settlers being part of the decision making entity is not at all simple. Complete elaboration on this issue is too long, so I lay out just the headlines of the points to be made. Surely you are aware that democracy is not just about the rule of majority, for this can be the worst kind of dictatorship where the majority’s stand always prevails and the suffering of minorities is persistently exploited. Democracy is also based on matters in which the majority should not prevail. The true nature of western democracies is discerned by the restrictions imposed on the majority and not by its power. The question is whether a majority should be allowed to demand such a sacrifice from a minority, after the majority itself deemed the settlement a national goal. This is a complex question. And it might be that this is one of the cases where the majority should not be allowed to prevail. Therefore the term “banishment” is appropriate.
- C. If the majority had considered all aspects and had been willing to fight for the minority, things would have been different. But the majority argues that this cannot be done and the outcome would be the downfall of all. Still, the disengagement plan is a subject of such fierce dispute, with respect to factual evaluations as well as to opinions and beliefs, that it is unclear how the majority’s view can be justified in light of the facts at hand.
- D. I do not use these words to gain acceptance, I do so because this is how I truly see it.
- E. Your arguments about the “crime” committed or “Nazis” are demagogic. I expressed my opinion that this is the right word to be used. I did not use any derogative term to describe those who disagree, nor can those derogations be logically deduced from what I said. If you read what I posted again, you would see for yourself that I do not consider it a clearly illegal action

which one must refuse to participate in. My stand is refined and precisely articulated enough not to be demagogically misrepresented.

Best regards.

### **E. Attitude toward the Army**

Q. I wanted to hear the rabbi's opinion regarding the thoughts I have been contemplating lately.

What should be our attitude toward the military in light of the recent events?

I was taught in the yeshiva that the military is the embodiment of redemption in our time, that every commander is "holy," and that one should contribute to the country. But I see that our military is not so pure. Not all military causes are purely martial. A great deal of politics is involved, up to the point of risking human lives for no reason.

We were in Lebanon for a number of years. We believed it was the best option, until one prime minister came and got us out of there. Apparently we did not have to be there all these long years. Were we getting killed there for nothing?

If the country believes that the "territories" are ours, then they should be settled and bravely defended. But if we are going to be evacuated tomorrow, why is settlement encouraged by special grants and cheap housing? If we shouldn't be there, let's evacuate the place now, rather than let people build for years and years and then throw them out. Why? Because that's what we decided now.

What I feel now is that I have no confidence whatsoever in the government and the military systems, and it is very difficult for me, as a religious person who has been raised differently, to see and to identify myself with it.

Thank you.

A: Greetings.

- A. We cannot place absolute pureness as a criterion. Unfortunately, we are human beings, and we are not completely pure in any aspect – even our learning of the Torah is not completely pure, the way we build a house is not completely pure, our settlement

efforts are not completely pure, etc. The Torah was not given to the ministering angels, and if we will measure things according to absolute pureness, we will probably denounce everything that exists in this world.

- B. What you call politics is often a policy which works to the benefit of the people of Israel, in its own way.
- C. We often work in a reality of doubt – we do not completely know what is good, and we try to do the best. If we do not succeed we try a different way. It is the same when learning the Torah: The Talmud teaches that a person does not understand the teachings of the Torah without failing first – is this a reason not to learn? Is everything we learned in the past a mistake? Was Shimon Haamsoni, who at first interpreted every “et” and then retired, mistaken, and was everything he did wrong for that reason?
- D. The “country” has great doubts regarding Judea and Samaria, and that is why its policy is not consistent, and one hand works against the other. This is certainly neither good nor suitable, and we should not make the post facto reality an ab initio reality. However, this is part of the way that things are conducted in the human world, and to deduct from this that military and military service are not worthy of our efforts is going too far and wrong.
- E. Instead of feeling distrust, it is better to do two things: The first is to understand how complicated the reality is, and how mistaken it is to expect it to be unambiguous and simple. As soon as you change your perspective and understand the complexity of the situation, you will gain the ability to correctly observe reality. The second thing is to try and change this reality to make it better. Reach for some mission for something you believe in, and ask yourself how you could bring reality closer to the vision of your mind. In this way you shall succeed.

All the best.

Q: Hello, honorable Rabbi.

I live in Northern Israel, and I give a weekly Talmud lesson in

my home. During the last year, a neighbor, living a few houses away in my street, joined. He is a simple person, married with a few children and working as a patrol officer in a nearby town. I have recently asked him whether he will be sent to participate in the “disengagement,” and he told me that he will indeed be sent, and that he will go, as this is his livelihood and there are no other options.

I went to Gush Katif, and on Monday, when the forces attempted to enter the settlements in order to deliver the decrees, my children called to tell me they saw him in the police lines at the Neve Dekalim entrance. I came to see, and I could not believe what I saw: he was wearing a black uniform with black gloves, like the special police forces, with a hat and sunglasses. I approached him and he exhibited discomfort, and did not want to talk with me. I greeted him and wished him that he will not raise his hand against a Jew. He answered “I hope so,” and did not look me in the eye.

Yesterday, which was Friday, I was taken out of Gadid. I returned home and reached the synagogue on Sabbath eve. I passed by him, and he did not say anything, as if he did not see me. My children approached him outside of the synagogue and admonished him, asking him how he could take Jews out of their homes, etc. He said “calm down!” and did not answer them.

My question is: should I shun him and ban him from my lessons, perhaps for some time? Educational anger? I thought this may alienate him for good. On the other hand, I do not think I should keep silent on everything, and act nice, as if nothing happened.

I would be happy to learn if there are general guidelines for this question and similar situations. Thanks in advance!

A: Hello.

I do not understand the dilemma.

I can find no reason on earth to ban him from the lessons.

Criticism of the disengagement plan can not be directed at him, and he is not the one responsible for it. Criticism should be directed at the political echelon, and if you would ask me about a member of the Knesset who voted for the plan, I would have to consider this. However, there is no place for thinking this over, as

that person should be brought closer and encouraged to learn Torah and to constantly grow stronger in his faith.

The struggle against the supporters of the plan will be conducted against those who made the decision, rather than against those who defended the people of Israel, by keeping its police force from crumbling.

All the best.

## **F. Limits of the Struggle**

Q: Hello Rabbi!

I would like to know the Rabbi's opinion regarding the way the struggle for the land of Israel should be conducted.

Naturally, I am talking about this specific case, in which it is not at all clear that it is against the laws of the Torah, and whether there is a duty to rebel against the government.

I would like to know whether the Rabbi believes that this plan should be fought against only within the limits of the law, or whether it is also permissible to deviate from the law in order to prevent this plan, for example, to block roads. I am not talking about the moral aspect, but about the actions being prohibited, and why?

Thanks in advance.

A: Greetings,

I did not completely understand the question.

Of course the law should be followed.

The problem in this case is that some of those fighting against this bad plan believe it to be essentially illegal, as it is illegal to leave the Land of Israel out of our own will, and it is illegal to drive people out of their homes in order to (perhaps) improve the lives of others. For this reason, it is hard to be convinced, in terms of law, that it is prohibited.

My stand on this issue is that the plan is unfortunately legal, and not only that, but that on the day after – whether the struggle succeeds or fails – we will be left with a bleak reality where there is no law and no judge, with a divided society with no mutual rules of behavior, and with a group of extremely idealistic young people

who have become used to acting against any rule or authority, and to a “get arrested and you win” festival, God will have mercy.

All the best.

### G. Refusing to Obey Orders

Q: Today it was published that a large group of religious Zionism rabbis support Rabbi Shapira’s call to refuse to obey orders to evacuate settlements. On the other hand, Rabbi Aviner has made the reverse statement, and this is also the impression I get from your answers to previous QandAs.

1. What are the sources used by Rabbi Shapira and his supporters in order to base the halakhic decision they have made, and what are the sources of the opposite halakhic decision?
2. How should a soldier who is not a student of one of the Rabbis who have signed these halakhic decisions act? Does the contradiction between the Rabbis enable him to choose a Halakhah which befits his personal point of view?
3. Is it possible that people have this option of choosing between different halakhic decisions in any case?
4. Is it possible that the contradiction between the judgments is due to the fact that this is a political-defense issue, and so the judgment derives from the Rabbi’s personal point of view, rather than from neutral objective use of halakhic sources?
5. If the answer to my last question is positive, how is it possible to deal with the claim that as a conclusion, Rabbis should not participate in some issues?

Thank you.

A: Hello.

I will answer briefly:

1. Rabbi Shapira, God bless him, clarified his sources – it is a Halakhah from Maimonides, which states that the king’s (or the government’s) orders should not be followed if they make the soldier transgress the law of God. This decision, of course,

assumes that it is forbidden for the country to give parts of the land of Israel to gentiles, and so the soldier is committing a felony when doing this. Those who argue against this base their argument on one of three claims: the first is that the government is allowed to say that it cannot hold on to parts of the Land of Israel, and that the command to settle the Land of Israel did not mean doing this under all circumstances, but rather to hold on and win, and if this is not possible – to retreat. The second is the argument that once the Knesset makes the political decision, this is the violation, and there is no halakhic meaning in the individual soldier’s refusal – imagine that the army commands him to go on a vehicle and retreat. The third is the argument that even the command to settle the land should be examined in light of saving lives for the country, and that refusal is a matter of saving lives for the country.

2. This is a delicate question. I believe that the soldier should follow the decision of his Rabbis. A Halakhah is not “chosen,” and in case of disagreement, the student should follow his Rabbi. I have often heard this position from Rabbi Shapira himself, God bless him, who referred students from other yeshivas who approached him with questions to the heads of their yeshivas.
3. I do not want to enter, in this limited framework, the issue of halakhic judgments and following the Rabbi.
4. I do not think so. I think many Rabbis agree with Rabbi Shapira, God bless him, in his assessment of the political-defense situation (for example, Rabbi Aviner, God bless him, who you have quoted, and even I humbly believe so), and there is no relation between their statements and refusing orders. Therefore, the claim that this is a matter of political beliefs is wrong.
5. Therefore, Rabbis must participate in this matter, and state what they believe should be done.

All the best.

Q: If an order would be given in the IDF to desecrate the Sabbath, God forbid, would you say that one should refuse to obey that order?



What is the difference between this precept and the prohibition to hand our land to the enemy?

A: Greetings,

There are a number of differences, but the primary one is the consideration of the duty to settle the Land of Israel, which is affected by the duty to observe the Sabbath. Just as the Sabbath itself is affected by the deaths of people, and therefore one Sabbath should be desecrated in order to observe many Sabbaths, and the nation of Israel will be torn apart if refusals will be widespread, and the duty of settling the land of Israel will collapse.

This belief of mine was published a number of times, and I even attach the following article, published in a newspaper regarding this.

The new political reality might place many commanders and soldiers in a personal dilemma, of whether to participate in the evacuation and obey the order on the day it is given. This dilemma derives from real causes – it would be terrible for a society if its soldiers did not have moral dilemmas, and it would be terrible for a society if it did not acknowledge that there are some orders that are illegal, which soldiers must refuse. This dilemma does not exist in a society in which one could “quit” the military, or in a fascist society, where obeying an order is a value above all others. It is correct, in terms of democracy, for soldiers not to face this dilemma, as the tool for enforcing law and order in a country is the police force, rather than the military. However, we do not do all the right things, and in this context clear statements should be made:

One must obey an order, even if it implies, to our great sorrow, the evacuation of settlements, which is in our eyes stripping another piece of Israel’s Jewish identity. One must obey an order even if the land of Israel is our land, and although there is a religious and a Zionist commitment to settle all of it. One must obey an order even if it means destroying his own house, or that of a relative. It is necessary to do this because this is the backbone of our coexistence. Without it, we would tear society apart, and it must be done in order to save lives in a country with no regular government and decision making norms.

But is there no limit? God forbid. There is not a person in the world who is allowed to be completely committed to a country, with no limits. It is not for nothing that the principle of a clearly illegal order, and its definition as an order with “a black flag waving above it,” were set in law. This decision is very compatible with the words of Maimonides himself, who talks about the limits of obeying the king’s commands. However, these situations are at the extreme ends of reality, and are not on the country’s agenda. Using the term “clearly illegal order” when it is not such an order, is only an ugly manipulation of the fundamentals of reality, and a real danger to the purity of morality, and to the lives of many, who will each have his own personal definition of such a command, and who will destroy this little plant who have started to cultivate in the land of Israel.

In addition, on the practical aspect as well, refusal is a mistake. Not only does it achieve no goals but it also makes people hate those who use this tool – the public does not forgive those who put a gun to their temples in order to create an internal balance of terror, and to try to enforce their will by violent force. Not a single good thing came to the land of Israel and to Jewish society from refusing orders. In addition, refusing also supplies a justifiable argument for mutual refusal – one refuses to evacuate, while the other refuses to defend; one acts according to his conscience, which prevents him from handing parts of the land of Israel to the enemy, while the other acts according to his conscience, which prevents him from participating in an “occupying” army, and Israeli society returns to the times prior to its destruction. The will to change the nature of the society and its policies should be directed to other means, by which reality can be affected: dialogue, persuasion, building an exemplary model which others would want to imitate, and other worthy human means.

All the best.

## **H. Prayers**

Q: Honorable Rabbi,

Hello,

If prayers by the great and marvelous rabbis of our generations do not cancel this horrible command upon us, how could we, the

simple people who also learn some Torah, etc, bring forth the mercy of the Lord?

I do not wish to degrade any person, but it is simply frustrating. As you can see, great rabbis are praying with intent, and nothing seems to move!

A: Hello.

We do not know the ways of the acceptance of prayers.

Since the days of Hassidism we have learned some of these principles. Hassidism emphasized that acceptance is not necessarily a result of the greatness of the person, as perceived by human eyes. Sometimes, it is the simple Jew, with simple and real intents, who can open the gates of heaven more than great and marvelous Rabbis.

Because we cannot know this, we pray with the fullness of our might, in the ways told by our wise men, and the Lord does what is good in his eyes. This goodness can come from the prayers of the entire nation, and the most important thing is united public prayer. This is what we learn from the commandment of convening the people with trumpets, and this is the conclusion derived from the prophet's calls for repentance, prayer and fasting.

All the best. May the Lord hear our prayers.

## **I. The Great Rabbis**

Q: Rabbi Cherlow, Hello.

My name is Gil. I am 36, secular (agnostic) and liberal, but I am very curious about the process that the national-religious society is going through.

In the months, weeks and days before the disengagement, we have often heard news of Rabbis declaring that the disengagement will not happen, that the Good Lord will not let such a disastrous event occur, and such statements which are all directed to one idea: Trust us Rabbis. We hereby announce that the Almighty Lord will prevent the plotters from hurting the sanctities of our religion. Yet despite all, reality proved them wrong.

My questions are as follows:

How do believers deal with a Rabbinical establishment which “has not provided the goods,” to use business terms, and which was so drastically wrong?

How do you deal with a “disappointing God?” How do you deal daily with all those believers who put their trust in God, while He did not prevent them from being evicted from their homes?

Do you believe that the rabbis were wrong (and not post facto) in connecting faith with “a return”? I am not a great scholar in the teachings of Maimonides, but did he not argue that a believer should not expect a return for his faith?

And the same argument, from a different perspective – how does that rabbi, who made such strong statements, deal with his mistakes, and with his followers who might have doubts.

Of course it is possible that this is not occurring, and that only a secular point of view assumes that this should occur.

I will appreciate your answer, even if it is not fundamentally halakhic, and even if it is worded in a more “secular” way.

Sincerely,  
Gil

A: Hello.

- A. The question of dealing with unfulfilled “prophecies” is divided into three main approaches. The first is to claim that these were not prophecies to begin with, and that it was never claimed that these things will happen on the factual level. These were merely expressions of hope or wishes, rather than factual statement. Many have come in defense of these Rabbis using this approach, claiming that the Rabbis were misunderstood to begin with, and that for this reason there is no place for a credibility crisis.

The second approach is a deep credibility crisis with those who have stated their prophecies, although the truth must be said, that most of those who have such a deep credibility crisis have also had these doubts in the past.

The third approach, which is taken by a great deal of the

public when facing this question, is the feeling that even if they were wrong and even if those were uncalled prophecies – these Rabbis are still great enough to make up for this problem.

- B. For generations, religious people have learned that the Lord does not “work for us” and that it is not imperative that he will answer prayers. We believe that the Lord hears our prayers, but that he sometimes refuses our requests. Because of this, there is no special argument against him, and I do not know many whose faith in God was diminished because of the unanswered prayer.
- C. If there was a connection between faith and reward, than this is obviously a serious mistake. As stated above, the Lord is not committed to do anything, including providing a return for worship. I am not sure that there was such a connection, but if it existed, than it was mistaken.
- D. I do not know what those Rabbis, who the public understood as promising something that did not happen, go through. I am not the address for this question.  
All the best.

## **J. Religious Zionism**

Q: I wish to share my private thoughts. I am completely distraught by the recent events in the country, and I cannot understand how the religious Zionist movement does not notice that it is sawing off the branch that it is sitting on. Everyone around me thinks differently, and I feel lonely in my beliefs and sad. I do not wish to challenge or to object just for the sake of objecting. I am past my adolescence, but I find myself tormented by my opinions and frustrated with the other side's inability of even listening. I believe everybody hurts, as this issue is close to our hearts. There are supposedly different opinions regarding many issues, but I see doom, and like my friends, I am pessimistic, but from the other side of things. As I already stated, this is not a question, but rather these are my private thoughts. Perhaps approaching the honorable Rabbi directly stems from being acquainted with your opinions, which do not always correspond with mainstream ones.

A: Hello.

I hardly know a single person in the religious Zionist movement who is not terribly worried – both from the fact that the disengagement will be executed, and from its difficult outcome on the image of the values of the State of Israel, and loss of confidence in the entire governmental system, as well as from the fact that we are harming ourselves, and causing religious Zionism to disengage from the state and society of Israel, and to adopt the ideology which actually led ultra-orthodox Judaism in regard to the rest of the Jewish people and their expression of nationality.

For this reason, your thoughts are not peculiar, but rather these thoughts accompany everyone. You decided one fear outweighs the other, while many others decided the opposite. But the very fact that both sides are present with the great majority of the religious Zionist public, makes me believe that it is possible to grow stronger through walking the border without crossing it.

In this difficult time, efforts should be constantly made not to fall into the pit of despair, and the belief that both sides hold a truth, and the recognition of the deep dilemma for both sides, will enable to rehabilitate everything, and even to do this with greater force, as long as neither side silences the other side, which exists within himself. For this reason, I am not afraid of the future, but rather I am confident that the great strength we have will rise, and for the time being we only need to ensure that neither side crosses the lines to places from which it is impossible to return.

All the best.

### **κ. Is the Path of the Love of Israel Over?**

Q: Honorable Rabbi Cherlow, hello,

These days we are hearing incessant warnings saying that the disengagement and evacuation will cause a civil war. These warnings and alerts come from the west bank circles and the Rabbis.

My question is:

A civil war is by definition a war between brothers, and in order for it to happen, God forbid, one party must start it. If both sides are in a difficult and bitter argument on principles, a civil war will still

not occur as long as no side considers this option possible, because it prefers war and bloodshed rather than waiving its principles.

It is now clear that the government and its bodies (the military and police) will not start a war against the settlers. How, then, would this be a civil war? Only if the settlers would start it. The very threat of a civil war demonstrates this option is being seriously considered, and not by marginal extremists, but by public leaders.

Does the evacuation of the Gush Katif and Samaria settlers, as tragic and painful as this mistake might be, justify in the Rabbi's opinion starting a civil war, and spilling our brother's blood?

Is this not an extremely dangerous incitement, and doesn't it give legitimacy to acts which might actually bring about the destruction of our country?

A: Hello,

- A. The assumption that civil war will not break out unless one side is interested is not accurate. Sometimes it takes just one fool to light an entire forest on fire, and the danger is not in controlled circumstances, but in circumstances which might get out of control.
- B. As far as I know, it is incorrect that this option is being considered at all by the leadership, and I have no doubt that if there will be an actual danger, the entire leadership will withdraw rather than start a civil war. However, as stated above, I do fear the explosive atmosphere which might cause a civil war, God forbid.
- C. The demand to avoid the creation of this atmosphere should be directed both ways, first of all to us settlers, because the government has a monopoly over power. However, one can not ignore the heating up of the atmosphere by the government, which is impervious to its need of public legitimacy, and it is using this force with a predation which goes contrary to the appropriate spirit when facing such a difficult decision. The prime minister seems as if he is drunk on power, and this also puts our domestic existence into jeopardy.
- D. There is no justification, of any kind, to start a civil war, and

even things which are worse than withdrawal from Gush Katif do not justify a civil war.  
All the best.

## **L. The Question of Education and Youth**

Q: To Rabbi Cherlow,

In light of the evacuation of the Gush Katif settlements, Social Group B in the town in which I live decided to conduct a series of activities for the town's youths, as preparation to the evacuation which might take place.

Honorable Rabbi, the questions which the young people wish to deal with comprehensively extend to their religious definitions of God, definitions of religious Zionism – an entire ideology which is disappearing right in front of our eyes! We do not know how to conduct such an important and complex series of activities. We cannot simply answer the questions. This is not what the youth is asking for. They are asking for something to grab on to when they are falling!

I would liken the situation to the process of a lonely man's despair, when a psychologist sits in front of him, trying to help, but all he can say are words of encouragement such as "it will all be alright," having no real solution.

I have no exact question. I am asking for a way in which my teammates and I can lead these teenagers...

Thank you in advance.

A: Hello,

I understand this problem well, as we all face it.

I propose a course of activities based on three principles:

- A. Re-examination of religious Zionism, especially a decision to ask ourselves again what we wish to achieve, and what our vision is. There are two different types of vision to be recognized – a future vision, when the entire people of Israel accept divine love and adherence to religious law, and a closer vision – what is our mission in the current sociological reality, when most



of the people are not with us – what can be and what cannot yet be achieved.

- b. After clarifying the vision, the question of current reality should be dealt with – and this, too, on two aspects: what can be realized now, out of the short-term vision, and what do we take upon ourselves in order to be fuller of the complete long-term vision.
- c. Assimilating the fundamental principle of constant construction. We will be taken from this place, and we will build in that place, and we will be uprooted from this place, and we will make this place grow. This is the principle of those who believe they can face the world's challenges.  
All the best. I will assist you in any possible way.

### **m. The Ultra-Religious Public**

Q: Hello Honorable Rabbi Cherlow.

How should we regard Rabbi Elyashiv now that he has deserted us, and that he no longer cares about anything except for his own interests?

A hurt person.

A: Hello,

First of all, one should regard him as a great Torah scholar, who is a supreme leader for some of the religious world, a scholar who many Rabbis look up to. The Torah always comes before any other thing.

Even I am very sorry for the decision made by Rabbi Elyashiv, God bless him. This decision will cause great damage to the land of Israel as the holy land, and to the religious commandment of settling the land. It will further intensify the image of ultra-orthodox Judaism as being eager for bribes, will increase the separation between the ultra-religious public and us, hurt the religious world, etc.

At the same time, one must also be fair when criticizing. Let us not forget two things. The first is the fact that this is exactly how the ultra-religious public felt when the *Mafdal* party joined the

government, and was a part of a policy which was harmful to the ultra-orthodox public – both in terms of budgets as well as in issues regarding the religiousness of the national system of the land of Israel. One cannot complain to another when his hands are not clean. Indeed, we are convinced that we have acted properly, and that move had a chance, but this is exactly what they feel, and one should always “make sure our actions are proper, and then demand others to act properly.”

Another issue is the very method used by Rabbi Elyashiv in making his decision. The path he has taken – weighing different issues such as the world of education and Torah and other issues regarding the State of Israel, together with the question of the land of Israel and adhering to Maimonides’ positive precept – is in principle, according to the Halakhah, a very correct method. This is exactly the role of a halakhic judge. Sometimes he must choose between two bad options, and make his decision (this is exactly the subject of my general lesson in the yeshiva today). We who dispute the conclusions of this weighing cannot dispute the very acts – for the reasons that this method is correct, and that this is exactly what we are doing: we conclude that the main consideration is the land of Israel, and we reject many good things we could have done for the people of Israel if we would be in the coalition, and so – why should we complain about others?

For this reason, instead of criticizing others, we will try to convince more and more people that our weighing is correct and just, and with God’s help will well achieve both what the ultra-religious public achieved, and what we wish to achieve, because as a matter of fact we are pretty close to each other, and our aspirations are similar.

All the best.

## **N. Self-Scrutiny on the Matter of Social Justice**

Q: Hello Rabbi Cherlow,

During the last year a new term has entered our lives – “Disengagement.” There is no doubt that this term implies quite a few

bad things, such as evicting people from their houses, the danger of civil war, etc. Since the moment the disengagement plan has been decided on, most of the national religious public has been busy in demonstrations, sitting in protest tents, doing door to door explanatory discussions – in short, fighting against the giving away of areas of the Land of Israel is the top priority of our population. In any place I go to, whether to a branch or to school, all I hear about is the disengagement plan, how bad it is and how we all can prevent it.

I am very disturbed by the fact that we all demonstrate with all our strength only when the issue is the land of Israel and people from our segment of the population, but when the issue is poverty, starvation, suffering of the weak and the injustice done to so many people in our country, not one of us acts, and almost no one cares. None of my friends have ever gone to sit in a protest tent in the “Bread Demonstrations,” but almost all of them, with no exception, went to sit in the protest tent in front of the Knesset to protest against the disengagement.

I wanted to ask the honorable Rabbi – What value should be given priority, and what is most important – the complete Land of Israel, or social justice and help to the poor? Is it right that we, the national religious public, who can definitely contribute and assist the weaker segments of our country’s population, should protest against the disengagement now, when there are so many people who are starving and suffering, who really need immediate assistance?

I will be happy to receive the Rabbi’s answer on this issue, as it perplexes me.

Thank you in advance.

A: Hello.

If reality was as you describe it, the situation would indeed be very grave, and it would contradict the Torah, which expounds on the principles of justice and charity, according to both the prophets and the wise men.

However, reality is not that unambiguous, but rather it is more complex, for three reasons:

- A. During these many long years, the public was also involved in many charity activities. It is hard to estimate the extensive activity of the religious Zionist public in different charity organizations, in volunteering for national challenges, in going to the development towns (see where some of the yeshivas are located) and in many other issues regarding these principles. It is incorrect that we were not active before. You are right in that most of the time people were motivated for works of charity, rather than being concerned with social justice.
- B. Some of the disengagement plan's grave implications are going to deeply hurt social justice for those people, and all the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, God forbid, later on.
- C. There are important charity activities, whether conducted by "Circles of Justice" or by other groups.

After somewhat assuaging your arguments, it seems that the principle claim you have made is very correct, but it does not necessarily come at the expense of the struggle for the land of Israel. We must struggle for the title "Jewish state," under which the justice and law of Abraham, settlement of the land of Israel, Jewish public domain, etc. are expressed. Under this title we must act, and you are right in saying that we must shift the system of balances between different issues we struggle for toward social justice, and that we must increase our efforts in that field.

Indeed, you in your good deeds are leading such a move, and it will be good for you to continue in it, and to convince your friends to work on the different aspects which constitute the image of the Jewish state. These actions will bear many blessings.

All the best.

Q: Honorable Rabbi Cherlow,

For a long time I am saddened by the distance created between the religious Zionistic public and other segments of the population. This is in part the result of an exclusive connection of this public with only one issue – Judea, Samaria and Gaza. A comment made to

your article by one of the non-religious readers, about the fact that when he sees a person wearing a knitted yarmulke he immediately thinks “settler,” with all emotional expressions linked to that thought, is a real wide spread phenomenon, and even I come across severe expressions of hatred toward people with that appearance.

This is indeed painful and infuriating for us – what is the cause for this hatred? Don’t they know that we also contribute in other places and fields? Don’t they know about the volunteer and charity work we perform everywhere? Why do they not note and appreciate that?

This has made me think about the ways we act as a public.

I believe that an essential part of the problem is that our activity in all these other fields of social change is not a political activity. The activity is communal, local and to a large extent is similar to the charity work done in the Diaspora.

On the other hand, the only political activity related to politics and legislation is in the context of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and I wonder why it is so. The aspiration of establishing in this country a proper society, in the spirit of Jewish values, is immensely important for us. We always talk of social ethics and morality of the leadership, but we implement this in personal or local context, rather than making this a symbol of our public. These aspirations should have also gone through the Knesset, rather than only on the local level of doing truth, justice and charity. When there is governmental corruption, cruelty toward the weak, political injustices, we should cry out and go to demonstrations, just as we do when we demonstrate against the disengagement, work through organizations which change legislation (most of which include leftists, who think this is not an important issue for religious people), through a lobby in the Knesset, through the media. These issues are also important to us, and they represent who we are and what we believe in. Through these issues, many segments of the society from different sectors can see in us partners in their struggle, know us and join us. Activity which initiates acquaintanceship meetings between sectors is indeed good and blessed, but there is nothing like real cooperation on issues that are important to all sectors, which leads

to acquaintanceship and appreciation of the other side. It is exactly us, as a public which sees the state as an important stage in its salvation, and who wants the Torah and Jewish morality to be the light for this political existence, who should work using the tools which exist in the state to establish this path. It is our role to do this, and these are our political struggles. Who will do it if we won't?

As a note I will add – I am active in a social organization which deals with the troubles of foreign workers and the issue of women trafficking, which works toward changing policies. I know that this issue also concerns the Rabbi, who participated in a number of events related to this matter. Unfortunately, when I examine the make-up of the organization, I am a minority. There are no religious people (and this is also true for other such social organizations). The other members are very far from religion, and they even do not like religious people. In one of the meetings, in a discussion, someone asked against the settler public – “Do you see here, in our organization, anyone who is religious?” meaning, these issues and activities do not concern them, while I know it is important to us. In a country where human trafficking occurs, shouldn't the Rabbis call for the public to demonstrate against this and to act for legislation against this issue? And so on and so forth. This is true for many fields in which we continue to deteriorate ethically, and if we act in these fields, then it is not done on a political-national level, while using the great strength of this public.

A: Hello,

Your statements are correct.

I would prefer the word “public” to “political.”

I have been saying these things for years and years, and I think that our neglect of the public aspect, and of working for social justice, has caused a great deal of damage. We do an exceptional scope of charity works, thank God. But when the issue is building society, we do not perform this in an appropriate scope, although many of the reforms of Israeli society were made by religious members of the Knesset.

This is one conclusion we will have to make, and I believe it will be made.

All the best, and well done.

### **O. Personal Crisis**

Q: I am torn from within...I cry endlessly...I cannot sleep and I take all my rage out on my husband and my baby...The disengagement is tearing me apart, and I cannot comprehend it...The belief that everything will change.... Nothing, I am shattered, and I cannot believe that this is happening. Perhaps God has already decided we are not his chosen people?...I am sorry if this is a harsh statement, but this is how I feel...I am terribly confused...

A: Hello,

The difficulty you are feeling is so understandable and human. I do not know how a person could not feel this way.

The Halakhah which is so dear to us taught us that these feelings are legitimate. In the mourning rules, the Halakhah sets “three days for crying,” meaning: One does not start great reckoning on the first days of mourning, and one is permitted to cry freely without finding answers for all issues and matters. We cry and we are angry. Of course we should be careful, not because what we feel is illegitimate, but because we do not want to tear apart what we cannot heal later on. The baby and the husband cannot promise that they will be able to withstand your mood, and this is something you should consider in order to avoid breaking up the house.

It is exactly because of the great strengths revealed over the last few weeks that we know for sure that we will have the power to rehabilitate and rebuild. We know that God Almighty is with us forever, and that he has not left us in more difficult circumstances, and so we trust that he will grant us the strength to build the future, and so we do not give up. After crying, we will recover, and we will find the way to rebuild together with everyone.

I wish you the best.

Q: Many people in the national religious public believed that there

will be no eviction, and the God will perform a miracle, and will prevent all of this at the last minute. Many people continued on their daily routine in Gush Katif, even as they saw the soldiers entering. They believed a miracle will happen. Important Rabbis said that this was God testing us, like in the binding of Isaac, and that a miracle will happen at the last minute.

In light of the bleak outcome, has this not caused our public a great deal of damage, especially among teenagers, who are idealists and who see everything as black and white, and who do not understand that life also has its downs in order for us to be able to go up again? Has this not caused great despair and disappointment among religious teenagers specifically, and among adults as well, which might cause people to give up on the Torah and its laws?

A: Hello,

We cannot know what the repercussions of this reality will be. We are still in the midst of a great storm, and only after it passes we will be able to examine the damages caused to the ship and correct them.

I am much less pessimistic. The great strength of our children and teenagers will withstand these questions as well, as well as many other questions. I do not predict a general crisis, and this despite of the fact that everyone is going through a very difficult experience. There are also many spiritual conclusions that should be made. One should not believe in false beliefs, and the belief that a miracle will happen, and that something will not occur, is a futile belief. Not only is that a lie, but it also brings with it great damage when it is not fulfilled. Because of this, we need to make an inquiry as to the meaning of the measure of confidence and faith ourselves, and indeed I have been writing about this time and again for a number of months.

If we will combine the great strength of the religious youth in order to re-examine the principles of faith, not only will the crisis be avoided, but we will also have a great possibility for powerful growth.

All the best, may we succeed.



## **P. What Does God Want?**

Q: Hello Rabbi,

After seeing what goes on in the U.S with the storm which flooded its south (New Orleans), I immediately thought: “measure for measure” – in the same way that they wanted and caused the deportation of thousands of Jews from their homes, God caused them to evict thousands of residents from their homes. Is there a problem in saying that?

People have attacked me and have told me that one cannot make God’s calculations etc. But the gemara explicitly determines that all of God’s measures are done measure for measure, and in the story of Rabbi Huna and the wine, the wise men have said that not only do we not know God’s calculations, but have explicitly told him, “Who would suspect God would punish without a reason?”

This case, in my opinion, cries out “measure for measure.”

Am I wrong in thinking this?

If this is wrong, I promise to try to repent with God’s help.

Thank you.

A: Hello,

I do not interpret God’s will in such a direct fashion. In this case I am also not sure that this is correct factually, as Sharon’s unilateral policy was actually not what the Americans wanted. However, even if it were so, I cannot rule out the possibility that this was God’s response to the policies of this superpower, although I do rule out the notion that we could know such a thing.

We should remember that if we start to think that we know the meaning of God’s actions, we will have to decide things about ourselves – what does it mean that we have not been successful in our struggle, and that God enabled the destruction of Gush Katif?

This is only one example of the complications you bring upon yourself when you try to understand what is happening in the heavens. There is a person who can do this, and whose main mission is to do this – the prophet. As long as we have no prophets, we are not able to understand the way things happen in the world.

It is true that our wise men have chosen this way a number of

times, but it seems that they were talking with doubt, rather than with certainty, and in addition – those were more direct things, such as the souring of four hundred jugs of that person's wine, and not general issues such as the storm in the United States

I wish to stress that a connection might exist, but we can not know this.

All the best.



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# Part 5

**American Orthodox Education and Aliya**



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9

Can American Orthodoxy  
Afford to Have  
its Best and Brightest  
(Not) Make Aliya?

*Yoel Finkelman*

A few years back, Reuven Spolter, a synagogue rabbi in Detroit, published an article in *Jewish Action* entitled “In Search of Leaders.” The article got some attention on the Internet and in the “after shul gossip” (at least in my earshot), and it prompted quite a few mostly critical letters to the editor. As a Modern Orthodox Zionist rabbi, Spolter was frustrated by what he perceived as a flow of the most dedicated Modern Orthodox laypeople and *klei kodesh* (religious functionaries) from the United States to Israel. It was difficult for him to criticize *aliya* (immigration to Israel) and *olim* (immigrants), but at the same time Spolter felt that American Modern Orthodoxy was suffering a serious depletion of its best and brightest. For some

“Modern Orthodox rabbis in America,” he suggested, the temptation to make aliya might be a “*yetzer hara*” (evil impulse). Spolter had “outed” a problem that had been hinted at by a few other writers, but which had yet to be tackled head on.<sup>1</sup> Could aliya weaken the fabric of American Modern Orthodoxy?

In the comments below, I will attempt to provide some context for and evaluation of this claim. I am concerned, along with others, that American Modern Orthodoxy will struggle if it does not have adequate leadership and if it cannot attract high-quality professionals to its institutions. Still, I believe it to be ideologically misguided and ultimately futile to discourage aliya in any significant way. I suspect that the professional and leadership shortages that may plague Modern Orthodoxy reflect tensions that are built into that community’s Diaspora Zionism more than they reflect any problem with aliya per se. I will begin this essay with several reasons why framing Modern Orthodoxy’s leadership problems in terms of the challenges of aliya is itself problematic. Afterward, I will try to distinguish between three potential areas of concern for Modern Orthodoxy: first, a manpower shortage in institutions and schools; second, a loss of ideologues, agenda-setters, and leadership to Israel; and third, the tendency to look to American expatriates to play leadership roles in a community in which they no longer live. I have a great many more questions than answers, but I claim that, ultimately, American Modern Orthodoxy must face the social and economic factors that discourage talented people from becoming religious leaders, and it must begin to explain to itself the meaning of Diaspora Religious Zionism.

My comments will focus more on the field of Modern Orthodox education than on rabbinics, communal services, and lay leadership, primarily because I have worked in and have a deeper familiarity with the field of education. Still, I offer these remarks with a measure of caution. I have spent almost all of my adulthood, and all of my professional life, in Israel. Olim who comment on American Jewish life can easily get things wrong. I hope that my comments about the American Orthodox community will be received in the spirit that they are intended, one of caring and concerned constructive criticism.

### ALIYA AND FRAMING THE TOPIC

Someone has to lead the American Jewish community; presumably those people ought to be American Jews. Nobody else can easily do so. Hence, every educator, rabbi, lay leader, and professional who leaves America removes a resource that could benefit the American Jewish community. Americans are likely to be best at educating and leading Americans, and, therefore, one cannot expect that an influx of Jews from anywhere else – including Israeli *shelihim* (emissaries)– could genuinely replace olim once they have left. Furthermore, American Jewish leaders received their own Jewish education, in large part, due to the largesse of the American community that supports schools, universities, and other communal institutions. It makes sense, therefore, that American Jews should be morally obliged to return that investment to the American Jewish community. These concerns, I believe, should be taken into account by individuals who are planning their futures as Jewish leaders and contemplating aliya.

With that, I believe that it is unwise and unhelpful to frame the discussion of Modern Orthodoxy's leadership problems in terms of a perceived problem with aliya. To begin with, aliya is a good thing. Axiologically, and increasingly demographically, the center of the Jewish people is in the Land of Israel and the State of Israel. It is probably unnecessary to catalog the almost endless series of sources that identify living in the Land of Israel as a value. The *Tosefta* in *Avodah Zarah* (4:3), to mention just one very well known example, prefers that one live in a gentile city in the Land of Israel than in the most Jewish neighborhood outside the land, because "dwelling in the Land of Israel is weighted as much as all the mitzvot of the Torah." In that sense, North American aliya is simply and straightforwardly positive. Indeed, given the importance of Religious Zionism in the mission statements of so many Modern Orthodox day schools, aliya is a sure sign that the American Jewish education is succeeding in doing what it set out to do. Jews who want to be at the center of Jewish living, who want to live as full a spiritual and religious life as possible, should be "here" and not "there." North American Jews, like their coreligionists throughout the Diaspora, belong collectively in Israel.



That they are not is easily explained sociologically and economically, but more difficult to defend religiously. At most, American Modern Orthodoxy's leadership problems are an unfortunate byproduct of an essentially positive phenomenon. Whatever soul-searching may be necessary to overcome the aftereffects of leaders' aliya should be doubled and tripled in questioning American Modern Orthodoxy's collective complacency about preferring the "cucumbers and melons" (*Bamidbar* 11:5) of Egypt over the place where the "eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (*Devarim* 11:12).

Furthermore, many olim continue to make contributions to the Modern Orthodox community in the United States. Some work in Israel's numerous one-year yeshivas and seminaries for English-speaking high school graduates, institutions that are rightly perceived as a critical element in North American Modern Orthodox education. Some olim return temporarily to North America, either during the summers to work in camps or learning programs, or on various *shelihut* programs. Many Israeli olim also contribute the fruit of their pens to the American Jewish community. Furthermore, olim may help cement the Jewish involvements of their friends and relatives who remain behind. It seems likely that American Jews with loved ones in Israel will visit Israel more often, be more concerned with Israel, and be generally more involved in Jewish affairs. While these contributions are not the same as a full time commitment to American schools, synagogues, and communities, they should not be overlooked.

However, even if American olim made no contribution at all to the American Jewish community, I believe that it is problematic to look too critically at the olim and their supposed abandonment of the American scene. Every individual who takes on tasks of Jewish leadership, no matter how talented and dedicated, must make decisions about where to focus his or her energies. In every case, those decisions will involve "abandoning" a certain potential constituency. There will always be more tasks that need to be done than people to do them. If American Modern Orthodoxy discourages aliya, it will take leaders for itself and leave Israel weaker. It is not immediately

obvious to me that Jewish education and rabbinics in America is higher on the list of *Am Israel's* (the People of Israel) priorities than all those many things that olim are doing in Israel. Those who work with one particular population should be cautious about challenging the particular decisions and sacrifices of those who have chosen to work with a somewhat different population.

American olim are some of the most dedicated and contributing members of Israeli society. Individual olim have become leaders of Israeli Modern Orthodoxy, as *roshei yeshiva*, academics, institution-builders, and writers.<sup>2</sup> They have been active in politics, particularly in extra-parliamentary groups.<sup>3</sup> Within Israeli Religious Zionism, Americans often come from a tradition of a moderate, Modern-Orthodox, non-fundamentalist religion, which, from my own personal perspective, is an absolute necessity for keeping Israeli Religious Zionism's moral and religious compass focused on a rational north. That tradition of religious moderation and freedom has also projected American immigrants into the forefront of attempts to create dialogue and bridge the gap between Israel's secular majority and religious minority.<sup>4</sup> (Those with somewhat different political or ideological convictions are likely to find American immigrants over-represented in their ideological camps, as well.) As a group, North American olim help strengthen the democratic, white-collar, middle class of Israel because they are generally socio-economically better off than the average Israeli, and come from countries with longer and more established traditions of democracy. If we discourage North American aliya, we may strengthen American Modern Orthodoxy and leave Israeli Judaism weaker in equal measure.<sup>5</sup>

Another reason why we may do ourselves a disservice if we focus too intensely on the "problem" of the aliya of leadership is that there is little to be done about it. As long as the North American Modern Orthodox community is Zionistically inclined – and as long as Israel remains a viable country with a reasonable standard of living and a rich religious and Jewish cultural life – then some of Modern Orthodoxy's best and brightest will come on aliya, as well they should. Perhaps emphasizing the importance of remaining in America to support the Diaspora community will convince a handful

to sacrifice their aliya dream, but for those dedicated to aliya as a religious obligation and opportunity, and for those who can make such a move while paying a relatively small social and economic price, such an approach is not likely to have a significant effect.

The American community could try to urge future olim to stay in America for a few years longer before leaving for Israel. This, too, is a limited strategy. Many olim already do that. If you forgive the anecdotal nature of this evidence, some of my thirty-something peers have made aliya recently after several years of service to the American Jewish community, and others have concrete plans to do so in the next year or two. Almost none, I suspect, would be willing to postpone their aliya anymore, if for no other reason than because aliya with older children, and certainly with teens, can be challenging. Those who come on aliya younger (like myself), at an age when they did not yet have specific career plans, are not likely to be ready to calculate their relative contribution to the Jewish people in Israel or America. Shelihut – an oleh returning to North America for a few years, to be followed by a return to Israel – is also likely to be of limited impact. Due to the challenges of having a successful career in education in Israel, and the limited financial benefits of shelihut, olim who have found a place for themselves professionally are generally reluctant to suspend their professional progress in order to return to the States, only to “start over” upon return. If there is little that can be done to “prevent” leaders from making aliya, and if there is little that can be done to increase the length of their stay in North America, then we would do well to look elsewhere for solutions to the perceived crisis of leadership in North American Modern Orthodoxy.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM?**

Before moving on to potential solutions, it may, perhaps, be helpful to distinguish between three aspects of the “problems” related to aliya. First, there is a perceived manpower and personnel crisis among Modern Orthodox klei kodesh, and it has been suggested that the aliya of educators and rabbis has contributed to the problem, or at least made its solution more difficult. “There are simply

not enough talented Modern Orthodox professional leaders to go around,” says Spolter, before quoting the principal of the local co-ed Orthodox high school as explaining that he “cannot find Modern Orthodox teachers.”<sup>6</sup>

Beyond the matter of professional staffing, there is a larger concern with leadership, vision, and guidance. This is not a question of filling jobs, but of leadership at the top of the ladder. Theologians, agenda-setters, ideologues, institution-builders, *poskim* (halakhic authorities), and spokespeople are critical in providing religious direction, institutional vision, and ideological coherence to Modern Orthodoxy. If those North Americans making aliya include even a handful of the potential visionary leaders, American Modern Orthodoxy may find itself with a shortage of that level of leadership. This seems closer to Jonathan Sarna’s and Shalom Carmy’s (separate) descriptions of a “brain drain”<sup>7</sup> as a long-term problem for the future of American Modern Orthodoxy. Sarna wonders whether “a movement that sends its most illustrious sons and daughters there [to Israel] can truly expect to triumph here?” Can Modern Orthodoxy thrive without the “remarkable Orthodox men and women who might have transformed American Jewish religious life but preferred to cast their lot with Zion?”<sup>8</sup>

Sarna raises an additional, third concern. As talented American Modern Orthodox Jews make aliya they may continue to play leadership roles within the community that they have geographically left. It seems likely that for American Modern Orthodoxy to thrive, its leadership must be local and indigenous. “American Orthodox Jews increasingly look to Israeli rabbis and yeshivah heads for direction. When a young American Orthodox Jew speaks of ‘my rebbe,’ chances are that he is referring to someone in Israel.” This leads Sarna to question “whether Israeli Orthodox leaders really understand the American Jewish scene well enough to exercise leadership here. Historically, at least, religious movements that cannot count on indigenous leadership to direct them have not fared well in America – at least, not for long.”<sup>9</sup> Is Sarna correct about the facts? If so, is there reason for concern?

Regarding the first issue, the problem and solution is not

located in the sphere of aliya. Rather, the problem should be contextualized within the American Jewish community's broader discussion of a perceived personnel crisis. Solutions are to be found in the field of professional recruitment and retention. The second and third matters may, perhaps, present more serious future challenges. However, rather than identifying aliya as the problem, American Modern Orthodoxy would be better served by facing, head on, the paradoxes (contradictions?) that have brought about these challenges: namely the tension of being a religious Zionist community in the Diaspora. If American Orthodoxy is going to address the challenges associated with its leaders' aliya, it must first begin a complex – perhaps uncomfortable and painful – process of explaining to itself, and to its most dedicated youth, why it has chosen to remain in *galut* (exile), and how it understands its role as a voluntary Diaspora.

#### A PERSONNEL CRISIS IN MODERN ORTHODOX INSTITUTIONS?

I would like to begin with the first aspect of the problem, that aliya has created or exacerbated a shortage of qualified teachers, rabbis, and professionals in Modern Orthodox institutions. We must, I believe, begin by determining the extent, nature, and seriousness of the problem. Often the claim that we do not have an adequate pool of candidates for educational jobs is dependent on an unstated definition of what an adequate pool would look like. Even if such a definition were stated, it may be unrealistic or idealized. Hard and important questions remain. Do Orthodox schools have fewer qualified teachers, or teachers who are less qualified, than public or private schools?<sup>10</sup> How do Orthodox schools compare to public schools and other private schools in terms of their staff turnover rate? If Orthodox schools are not significantly different from other schools, perhaps what is perceived as a crisis is in fact typical of the conditions in the educational job market. The fact that principals and educational directors must annually assemble their staff anew toward the beginning of each fall can easily lead to frustration. But this annual manpower search may – and I reiterate, *may* – also lead to exaggerating the nature of the problem.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, historical perspective also raises the possibility that the problem is not as severe as it appears. As Susan Shevitz has pointed out, the American Jewish (though not specifically Orthodox) community has been discussing a crisis in the teaching profession at least since the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the decades since then have witnessed dramatic growth in the field, as well as increased professionalism. There are more Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jewish schools than ever, and constantly increasing opportunities for professional training. The field of Jewish education is larger and more professional than it has ever been.<sup>13</sup> At one level, the growth in schools increases demand for teachers, which may be contributing to the shortage. At another level, however, decades-long discussion of a crisis, at the same time as the profession is thriving, may also indicate that the field of Jewish education is underestimating its own strengths. Are we, perhaps, caught in another example of the “recurring myth of teacher shortages”?<sup>14</sup>

Even if there is a crisis (and I do not, in my above comments, mean to suggest that I know that there is not one), it also behooves us to think carefully about the nature of the crisis. What precisely is missing in Orthodox educational and lay leadership? Is there a shortage of teachers, principals, congregational rabbis, psychologists, social workers, or other figures? Perhaps there are enough people, but they lack specific talents and skills. Perhaps existing talent is concentrated in a few geographic areas, with people reluctant to move from the perceived centers of Orthodox life. Perhaps the existing pool of talented professionals is not being managed or organized as efficiently and effectively as possible? Perhaps “there is no personnel crisis in Jewish education; rather there are a series of personnel *crises*, each of which needs to be addressed differently.”<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, if there is a crisis, it seems odd to point to aliya as such a critical factor. To begin with, the rates of aliya from the United States are simply not that high. According to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, there were 2,157 immigrants to Israel from the United States in 2006. While this number represents a slight rise from the previous few years – a rise that is probably associated with peaking American real estate prices, the growing cost of day-school tuition,

and the trend toward commuting from Israel to work in the United States<sup>16</sup> – the number of olim today remains lower than it was in the early 1980s, and certainly in the peak years of the early 1970s.<sup>17</sup> These numbers hardly involve a significant demographic shift. Given these small numbers of olim, in order to claim that aliya is such an important factor in the teacher shortage, one would have to demonstrate that educators and rabbis are significantly over-represented among olim, something that to the best of my knowledge has not been studied and may or may not be the case.

Instead of focusing on the immigration of what amounts to a rather small percentage of the population, it would be better to consider more obvious and probably more central factors: professional recruitment and the retention of those professionals once they are recruited. Orthodoxy should begin careful research designed to map the profession of Orthodox education, with all its strengths and weaknesses. It might begin by examining how Orthodox education has achieved the real and dramatic successes of the second half of the 20th century. What things have been done in the past to make the field of Orthodox education as large and as professional as it is today? What has worked, and what has not worked? How have we gone from a handful of schools, and fledgling attempts at centralization by *Torah Umesorah*, to a vast network of day-schools supported by university and yeshiva-based professional training, and numerous umbrella organizations providing a plethora of resources?<sup>18</sup>

Researchers should continue with careful surveys of the working conditions of Orthodox professionals in various fields, and attempt to identify what makes these professions attractive, and more importantly, what makes them unattractive. Orthodoxy should begin to ask questions of those young people who choose to enter Jewish professions, and particularly those young people who consider such a path but ultimately choose a different one. We should be surveying those who leave these professions, as well as those who remain in the field. What are their experiences? Why have they made the career choices they have made? Are they happy with those choices? Why or why not? Answers to these questions might suggest plans of action that could increase the pool of professionals. Such programs

are likely to be more effective than any amount of breast-beating about the downsides of aliya.

The general Jewish community has begun to address many of these questions. Yet, Orthodoxy remains underrepresented in these discussions.<sup>19</sup> Orthodoxy should increase its cooperation with other American Jewish groups – and create its own initiatives if need be – in conducting systematic research, diagnosing problems from a variety of methodological perspectives, suggesting modes of intervention, and implementing those suggestions. In the larger organized Jewish community there is a “consensus about the need for a community-wide approach” that “invites comprehensive, holistic solutions rather than small, technical fixes.”<sup>20</sup> We should build a grass roots effort to recruit and retain professionals from within existing American Orthodox ranks.

Research conducted thus far points to the fact that Jewish education is a profession with poor compensation, few worldly benefits, and to some degree low social status. One systematic study of teachers in North American Jewish schools points to the fact that many work only part time, less than “half of the day school teachers...reported satisfaction with their salaries,” and most full time teachers do not receive health care benefits or have pension plans, to mention nothing of sabbaticals or tenure. In addition, many move from job to job more frequently than they would like.<sup>21</sup> Several years earlier, Steven Cohen and Susan Wall found that Jewish educational leaders felt harried by the endless hours of their jobs, frustrated by lay leaders who do not treat them like knowledgeable and competent professionals, and irritated by parents who meddle too much in school life. They felt no small measure of burnout, and were non-committal when asked if they intended to remain in the field. While Cohen and Wall found that educational leaders, particularly Orthodox ones, did not generally suffer from feelings of low status, these leaders did suggest that if their social status were to be improved they might be treated better and have more influence on lay leaders and board members. Furthermore, Jewish college students indicated that they were concerned that were they to enter the field of Jewish education, they would suffer from low social



status.<sup>22</sup> Under these circumstances, when “earnings and benefits are meager compared to most professions,”<sup>23</sup> is it any wonder that it seems hard to fill positions?

If there is a shortage of talented teachers and educational leaders, it is time to raise salaries, provide benefits such as health care and pensions, make the workplace more professional and challenging, provide professionals with opportunities for further training and advancement, supply the most talented and dedicated professionals with sabbaticals and tenure, offer adequate administrative assistance to principals, and help educate lay leaders about the profession of Jewish education. All of this costs money, money which the schools at the moment do not have. Still, in its long history, the American Jewish community has provided great deals of funding for significantly less worthy projects. If there is an educational, moral, and religious will, there is most certainly a financial way. The result of the above is likely to help attract talented people to the field of Jewish education.

There is, I believe, reason to suspect that doing so is more difficult than just fundraising. To begin with, this is not a specifically Modern Orthodox problem, but a problem with American educational culture as a whole. “The fundamental problem facing [American] teaching,” explains educational researcher Richard Ingersoll, is “the low standing of the occupation. Unlike in many European and Asian nations, in this country, teaching is largely treated as low status work, and teachers are semi-skilled workers.”<sup>24</sup> If low salaries, minimal benefits, and inferior social status for teachers is pervasive in American culture, then Modern Orthodoxy will have to be way ahead of larger American trends if it hopes to improve things, a distinct challenge to say the least.

But certain aspects of contemporary Modern Orthodox life may exacerbate this general American problem. Unfortunately, Modern Orthodox Jews are often characterized by inconsistent religious commitment and ambivalence about religion. Often, Modern Orthodox laypeople are thoroughly embedded in America’s suburban middle or upper class. Religion is shaped – sometimes simply disregarded or ignored – by the internal logic of that experience. Religion is not

so much an axiological commitment to the service of God. Instead, it provides a social framework and cultural identity for middle or upper class suburban Americans, in a culture that deeply values religious affiliation. Alan Brill is correct when he says that “The [contemporary] Orthodox community is completely embedded in American culture.... [It is] a community whose worldview is drawn from its embeddedness in American culture.... Jewish suburbia is entirely embedded within general suburban trends.”<sup>25</sup>

For many of these Jews, religion is valuable, but primarily to the extent that it is compatible, or can be made to be compatible, with the social and financial needs of suburban upward mobility. When it is not compatible, it may simply be overlooked and ignored. Modern Orthodox laypeople, therefore, may view religious leadership with ambivalence and discomfort. Rabbis and educators call for more consistent religious commitments, and they challenge – in part due to their own higher levels of religious consistency, and in part by their very preference of rabbinics and education over more lucrative professions – the materialism, complacency, and religious indifference that is reflected in so much Modern Orthodox practice.

If I may be permitted a somewhat ironic take on this, I might suggest that under these circumstances, the low pay and low status of teachers is actually quite functional. As Samuel Heilman has put it, “Jewish school[ing]...is a model of the Jewish community it serves, a mirror image of what goes on in the Jewish world around the school.... The Jewish community, instead of being altered by the education it provides, perpetuates itself *along with all its attendant problems*.”<sup>26</sup> There may be little better way to transmit and reproduce Modern Orthodox lay anxieties and ambivalences about religion and religious leaders than by sending children to schools where underpaid and under-appreciated teachers demonstrate that Judaism is important, but not *that* important. The community’s collective ambivalence about Judaism is reproduced by the cultural contradictions inherent in the low social status of those who are, ostensibly, the most important. The Modern Orthodox doctor or businessperson, parent of a young person trying to choose a career path, might say (or think silently): “I’m glad that there are rabbis

and teachers out there, but I am more glad that I am not one of them, and I wouldn't want my child to become one." Keeping salaries, benefits, and social prestige of teachers and rabbis low helps make this statement loud and clear. Students get just the education that their parents desire – Jewish in content, but subtly demonstrating that there are more important things than full time and intensive religious existence.

I hope that I am wrong, and that this paradox will not make it more difficult to draw talented Americans into the fields of Jewish educational and professional leadership. Even if I am right, however, the American Orthodox community is better off working to overcome this challenge by putting its resources into improving the conditions of Jewish professions and attracting more of its members into these jobs. I suspect that questioning aliya will do little to answer these deeper challenges.

### LEADERSHIP IN ISRAEL

Hypothetically, the American Modern Orthodox community might succeed in addressing its manpower shortage in a variety of ways. Still, as noted, other issues may rear their heads, and affect the long-term strength of American Modern Orthodoxy. Modern Orthodoxy requires not only talented professionals for its institutions, but also ideological leaders, institution-builders, agenda-setters, poskim, visionaries, and spokespeople. Certain individuals may be particularly influential and important in these roles. The aliya of one such a person may have a wide impact.<sup>27</sup> Are people who could serve these roles for the American Modern Orthodox community failing to do so because they have moved to Israel?

There may be another related phenomenon. Olim may continue to play a leadership role in the American community even after they have moved. As technological advances allow for easy international communication, and as American Modern Orthodox youth spend some of their most formative educational experiences in Israel, the community may discover that some of its leaders are, in fact, no longer living in North America. Some Modern Orthodox laypeople may turn to their "*rebbeim*," their teachers from Israel, for guidance,

advice, and halakhic decisions.<sup>28</sup> Olim may have an impact through Israeli institutions that service Diaspora communities, like Bar-Ilan University's Lookstein Center or ATID, and olim may have a growing say about American Orthodox affairs, by way of publications, interpersonal communication, or *pesak* (halakhic decision).<sup>29</sup> Sarna is concerned that a shift in the geographic location of American Orthodox leaders could lead to problems.

Perhaps Sarna exaggerates the problem. It is possible, and even likely, that on the ground – inside schools, synagogues, and communities – leadership is still provided overwhelmingly by locals. It is also possible that the problem is more serious, but that the same advances in communication and travel that have allowed olim to be so involved in North American Jewish life are also the solution. The global village will shrink the world so much that the location of someone's home will matter little in his or her ability to serve as a leader for a community somewhere else. But it is also possible that geography will still matter a great deal. Those of us living in Israel may find ourselves with less and less of an understanding of the dynamics of the community from which we came, and still retain a significant voice in that community.

Obviously, I am an advocate of open communication. American Orthodoxy has a great deal to learn from those in Israel, both because olim may have intelligent things to say to Americans, and because the eyes of an outsider can often provide helpful perspective. But, as Sarna points out, a community that relies too much on imported goods for its cultural capital may find itself in trouble. I have no idea when the point of "too much" is reached, and how close the community might be to that point. I feel even less qualified to predict precisely what consequences it might have if "too much" is reached, but there may be challenges along the way.

Thank God, the American Modern Orthodox community is blessed with many extremely talented and well respected educators and leaders. Certainly, there are individual olim who have become institution-builders, visionaries, ideologues, and leaders in Israel, probably at the expense of similar roles they might have played in America. And there are those who remain in America but continue

to turn to Israel for leadership and guidance. Under these circumstances, is Sarna correct? Are there any signs that American Modern Orthodoxy is in fact suffering from a lack of leadership? The extent of these phenomena is very difficult to evaluate, which makes it that much more difficult to predict what impact they might have. At one level, as in the case of staffing, solutions might lie in developing the talent that is in America, but which is underdeveloped. (One obvious example involves removing the glass ceiling that can exclude women from positions of leadership.) There are things that the community can do to help people become leaders, and there are at least some institutions in place in the Jewish community that are trying to do so.

Yet, at another level these challenges – if they indeed emerge as serious problems – are part of the larger paradox of American Modern Orthodoxy as a religious Zionist community in the Diaspora. American Modern Orthodoxy teaches and preaches about *Eretz Israel* and the accomplishments of modern Zionism, and struggles to inform itself and its students about Israeli reality. It collectively identifies the centrality of Eretz Israel and Medinat Israel. It is communally dedicated to supporting and visiting Israel, and celebrates the aliya of the minority who choose that path.

Yet, American Modern Orthodoxy has a great deal invested in the Diaspora. At a purely material and financial level, individuals have jobs and homes; communities have synagogues, schools, and yeshivas; and the movement supports a university as well as other numerous non-profit organizations of all kinds. Most importantly, American Modern Orthodoxy is made up of thousands of individuals who are utterly, completely, and totally American in terms of virtually every meaningful cultural and social parameter.

This is not merely a paradox, irony, or dialectical tension. For the most part, the question of what it means to be a Diaspora Zionist community is not a central aspect of contemporary Modern Orthodox discourse. R. Shalom Carmy's essay, "A View from the Fleshpots: Exploratory Remarks on a Gilded Galut Existence," may be the exception that proves the rule, in that regard.<sup>30</sup> R. Carmy asks some hard questions about American Modern Orthodoxy's collec-

tive decision to remain in the Diaspora. He attempts to provide an initial theoretical explanation of a valid galut existence, despite his serious misgivings about the potentially apologetic nature of the project and the way in which it might be used to mask an appropriate measure of discomfort. For better or worse, his discussion hardly sparked much discussion and debate. R. Carmy's observation that "the reasons for remaining in galut are more muddled than ideologists assume," is certainly to the point.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, I suspect that in most cases the reasons for remaining in galut are not even muddled. To be muddled, one would have to say something, while intending but failing to be coherent in doing so. For most American Orthodox Jews who remain in the Diaspora, the conversation never starts in earnest, and therefore never gets to the level of muddled. American Modern Orthodox Jews remain in America because they are Americans, and because they are comfortable in the United States. They do not think about what it means to be in exile, because they feel entirely at home. Gerald Blidstein put it well, nearly thirty years ago (at a time when aliya rates were higher than they are today), when he suggested that for most American Jews the topic of Israel is like that of death: "a subject of incessant, indeed compulsive, attention, but both always happen to somebody else."<sup>32</sup>

American Jews are not going to come to Israel *en masse* in the foreseeable future, and, truth be told, it would probably do more harm than good, at least in the short run, if they were to do so. Under these circumstances, American Modern Orthodoxy has yet to address a series of critical questions about the nature of the contemporary Diaspora. The question of when or how Diaspora Jews should criticize Israeli government policy rears its head whenever a given group of American Jews opposes that policy. But that, it seems to me, only scratches the surface of larger issues. Can American Modern Orthodoxy give an accounting to itself of the nature of Diaspora Religious Zionism? What role does that community see for itself, relative to World Jewry, in an age when the secular State of Israel is a living reality? How should we conceptualize the idea of exile, when that exile is voluntary and when one can and does

visit the Holy Land regularly? How does the nature of galut change when it is to be contrasted not with a utopian (and hence largely imagined) *ge-ulah* (redemption), but rather with the contemporary State of Israel with all of its human foibles? If Diaspora Jews over the ages have felt a great measure of alienation from the nations in which they live, how should American Modern Orthodox Jews, who largely lack that alienation, understand their place in America? What do the concepts of location, space, territory, and land mean to American Religious Zionists?<sup>33</sup> I do not have answers to these questions, but they have been at the center of the agenda of modern Jewish and Zionist thought,<sup>34</sup> and are largely absent from contemporary American Modern Orthodox discourse. Addressing these issues can only strengthen the community's ideological and theological base.

Indeed, when *Tradition* recently issued a generally pointed, insightful, and well-received symposium on Rav Soloveitchik's Zionist essay, "*Kol Dodi Dofek*," the discussion largely ignored these seemingly important issues. Several authors pointed out that the title of the essay echoes *Kuzari* 2:24, which describes God knocking, calling on the Babylonian exile to return to the Land. The Khazar king challenges the *Haver*, explaining that the Jewish People "falls short of the duty laid down in your Torah, by not working to reach that place [the Land of Israel], and making it your home in life and death." The *Haver*, unfortunately, finds himself agreeing with the king's critique. The community had not, and still does not, live up to the demand of returning to the Land. Yet, this observation about the title of the Rav's essay did not lead to a sustained reflection in the symposium on the implications of that allusion for the contemporary American Zionist community, and the possibility that that community is failing in the same way as its ancient predecessors. Perhaps American Modern Orthodoxy is, collectively, refusing to don its shoes and robe, leaving God knocking longingly at the door.

Furthermore, the symposium did not address Rav Soloveitchik's role as a Religious Zionist theologian of the first rank who lived in the Diaspora, who did not pursue plans to come to Israel, and who did not publicly encourage his students to come on aliya.

Is there something in his theology to nourish the Religious Zionist experience of “voluntary exiles?” If yes, the American Modern Orthodox community should be working to articulate it. If not, are there other thinkers or positions that might fill such a need?

As Religious Zionists, we cannot, I believe, accept the Zionist tradition of *shelilat hagolah* [negation of the exile], which in the more extreme versions of Brenner and Klatzkin, links the return to the Land of Israel with a stated rejection of the entire rabbinic-exilic tradition and its values. We believe that it is possible to live a real, rich, and spiritually valuable life outside the Land. Furthermore, as committed to Halakhah and *mesorah* [tradition], Modern Orthodoxy revolves around the literary and spiritual contribution of the 2,000 years of exilic Torah. Without that galut, we are orphaned. Yet, acknowledging and celebrating the centrality of the rabbinic tradition that developed in galut is not the same as recommending it for contemporary Jews. Modern Orthodoxy can no more negate the exile than it can agree with Ahad Ha’am or Mordecai Kaplan, for whom Zion was a cultural center to inspire a fuller Jewish life for the majority of *Am Israel* that would remain in the Diaspora. Contemporary Modern Orthodox Jews, in contrast, must address those halakhic and *aggadic* sources that identify dwelling in Israel as a positive commandment at most, and as a spiritual value of the highest order at the very least. I suspect that the lack of serious discussion of the meaning of Diaspora living is related to the difficulty – perhaps impossibility – of arriving at an adequate theory.

Under these circumstances, American Modern Orthodoxy is bound to find some of its most promising talent moving to Israel, and is bound to find some of its members turning to Israel for advice and leadership. There is, it seems to me, no way that American Modern Orthodoxy could have it otherwise, at least given today’s circumstances. As long as Israel remains such a vibrant center of Jewish and Torah life, as long as American Modern Orthodoxy values Zionism, and as long as it has no significant theory to explain its Diaspora existence, some of the most dedicated Modern Orthodox Jews will follow their hearts and minds, and come to Israel.



### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the first week of August 2006, I sat down to organize my thoughts and write an outline of this developing article. I found myself distracted by an irony that tugged at my conscience. As I sat in my Beit Shemesh home, thoroughly enjoying the unstructured summer that allowed me to work on this and other projects, over a million Israelis were either living in bomb shelters or had fled their homes. Israel was at war, and home was the front. My family and I had pitched in, helping with refugees staying in a local school. But the incongruity between my relaxation and their conditions made me feel decidedly uncomfortable.

Then the phone rang. I had been called in for an emergency draft. I packed my bag and left early in the morning to the emergency induction point. Our unit – a typical group of mixed Ashkenazim and Sephardim, younger and older, religious and secular, immigrants and natives, married and single – was all there. It was good to see “the guys” again, including some older soldiers whom we expected not to return to the unit. Still, there was a palpable sense of fear and concern. In the end, we were assigned a safe and easy task on the home front, with good living conditions and by the standards of things, easy access to home. Hardly a bad stint of reserve duty for me; more difficult and challenging for my wife and children.

It seemed appropriate to begin writing this essay using the primitive tools of pen and paper between shifts of guard duty. Writing under these circumstances has not, I believe, substantively altered my analysis of and attitude toward the challenges that face the American Modern Orthodox community as it watches talented lay leaders, rabbis, and teachers realize the age-old dream of aliya, but I maintain that it does help frame the discussion. Jews belong here in Israel. North American immigrants to Israel make enormous contributions to themselves and to Am Israel, whether as teachers or hi-tech workers, store clerks or government officials, or sitting on a hilltop during reserve duty munching on sunflower seeds and casually spitting the shells on the ground. North American aliya is a blessing, and it is a *zekhut* (privilege) to be part of it. I wish more would join us.

At the periphery of this positive development lie, perhaps, certain challenges for the overwhelming majority of North American Modern Orthodox Jews who have chosen to remain in exile, ignoring the historically unprecedented ease with which they could accomplish what their ancestors only dreamed of. Those challenges are worth discussing and evaluating, but we must not lose sight of the center. I reiterate: whatever soul-searching may be necessary to overcome the aftereffects of leaders' aliya should be doubled and tripled in questioning American Modern Orthodoxy's collective complacency about staying put.

### NOTES

1. Reuven Spolter, "In Search of Leaders," *Jewish Action*, 64:3 (Spring 2004): 38–44 (After a decade of service to the American Jewish community, R. Spolter has recently announced his own aliya plans). Also see Shalom Carmy, "A View from the Fleshpots: Exploratory Remarks on Gilded Galut Existence," in *Israel as a Religious Reality*, ed. Chaim I. Waxman (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1994), 1–42; Jonathan Sarna, "The Future of American Orthodoxy," *Sh'ma* (Feb. 2001), available at <http://www.shma.com/feb01/sarna.htm>.
2. See Yair Sheleg, *The North American Impact on Israeli Orthodoxy* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1999), 3–7.
3. Avi Kay, *Making Themselves Heard: The Impact of North American Olim on Israeli Protest Politics* (New York and Israel: The American Jewish Committee, 1995), and his "Citizens' Rights in Flux: The Influence of American Immigrants to Israel on Modes of Political Activism," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 13:3–4 (Fall 2001): 143–158.
4. See Sheleg (though in places he may overstate his case).
5. On the impact of olim, also see Uzi Rehbun and Chaim I. Waxman, "The 'Americanization' of Israel: A Demographic, Cultural and Political Evaluation," *Israel Studies*, 5:1 (2000): 65–91.
6. Spolter, 41–42.
7. Carmy, 40 and Sarna.
8. Sarna.
9. Sarna.
10. On the whole, Orthodox day-school teachers have more extensive Jewish education, but less extensive university-based teacher training, than do their non-Orthodox counterparts. See Adam Gamoran, et al., *The Teacher's Report* (New York: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1998), 5–7. Gamoran does not distinguish between different shades within Orthodox education, and it may be that Modern Orthodox teachers more closely resemble their non-Orthodox peers than do haredi teachers.

11. Shaul Kelner, "A Bureau of Labor Statistic for Jewish Education," *Agenda: Jewish Education*, 17 (Spring 2004): 17, available at [www.archive.jesna.org/pdfs/agenda\\_17.pdf](http://www.archive.jesna.org/pdfs/agenda_17.pdf).
12. See Susan L. Rosenblum Shevitz, "Communal Responses to the Teacher Shortage in the North American Supplementary Schools," *Studies in Jewish Education*, 3 (1988): 25–61.
13. Several important works from the 1960s – Alvin I. Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America* (New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1968); Charles Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Year Book*, 66 (1965): 21–97; idem. "The Training of American Rabbis," *American Jewish Year Book*, 68 (1969): 3–112 – have yet to be updated systematically. The emerging works of Adam Ferziger on American Orthodox rabbinic and professional training are beginning to fill the gap. Also see Marvin Schick, *A Census of Jewish Day Schools in the United States* (New York and Jerusalem: Avi Chai, 2000).
14. Richard M. Ingersoll, "The Recurring Myth of Teacher Shortages," *The Teachers College Record*, 99:1 (1997): 41–44, available at <http://www.tcrecord.org>, ID Number: 10602.
15. Editor's introduction to Isa Aron, "Realism as the Key to Excellence in Congregational Education," *Agenda: Jewish Education* 17 (Spring 2004): 9.
16. See Dodi Tobin and Chaim I. Waxman, "Living in Israel, Working in the States: The Transatlantic Commuter," *Jewish Action* (Winter 2005), 44–48.
17. For the statistics from 2006, see Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics press release, available at [www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/newhodaot/hodaa\\_template.html?hodaa=200721026](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/newhodaot/hodaa_template.html?hodaa=200721026). The CBS statistics from previous years can be found in its yearbook. See <http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader>. For statistics and a discussion of aliya rates from the United States during the years 1949–1993, see Chaim I. Waxman, "American Orthodoxy, Zionism and Israel," in Shalom Z. Berger, Daniel Jacobson, Chaim I. Waxman, *Flipping Out? Myth or Fact: The Impact of the "Year in Israel"* (New York: Yashar Books, 2007), 184. The Jewish Agency provides slightly different numbers. See <http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/Home/About/Press+Room/Aliyah+Statistics/dec20.htm>. The differences between the CBS and the Jewish Agency numbers cannot be explained merely by the fact that the former is counting immigrants only from the United States, while the later is counting those from all of North America.
18. See above, n. 13. Also see Doniel Zvi Kramer, *The Day Schools and Torah Umesorah* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1984).
19. The impetus for this growth in the research came with The Commission on Jewish Education in North America's report, *A Time to Act* (Lanham, MA, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1990). For a survey of available studies and policy reports, see Shaul Kelner, et al., *Recruiting and Retaining a Professional Work Force for the Jewish Community: A Review of Existing Research* (Waltham, MA: Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and the Fisher-

- Bernstein Institute for Leadership Development in Jewish Philanthropy, Brandeis University, 2004), available at <http://www.cmjs.org/files/RRLR.pdf>.
20. Kelner, et al., 29.
  21. Gamoran et al., 11–16. Gamoran’s study included both Orthodox and non-Orthodox professionals.
  22. Steven Cohen and Susan Wall, *Recruiting and Retaining Senior Personnel in Jewish Education: A Focus Group Study in North America* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Education Committee of the Jewish Agency, 1987): 20–27.
  23. Gamoran et al., 11.
  24. Ingersoll, “Myth.”
  25. See his, “Judaism in Culture: Beyond the Bifurcation of *Torah* and *Madda*,” *The Edah Journal*, 4:1 (Iyyar, 2004): 10–11.
  26. Samuel Heilman, “Inside the Jewish School,” in *What We Know About Jewish Education* ed. Stuart Kellman (Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 1992): 321, emphasis mine. Heilman, in this particular passage, may be overstating the conservative role of schools in reproducing culture, and may be underestimating their transformative roles.
  27. There has, for example, been some speculation about what impact it might have had had the Rav been elected as Israeli Chief Rabbi. See Jeffrey Saks, “Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and the Chief Rabbinate: Biographical Notes (1959–1960),” *BDD*, 17 (September 2006): 66–67.
  28. Some one-year programs in Israel may, inadvertently, exacerbate this problem. In their enthusiasm to establish personal relationships between students and staff, some of these programs send subtle messages to students that their year in yeshiva is the peak of their spiritual lives and that their teachers from Israel may be the best qualified to offer them spiritual advice into the future. This can, in some cases, create an unhealthy dependence on Israeli teachers, at the expense of indigenous American religious leadership.
  29. This challenge is reflected in the irony of having R. Aharon Lichtenstein address the topic of “Being a Religious Zionist in the Diaspora” in this volume. Despite having lived in Israel for decades, R. Lichtenstein is rightly considered one of the most important rabbinic and halakhic voices in contemporary American Modern Orthodoxy, and is rightly considered uniquely qualified to comment on the situation of the Diaspora community.
  30. Carmy, “A View from the Fleshpots.” Also see R. Lichtenstein’s contribution to this volume, as well as Jonathan Sacks, *Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren? Jewish Continuity and How to Achieve It* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1994), Chap. 8.
  31. Carmy, “A View from the Fleshpots,” 6.
  32. Gerald Blidstein, “America’s Jews and Israel,” *Tradition*, 18:1 (1979): 9.
  33. In Israel, there is extensive discourse surrounding questions of land and location. The nature of the Land’s sanctity, the value of settlement in the Greater Land of Israel, and the need for religious presence in locations such as largely secular Tel

Aviv and in struggling development towns are all subjects of extensive conversation.

34. Arnold M. Eisen, *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflections on Homelessness and Homecoming* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986).

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# 10

## Are the Right People Making Aliya? [Who Will Be the Teachers of Our Children?]

*Binyamin Blau*

*Introductory note:* At the outset, I must acknowledge that since there has not been an exhaustive sociological study examining this issue, many of the premises presented are based on anecdotal evidence. On the other hand, when there is a preponderance of evidence even of this nature, and it is combined with a situation of potential gravity, then it is our task to honestly wrestle with this topic.

At first glance the title of this paper seems, at best, provocative, and at worst, inappropriate. How can one criticize those who have

made *aliya*? Minimally, moving to Israel is at least a fulfillment of a religious deed, a *kiyum mitzvah*, while there are views that it is the central mitzvah that dominates our spiritual existence.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as individuals dedicated to the approach, *hashkafah*, of the Rav, can one ever fault someone who has “heard the knocking” and has answered the call?

While those are valid points, they do not do justice to the complexity of the issue. It is not the sincerity of *olim*, immigrants to Israel, that is being challenged, but rather it is the consequence of their actions that must be reckoned with. What is the impact of the recent wave of *aliya*, and how should North American Jewry respond to this phenomenon?

### FACTS ON THE GROUND

There is clearly a resurgence of *aliya* fervor. Nefesh B’Nefesh, an organization founded a mere five years ago, has been a resounding success. Last summer alone they arranged for seven flights to arrive in Israel, bringing close to three thousand new residents to our homeland.<sup>2</sup> Seminars are now held around the country and the prospect of making *aliya* has become a real option rather than a wistful dream. In a similar vein while many summer camps battle decreasing enrollment and struggle to find suitable counselors, many of the Moshava camps have to turn applicants away. For those who believe in Religious Zionism, this is a welcomed development.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, there is a real paucity of qualified educators and/or rabbis who openly subscribe to either a Religious Zionist or Torah U’Madda philosophy. The number of synagogues, self-described as Modern Orthodox, that are searching for suitable leaders to guide them, is startlingly high.<sup>4</sup> A listing of Young Israel rabbis reveals a striking number of *musmakhim*, rabbis, whose hashkafic views seem at dissonance with those of their congregants.

Along the same lines, if one enters the typical yeshiva high school, it is rare to find a cadre of teachers who fully support the institution’s ideology. One of two possible scenarios exists, with both being problematic. Either the Judaic faculty members themselves are not Orthodox and feel that the school’s stated mission does not

match their personal beliefs, or, as is more common, they feel that the school does not sufficiently promote true religious observance. While the problem is less acute in the New York/ New Jersey area, and there can be a healthy educational component to having a staff with heterogeneous views, in most instances it is not a matter of choice but rather a concession to the limited available options.

We are therefore left with an ironic reality; at the very instant that adherence to the philosophy of Religious Zionism is rising, there is a crisis in finding proponents of that same ideology in the institutions that naturally promote it, namely in our schools and synagogues.

### ARE THESE TWO ISSUES INHERENTLY LINKED?

Is there a correlation between the rising aliya rate and the lack of *klei kodesh*, communal professionals in the religious community, who believe in that same objective? There are cogent arguments that support both possible responses to this question.

On the one hand numerous factors that are totally unrelated to aliya contribute to the shortage of philosophically aligned educators/rabbis in the United States. Unfortunately, there is a lack of respect accorded to these positions by our community which leads to a smaller number of individuals actually selecting these career paths.

The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, (RIETS) the leading source for our community's *klei kodesh*, has revamped aspects of the *semikhah* program in response to the disturbingly low rate of graduates who actually enter into either the rabbinate or the teaching profession.

Additionally, the jobs themselves have become quite taxing, leading to decreased longevity. While years ago one grew accustomed to associating a synagogue with its rabbi due to the almost symbiotic relationship between them, now it is rare to find a synagogue that has not formed a search committee within the last five years. The matter is particularly acute in terms of administrative positions where it has become increasingly difficult for institutions to retain administrators for extended periods of time. The latter



concern is not limited to the field of Jewish education, but the fact that it permeates the general educational landscape serves as little consolation.

While those points are not in dispute, there is another equally powerful perspective to consider. If one talks with *klei kodesh* who are in the field there is a growing uneasy sense that indeed our community's best and brightest, a clichéd but apt term, are making *aliya*, and it is unclear who will fill the widening void created by their departures. Let us examine anecdotal evidence that bears out this contention. (I must note that these examples are based on personal experiences, but I suspect that they will resonate with most readers.)

One of the fringe benefits of the *semikhah* program at RIETS is the option of spending a year or two in Israel studying at the Gruss Center. Eighteen years ago I availed myself of that opportunity along with over twenty of my fellow students. In a striking development almost all of my colleagues did indeed become educators and rabbis. A recent calculation of their whereabouts, however, reveals that over 50 percent of them now reside in Israel. While one can not dismiss their collective numerous, and ongoing, contributions to Israeli society, clearly they are no longer directly impacting the North American community.

Moving to examples of more recent vintage, two years ago I was contacted by a dynamic young educator who was in the process of making *aliya*. A conscientious individual, he was concerned about who would replace him as he was part of a unique learning program still in its infancy. We chatted and both lamented that we could think of five suitable replacements who lived on the same block in Israel, but could not name five comparable educators in all of New York. Once again, without making a judgment as to the effectiveness of those Israeli educators, or the wisdom of their choices, the power of the observation remains striking.

Finally, I presently have the privilege of serving as the principal of the Upper School at the Fuchs Mizrachi School in Greater Cleveland. We are blessed with incredible staff members who proudly defy the normal pattern and all exemplify the Religious Zionist ideals

that define the school's mission. A huge concern of mine, however, is that within five years the staff will have a total makeover as my *mehankhim*, educators, fulfill their dreams and depart on aliya. (Having just been informed of another rebbe's imminent move to Israel, it appears that my worries are coming to fruition.) As a friend I can celebrate, and even champion, their decisions; as a principal, I greet those same choices with trepidation and a degree of wistfulness.

In many respects it is the sentiments behind those mixed emotions that capture the essence of our dilemma. From God's first encounter with Avraham, and then proceeding throughout the words of the neviim, the prophets, the message is unequivocal: Israel is the place where all of the Jewish people belong. *Hazal*, the Talmudic sages, powerfully reinforce this belief in numerous statements, even declaring that living outside of Israel is comparable to living without God.<sup>5</sup> (While that poignant comment requires further analysis, it is revealing nonetheless.) The longing to return to our homeland has been a constant theme, as well as a beacon of hope, during our prolonged exile. Against this powerful backdrop, can an individual who elects to move to Israel in fulfillment of our destiny be considered anything less than noble?

Moreover, leaving aside the theological implications, the decision to make aliya often requires significant personal sacrifices. Rabbinic opportunities in Israel are scarce, and many educators need to teach in numerous institutions simply to get by. Even with the increased numbers of olim, and the frequency of travel and new forms of communication in the modern age, young couples who emigrate still face the prospect of separating from friends and family. Despite all the preparation, moving to another country, even our own, entails a serious psychological transition. This is particularly true for children, most notably teenagers, which is another factor compelling couples to accelerate their aliya plans in the hope of easing their family's adjustment. In light of these factors, can the decision to make aliya be considered anything less than heroic?

From the perspective of those individuals moving to Israel, the answer to that question is clear. Indeed they are deserving of our praise by virtue of their actions. If the same question is viewed

through the communal prism, however, the answer becomes less clear. Assuming that our present trend continues, and many of our gifted *klei kodesh* immigrate to Israel without an accompanying mass movement, what will become of the schools and synagogues that they leave behind? Who will fill those critical positions in cities across the country? Inevitably communities will be forced to make one of two choices. Either they will select individuals who firmly believe in our *hashkafah*, but may not be fully qualified. Or, they will turn to the myriad of dynamic graduates of the *haredi* educational system who will powerfully impact the communities in which they settle, but will not espouse our philosophy. The ramification of these selections will be profound in numerous ways, but even if we limit ourselves to the issue of *aliya*, the impact is significant.

The message of moving to Israel that we expect to reverberate in our schools and synagogues will either be muffled (assuming the former scenario in the options listed previously) or it will be eerily silent (in the case of the latter scenario). From the communal vantage point, is it not then incumbent on those making *aliya* to worry that their departure will perhaps weaken the very cause they are championing?<sup>6</sup> While there is no single solution to our dilemma, four possible responses may be suggested.

### 1. Adopt a “Scorched Earth” Tactic

Rather than attempting to change the present pattern, the very phenomenon of increased *aliya* by our *klei kodesh* (and the resulting void it creates) can be used as a powerful argument to encourage the larger public to follow suit. By portraying the bleak future for those who remain behind devoid of leadership, perhaps amorphous *aliya* plans will crystallize and there will be an ingathering of immigrants to Israel of staggering proportions. Taking this approach to its fullest point of application, even more educators/*rabbis* would be persuaded to move to Israel further heightening the crisis, and eventually coercing the *tzibur*, the larger community, to emulate their example.

While ideological purists may find this tactic quite appealing, it does not seem consistent with the Rav’s more pragmatic view of

both Zionism and religion. If even our present ownership of the state cannot be taken for granted, if we are not yet in a messianic age, then taking a gamble of this magnitude reeks of recklessness. The risk of a lost generation looms heavily on the horizon.

## 2. Replicate the Rabbi Riskin Model

Perhaps the solution then is to encourage more educators/rabbis to create new communities in Israel, and then have their communities move together with them. The positive impact of this model is enormous, as it strengthens Israel's economy and national psyche, and it greatly eases the transition of North Americans making aliya. Just as Efrat has grown exponentially over the last few years, other cities will hopefully follow suit, which in turn will generate further aliya as there will be even more locations readily accessible to English speaking olim.<sup>7</sup>

While this is a noble thought worth contemplating, it is wonderfully naïve to assume that a unique model can be duplicated many times over. The dynamism and charisma required to build a new town and then persuade a sizable portion of an existing congregation to relocate, are not found in abundance. We may marvel at those who can accomplish this daunting feat, but we can not depend on this becoming a common occurrence.

## 3. Alter Aliya Plans

While it is ultimately a personal decision, it is critical that the effects on one's community be an important factor when weighing the timing of making aliya. No one is as successful at affecting our Modern Orthodox/ Religious Zionist community as those who emerge from within. While this consideration does not exactly meet the Rambam's criteria for allowing someone to live outside Eretz Israel,<sup>8</sup> we must note that the Rambam himself was dwelling in Egypt when he penned these words. Clearly he, and the numerous *gedolim*, sages, who lived outside of Israel, believed that the needs of the *klal* can outweigh personal obligations.

While it would be presumptuous for any individual educator or rav to compare oneself to figures of stature such as the Rav or

Rav Moshe Feinstein and thereby rationalize remaining abroad, our dilemma concerns the collective departure of *klei kodesh*, which greatly changes the equation. Moreover, if we are suggesting delaying *aliya*, as opposed to abandoning the dream altogether, the justification for serving Klal Israel, the Jewish people, in the Diaspora grows even stronger.

Perhaps the wisest permutation of this concept would be for the educator/rabbi to not depart until a suitable replacement had been found. In this manner, continuity would be insured, and the problems envisioned earlier, overcome.

There may be much merit to this approach; however, it can not be the sole solution. There is no way for the community to legislate or dictate when individuals make *aliya*, nor should there be. Moreover, due to the personal nature of these choices it would be impossible for a real system to be created. Our dilemma would be lessened, but not solved.

#### **4. Develop a Better Model of *Shelihut***

The present system of hiring emissaries from Israel has added a unique and valuable dimension to schools and communities across North America. The authentic Israeli spirit that these young men and women possess can not be replicated. Emotionally, their impact lasts far beyond their limited stay. Unfortunately, the overall success of this arrangement is far more erratic.

While clearly well intentioned, many of our Israeli guests arrive extremely unprepared for their mission. Their lack of familiarity with both the language and the culture can be difficult for all parties involved. The expectation that any Israeli, even those who have not been trained as educators, can be successful in the classroom is deeply flawed.

The remedy then is to create a better training mechanism so our communities can reap the benefits of having dynamic Israelis in our midst, without sacrificing the quality of instruction. The creation of a new institution in Israel that would use gifted educators/rabbis who themselves had recently made *aliya* to train these emissaries,

and would certify their readiness to go abroad, would be a welcome development.

I believe that Yeshiva University (YU) is uniquely positioned to form such a program, in light of its large number of talented graduates who have already emigrated and the facilities the school already possesses, which minimizes the start-up costs. Additionally, the fact that the YU placement office in New York is already in contact with schools and synagogues looking to fill positions makes YU the perfect conduit between these newly certified *shelihim*, emissaries, and their prospective hosts. The matchmaking process would be streamlined and the recipient communities would have greater confidence that their guests are qualified and appropriate.

Enacting this program under the auspices of Yeshiva University could potentially have an additional corollary benefit as well. Presently, the majority of individuals embarking on shelihut are native born Israelis who feel a moral obligation to spread the message of Zionism and encourage aliya. The involvement of YU not only raises the profile of this mission, but it also engages many North American olim in the process. Perhaps this will spark some of those same educators/rabbis or their contemporaries to consider a tour of service abroad of their own.

While the latter point may be a bit ambitious, a successful implementation of the larger concept, even in a limited fashion, would create a steady flow of competent replacements for *klei kodesh* immigrating to Israel. In addition, there would be no doubt that these new teachers and rabbis will promote the future aliya of our children.

Theoretically, the idea sounds wonderful; whether this vision will become a reality is another question entirely. There is no guarantee that such a program will be created, or that it will run smoothly if established. Even if the first two criteria are met, there is still the concern that the numbers will not be sufficient to accommodate the growing need. Ultimately, a complete solution remains elusive.

What then is our next step? In many respects, we remain with our initial quandary. Aliya must be promoted and celebrated; our

hashkafah demands no less. At the same time our community must discuss and debate possible solutions, be they the ones outlined or any other creative offerings, until we merit the only clear resolution, the advent of Moshiah, may he come speedily in our days.

### NOTES

1. The former position is quoted by Rav Moshe Feinstein in *Igrot Moshe Even HaEzer*, 1-102, while the latter position is advanced by Ramban on Bamidbar 33:53.
2. While it is hard to determine the exact impact of Nefesh B'Nefesh's activities, they have clearly streamlined the process and aroused community awareness.
3. Regrettably, it must be noted that even with all these developments, the actual number of olim is relatively small. According to the Jewish Agency, there were 3,200 emigrants from North America in 2006. The tide is far from a thunderous wave.
4. This assertion is based on recent listings by the RCA/OU/YU Joint Placement Committee.
5. Ketubot 110b.
6. In truth the issue is far deeper than merely the message of aliya being lost. The same educators/rabbis who espouse making aliya tend to promote a myriad of values (the inherent worth of secular education, the broader role of women in Judaism etc.) that are critical to our hashkafah. I have chosen a narrow focus to simplify the argument. Additionally, we have not even touched upon the related issue of whether those educators/rabbis have a requirement to serve their communities as an expression of *hakarat hatov*, appreciation, for all that they received in their formative years, particularly in light of their unique ability to influence those same kehillot from which they came.
7. Unfortunately, Efrat's growth has not come without its own set of challenges. Nonetheless it remains an important conceptual model for purposes of our discussion.
8. Hilkhhot Melakhim 5:9.

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# 11

## The Aliya Threat to American Modern Orthodoxy

*Seth Farber*

*Aliya* is a reality but modern Orthodoxy doesn't know what to do with it.<sup>1</sup> In one sense, aliya is the quintessential expression of the religious Zionism espoused by the American modern orthodox community. And yet, the overwhelming majority of avowed Zionists continue to live rich and meaningful Jewish lives in the diaspora, not seriously contemplating aliya, despite its feasibility.

From a quantitative perspective, aliya is a growth industry, at least on the North American scene. Despite the fact that in 2006, aliya across the world dropped to its lowest levels since 1998 (less than 20,000 immigrants), North American aliya has been on the rise during the past four years. In August 2007, the Israeli government agreed to fund Western aliya organizations to the tune of \$1000 per oleh, highlighting the success of these organizations in promoting



emigration to Israel. An argument may be made that organizations such as Nefesh B’Nefesh have not created the new aliya trend, but are simply capitalizing on the economic opportunities in Israel, the maturation of a generation of modern orthodox Jews who were inspired by their “year abroad” or the advances in technology that allow for transatlantic careers. Whatever the reason, North American aliya is a reality.

Our question, however, deals with the aliya of Jewish leadership and their responsibility toward the American Jewish and Orthodox community. Formulated by Rabbi Binyamin Blau, the question becomes: “assuming that our present trend continues, and many of our gifted *klei kodesh*, communal professionals in the religious community, emigrate to Israel without an accompanying mass movement, what will become of the schools and synagogues that they leave behind? Who will fill those critical positions in cities across the country?”

This paper challenges the assumptions of this question on both qualitative and quantitative grounds. We argue that aliya has been a factor on the American modern orthodox scene since the 1960s, and that American modern orthodoxy has grown despite aliya. In addition, we suggest that aliya, among other factors, contributes to the dynamism of the American Orthodox religious culture, and it will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. In fact, recent trends within American modern orthodoxy, particularly the efforts of the Center for the Jewish Future at Yeshiva University, suggest that the rabbinate and Jewish education will continue to be vibrant factors on the American scene. In short, American modern orthodoxy has little to be concerned with regarding its future viability at least in the major centers of American Jewish life. A major cause for concern is the Orthodox Jewish communities on the periphery, but ironically, these are only being strengthened by aliya, not weakened.

### THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE QUESTION

Are more gifted educators and rabbis coming on aliya today than did in previous years, and how does that compare to the general trend in aliya? American modern orthodox educators and rabbis have been

making aliya since the 1960s. Is something new happening today? Even if we were to find a new pattern of aliya among educators and *klei kodesh*, is this or will this be relevant to the triumph of modern orthodoxy in America?<sup>2</sup> Before we begin asking whether we need American rabbis to return for stints as *shelihim*, emissaries, before we ask the question whether their contribution to Israeli society or to Jewish and Orthodox culture in Israel outweighs the loss to the American community, and even before we start asking whether aliya should be encouraged as the ultimate expression of the Zionist or religious Zionist enterprise, we need to know the extent of the contribution of the so called *klei kodesh* to the American community and the extent to which aliya is a factor in the diminishing of that contribution.

Prior to analyzing the quantitative data, two observations are in order. Firstly, it is interesting to note that the question of the brain drain that aliya has created was asked well before the perceived shift in aliya trends began. Rabbi Shalom Carmy's assertion that "Many of America's best Orthodox intellectual and social resources...now reside in Israel. Israel's gain has been our loss,"<sup>3</sup> was made in 1991. Jonathan Sarna's article on the possible demise of American Orthodoxy due to aliya was published in 2001. Many of America's top Jewish educators made aliya more than a decade ago.

If further evidence is needed, let us look at the specific examples brought up by those who seek to illustrate the brain drain phenomena and its implications for American modern orthodoxy. Sarna, for example, mentions Rabbi Shlomo Riskin as an educator who removed himself for a vibrant community. Others have lamented Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's aliya, as it left a noticeable void at Yeshiva University. And yet, Rabbi Lichtenstein made aliya more than thirty-five years ago, and Rabbi Riskin more than twenty years ago. Can we say that American Orthodoxy has suffered because Professor Michael Rosenak or other members of the Graduate Teacher's Seminary of 1954 came on aliya in 1957?<sup>4</sup> What of Rabbi Ezra Bik and Dr. Bryna Levy and Rabbi David Miller and Malka Bina and the list goes on and on of Jewish professionals who were all in Israel by the early 1980s?<sup>5</sup>

All this indicates that the new phenomenon is not really new at all. Whatever the quantitative data says, it is clear that aliya has been around for a while, and will continue to be a factor in the ethos of American Orthodoxy. It is striking, that despite all the lamenting about aliya and the perceived crisis, American Orthodoxy has grown, flourished, and demonstrated a dynamism that shows no signs of waning, even in the face of the aliya of some of its “best and brightest.” Regardless of the perceived lack of leadership in America, notwithstanding the emigration of genuine leadership, and even forgetting about the desideratum of a more defined, articulated or engaging American religious Zionist ideology, American modern orthodoxy is doing better than ever.<sup>6</sup>

Some have made the argument that even if the aliya of *klei kodesh* is not a new phenomenon, we should do more to make it one. Perhaps, some would argue, emigration to Israel, particularly for rabbis and educators, should be encouraged, in order to religiously strangle the American Orthodox community. Yoel Finkelman argues provocatively that American Orthodox Jews are not sufficiently engaged to be muddled in their religious Zionism. Perhaps by depriving American Orthodoxy of rabbis and educators who speak their cultural language, American Orthodox Jews would be rattled into confronting the significance of aliya in particular and their Jewish lives in general.

This argument is flawed on tactical and strategic grounds. Tactically, it simply won't work. While many rabbis and educators are tempted by aliya, the opportunities that exist for them in Israel are, for the near future, exceptionally limited. Despite economic incentive programs such as fellowships and loan cancellations (both of which have been taken on for Yeshiva University alumni and deserve consideration in our context), the fact is that only a small percentage would consider abandoning the satisfaction and genuine good work that an American career in education or the rabbinate provides for the unknown of Israel.

Cultural and family responsibilities also play a role in the decision of the overwhelming majority of Jewish educators and rabbis the United States to not move to Israel. One factor that is stimulat-

ing aliya in the general sector, that is, the lack of compromises that individuals need to make in their career because of advances in technology and the growth of the Israeli economy are hindrances to the aliya of those involved in the rabbinate or Jewish education. Obstacles of language and the non-existence of an American style rabbinate in Israel preclude the possibility of “vertical transition,” and certainly, in most cases, do not allow for career growth.

But even if the impracticality of aliya could be circumvented, there is a dimension of American orthodoxy that is not endangered by the loss of its leaders. The volunteeristic dimension of American Judaism in general, and modern orthodoxy in particular (in contrast, I believe to other various ultra-orthodox communities in the United States), places the rabbi, teacher, educator or administrator in a unique position regarding his or her leadership. Modern orthodox rabbis and educators often practice their trade sublimated to the convictions of their constituencies. I don't mean to suggest that rabbis are irrelevant, but rather, that often, they play the role of accommodators rather than independent leaders in their communities, particularly on the modern orthodox scene. Of course, rabbis and educators can provide vision, but their vision is often held in check by their constituency.

The position and role of rabbis and Jewish educators on the American scene should not be seen only in its negative sense. When one does this, one inevitably returns to the suggestion, as suggested by Finkelman, that by increasing salary and prestige of rabbis and educators, the community will create more effective leadership. However, it may be that the current model, with the vast resources already invested in Jewish education and the rabbinate, highlights a positive aspect of American modern orthodoxy as it demonstrates the power of the laity. The responsibility that the American modern orthodox community feels towards its institutions and its investment in them is remarkable and worthy of praise. As such, even were a mass movement of aliya of rabbis and educators to commence, it might not fundamentally change the character of American modern orthodoxy which is fundamentally (for good and for bad) lay driven.

Finally, the extent to which the modern orthodox constituency follows its leaders- particularly in the aliya department- is indicative of the role of rabbis and educators. When Rabbi Riskin made aliya, only four or five families went with him, with another 450 staying at Lincoln Square Synagogue. This does not mean that he was not a great leader, but simply that American modern orthodox Jews rely on themselves.

### THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

It ought to be clear already that I don't accept the doomsday scenario for American modern orthodoxy, nor do I believe that its future is exclusively dependant on rabbis or educators. The quantitative data related to rabbis and Jewish education professionals supports the claim that aliya is a strong factor in the dynamism of American modern orthodoxy, but that its significance should be measured over the last fifty years, and not the last two. In fact, aliya of North American modern orthodox Jewish professionals has been going on since the 1960s. Before analyzing the data, it is important to note that defining the aliya of Modern Orthodox rabbis and educators is itself a difficult task, for it is possible to define modern orthodoxy in this area based on institutional affiliation, community served, or ideological orientation, or some combination of the three. In addition, there is significant nuance to the numbers of people (particularly rabbis) who make aliya, considering that individuals can make aliya pre-career, in the midst of their career or in retirement. Moreover, there are those rabbis or teachers who served their community in the United States, but pursue a different career path in Israel, and even those who chose not to pursue *avodat hakodesh*, sacred professional activity, in the United States but take it upon themselves in Israel, either because of their relative financial security or out of conviction. Finally, there are those residents of Israel who served the American modern orthodox community who have not officially declared aliya, for a variety of reasons.<sup>7</sup>

It is safe to say that almost everyone who made aliya from North America in the past two years did so through Nefesh B'Nefesh. Since the organization has only recently kept detailed records, the

data is sparse and the statistics from their database do not differentiate between those who identify as modern orthodox and other. A central factor introduced by the minimal data available is that the number of women who are engaged in education who are coming on aliya far exceeds the number of men. Since women teachers represent an important dimension of the modern orthodox educational enterprise, the high number of olim should give some cause for concern.

**Table 1: Aliya of Teachers and Rabbis from North America**

Nefesh B’Nefesh	Teacher			Rabbi
	Male	Female	No Gender Indicated	
NBN 2002			7	1
NBN 2003			6	1
NBN 2004	16	52	30	9
NBN 2005	37	87	2	13
NBN 2006	38	108		5

Given that NBN brought some 3000 North Americans on aliya in 2006, the numbers of rabbis and educators constitute less than 5 percent of the total.<sup>8</sup> But there is little indication from the NBN statistics of the ideological bent of the olim. Are these modern orthodox rabbis and educators?

RIETS has only recently begun to publish statistics tracking graduates of their ordination program. The recent publication of *Chavrusa*, the alumni magazine of RIETS, debunked a myth that most recent graduates do not pursue work in the rabbinate or Jewish education. According to their statistics, of the 184 semikhah graduates from 2002–2006, only 16 percent did not pursue some aspect of Jewish communal life, with 34 percent entering Jewish education, 22 percent continuing in kollels, 17 percent entered the pulpit rabbinate, and 9 percent entered Jewish communal service.<sup>9</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Musmakhim</b>	<b>Declared Aliya</b>
1996	28	3
1997	29	1
1998	38	7
1999	46	3
2000	19	2
2001	33	4
2002	57	6
2003	31	2
2004	29	2
2005	53	12
2006	44	4

Only a handful of rabbis from each graduating class declared aliya following their studies. The rabbis and teachers who have declared aliya in the chart here represent those at the beginnings of their career and those at mid-career. The statistics from the past ten years, provided by the rabbinic alumni of YU, suggest that of the more than 2000 musmakhim of YU, approximately 410 have established permanent residence in Israel. The table above, tracing the last ten years of semikhah graduates, suggests that, on the whole, 10 percent of graduates are moving to Israel. Although 32 graduates of the semikha program attended the hag hasemikhah in Israel in March 2006, an unprecedented event that inspired students and roshai yeshiva alike,<sup>10</sup> only 22 of those opted to stay in Israel, reflecting the trend toward returning to the United States.

When compared to the graduates of the 1960s, it appears that the percentage of those musmakhim who emigrated to Israel parallel those from the last ten years. This chart demonstrates the number of musmakhim on aliya from the graduating classes of 1960–1969.

Even taking into account that some significant percentage of the musmakhim make aliya at the mid-career stage (some of those listed are Rabbis Yonah Fuld, who served as the principal of SAR Academy, George Finkelstein, who served as the principal of MTA,

and Shlomo Riskin, who served as the rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue), the numbers still include some who made aliya at the early career stage (Rabbi Daniel Tropper, of Gesher, or Rabbi David Miller of the RIETS Israel Kollel for example), and highlight that aliya has been a trend for an extended period of time.

**Table 3: Annual Number of Ordainees and  
Number Declared Aliya, 1960–1969**

Year	Total Musmakhim	Declared Aliya
1960	27	9
1961	29	8
1962	26	3
1963	25	7
1964	28	5
1965	33	8
1966	41	6
1967	44	9
1968	51	8
1969	52	7

Moreover, at the recent chag hasemikhah, celebrating the 40th and 50th anniversary classes, it was made known that approximately 20 percent of the graduates are presently living in Israel, a number higher than the present levels of graduates.

This data bolsters the thesis that aliya, despite being a central demographic factor, has, in its current constellation, little to do with the success of American modern orthodox institutions.

This thesis is suggestive of a dimension of American modern orthodoxy that little has been written about. From an ideological perspective, modern orthodox ideologues have embraced a healthy tension between rabbinic authority and personal autonomy suggesting that such a tension can provide the context for a dynamic and meaningful religious life. It appears that the aliya of a percentage of American rabbis has led to a greater dimension of personal autonomy and considerable growth of modern orthodoxy on the American scene. American modern orthodox Jews prefer independence



from their rabbis and to a large extent this is a good thing. The fact that so many rabbis have immigrated to Israel has simply weakened the dependence on forces that contour a lay driven orthodoxy. In fact, when modern orthodox communities lose their rabbis, they often choose rabbis from Chabad or other ideologies, but continue to hold steadfastly to their principles.

It is possible to raise theoretical questions regarding what might have happened if X had stayed or Y had made aliya. But the bottom line is that all indications are that the aliya of rabbinic leadership, be it at the beginning of their careers, the midpoint, or in retirement, has created a void which laity has stepped into, both creatively and successfully.

Modern orthodoxy has demonstrated its vibrancy when it faced the void created by the death of Rav Soloveitchik. The diversity of opinion, the multiple means in which his students sought to recreate the Rav's dynamism, the various approaches to modern orthodoxy which all gather around the banner of synthesis have all allowed American Orthodoxy to triumph. I believe that Alan Brill's categorization of the American suburban religion, devoid of meaning or serious challenge, is dismissive of the accomplishments of the lay community in structuring a new type of Orthodoxy where rabbis and teachers play a significant but non-exclusive role.

Allow me to give an example of what I consider to be successes, in the face of the aliya of the 1960s and 1970s: Let us consider for a moment the institutions of modern orthodoxy. Save Drisha (founded in 1979), and perhaps Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Modern Orthodox rabbis have not created institutions that have been driving forces in its development in the last thirty years. But does this mean that modern orthodoxy is in danger? Quite the opposite. Despite the fact that so many have gone on aliya and the perceived lack of leadership, the level of Torah scholarship, learning, and general observance has risen to unprecedented levels. Most of this activity is lay driven, and rabbis play critical, though supporting roles.

The fact that aliya has played a small role in the coming of age of American modern Orthodoxy may be explained by a number of factors that are unique to modern orthodoxy: 1) the general mobil-

ity of rabbis and Jewish educators in their pursuance of professional careers; 2) the support of aliya as part of an expression of American religious Zionism: In addition, the “new aliya” – to the extent that it is a factor – has contributed another two aspects that attenuate the brain drain: 1) the fact that so many educators and rabbis who have made aliya support American institutions in Israel and 2) the fact that others continue to service their home communities from Israel through consulting, Internet, or, in one case, serving as a communal principal (or in three cases, running modern orthodox summer camps from Israel).

Each one of these dimensions is deserving of consideration for its role in shaping the American modern orthodox culture:

### **MOBILITY**

A prominent modern orthodox philanthropist was recently asked how he came to support the Lubavitch movement, given that he does not seemingly support their ideology. His response is illustrative of the weakness and strength of what I would refer to as the flux of modern orthodox teachers and rabbis in the United States

The philanthropist argued that he identified in Lubavitch a good, solid business model. “If you’re a businessperson backing an enterprise and are looking for people to be partners with, there are things you look for,” he said. First, “is the product any good?” When the product is Jewish heritage, he says, there is no question – “For Jews, there can be none better.” Second, “You need a partner with a proven track record, someone who is both passionate about and good at his business.” In the case of Lubavitch, he was impressed that the “best and the brightest” of the Lubavitch movement’s young people go into shelihut. “The best and the brightest don’t go into medicine, law, business or journalism. They go into shelihut,” he said, which shows a deep level of commitment.

Additionally, he said, the personal stake of individual shlichim, their lifelong personal investment, bodes well for their success. “They’re going to put down roots in the communities to which they’re sent and remain there permanently.”<sup>11</sup>

American modern orthodox rabbis have rarely demonstrated

the staying power of Chabad rabbis. To the best of my knowledge, there is no scholarship related to this, but my impression is that the stronger communities outside the central geographic areas were most successful when the (few) rabbis or educators undertook a challenge and never returned. Consider the examples of Bangor or Columbus, where rabbis who served for more than twenty years were able to build institutions that transformed a generation. Of course, when those rabbis left, their institutions disappeared. But contrast them to peripheral communities of today such as Nova Scotia (Halifax has had nine rabbis since 1960) or Jacksonville which are structured on the “five-year-rabbi” model. Within a couple of years, few rabbis can have longstanding impact on a community or on a school. Part of the reason that aliya is a non-threatening phenomenon is that modern orthodox rabbis are consistently re-positioning themselves, both away from the metropolitan areas in their early years (on the whole), and back to the geographic centers in their mid-careers.<sup>12</sup> Yeshiva College and RIETS never encouraged their rabbis to just stay with one community, and only a minority of rabbis have felt such a calling. In 2005, 170 rabbis had their resumes sent on their behalf by rabbinic services to 135 Jewish institutions.<sup>13</sup> Statistically, this means that every five years, on average, members of rabbinic alumni are looking for a change.

Mobility of rabbis is a double edged sword. It allows for personal growth and challenge on the part of the rabbi (and often on the part of the community), but also can throw communities or educational institutions into disarray. Conversely, the fact that communities must engage in new searches every few years creates a necessary reevaluation of priorities, which is healthy for a religious community.

If mobility is such a strong factor in the lives of rabbis and Jewish educators, then one must consider the fact that modern orthodoxy has grown despite the mobility, and that Israel in some respects, is just another destination to which rabbis move. On the whole, rabbis and educators are moving around, and as such, there is little to worry about if 20 percent decide to move to Israel.

### **SUPPORT OF ALIYA**

There seems to be consensus on the modern orthodox street that aliya is a good thing and a meaningful expression of religious Zionism. I don't know if this was always the case, and I do remember being warned upon my entry to the semikha program at RIETS that if I want to move to Israel, I should study plumbing, but nowadays, there is certainly uniform support for aliya. This has contributed to the fear factor related to the future of modern orthodoxy, but I think there is little reason to worry. Communities take for granted that their rabbis may make aliya and in certain circumstances, even help them do so. Consider the three principals of the SAR Academy who consecutively made aliya following a decade of service to the Riverdale community.

The recognition that Jewish leadership may make aliya is important in two respects: First, it allows communities to strategically plan, understanding that their rabbi or educator is not a fixed factor in the future of their community. As I've stated above, this allows for a richer Jewish experience (particularly on the contemplative side) for the modern orthodox laity, as their personal level of responsibility for the future is heightened. In addition, it is a positive feature, for rabbis and educators often serve as role models in their communities and they may in fact inspire others to consider aliya.

### **SUPPORT FOR NORTH AMERICANS FROM ISRAEL**

The new aliya of rabbis and educators, to the extent that it is significant demographically, may not constitute a danger because, as Yoel Finkelman has pointed out, it comes at a time of extraordinary growth in American institutions in Israel. There are now more than forty year programs (yeshivot seminaries and the like) that are catering to the needs of modern orthodox high school graduates. Most of those attending these programs will ultimately return home enhanced by the experience which, more and more, is becoming an American style moment. If, in the 1970s, the few Americans who studied in Israel found themselves for the most part in Israeli environments, nowadays, almost all the American programs are run with American style amenities, in English and with American

trained educators and rabbis. Without detailing the advantages and disadvantages of this evolution, the fact is that many rabbis and educators continue to serve the North American modern orthodox community from Israel. As both Dr. Finkelman and Rabbi Blau note, the shelihut programs and scholar-in-residence programs as well as the modern orthodox scholarship that all emerge in Israel from North American olim also highlight the contributions. One cannot let the opportunity pass to note that Rabbi Ezra Bick's podcasts from the Har Etzion website are timed to coordinate to the Manhattan commute.

Though it is difficult to say whether an individual's contribution from afar or for a short time can be matched by his imminent and permanent presence, these contributions certainly play a small role in the dynamism of the American Orthodox community.

Aliya, then, is a (permanent) feature of the American modern orthodox scene, and it should not worry us. In fact, aliya of rabbis and educators is gradually contributing to the North American modern orthodox scene, by providing opportunities for young olim to serve as shlichim in communities on the periphery that have been neglected for too long by young musmakhim. The move to the geographic centers has been the great Achilles heel of modern orthodoxy. "Strong" communities such as Toronto and Atlanta which provide kosher restaurants, eruvs and high quality schooling have all but pulverized the communities within their 100 mile radius. Slowly, these communities are beginning to be serviced by olim who are not afraid (particularly given attractive compensation packages) to go out of town. Yeshiva University, despite its recent positive investment in rabbinic training services, is no longer the sole provider of rabbis to the modern orthodox community, and I don't only refer to Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. Programs such as Amiel, *likrat Shlichut* and seminaries and yeshivot such as Hamivtar, Darchei Noam and Pardes are all contenders now for positions in the United States and each of these institutions has placed rabbis or educators who are olim in communities outside of the geographical centers. This is another positive byproduct of the brain drain.

Israel, to paraphrase Clemenceau, is filled with irreplaceable

educators and rabbis from the United States. But there is nothing to worry about. In fact, quite the opposite.

### NOTES

1. This play on Arthur Hertzberg's introduction to *The Zionist Idea* is reflective of the new trend in American Orthodox culture to identify Zionism with aliya.
2. Jonathan Sarna, "The Future of American Orthodoxy," <http://www.shma.com/febo1/sarna.htm>.
3. Shalom Carmy, "A View From the Fleshpots: Exploratory Remarks on Gilded Galut Existence," in *Israel as a Religious Reality*, ed. Chaim I. Waxman (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1994): 40.
4. [www.yucommentator.com/media/storage/paper652/news/2005/04/18/Features/Yeshiva.Alumni.Recall.Pioneering.Israel.Experience-919160.shtml](http://www.yucommentator.com/media/storage/paper652/news/2005/04/18/Features/Yeshiva.Alumni.Recall.Pioneering.Israel.Experience-919160.shtml)
5. It might be argued that the departure of moderate voices to Israel has contributed to the "move to the right" in modern orthodoxy. In the full version of this paper, this issue will be addressed.
6. Here the quantitative data is significant. See Chaim I. Waxman, "American Modern Orthodoxy: Confronting Cultural Challenges," *Edah Journal*, 4:1 (2004, Iyar 5764); Jacob B. Ukeles, "A Quantitative Profile of Modern Orthodox Jews in the New York Area," *Edah Journal*, 5:1; For a somewhat dissenting opinion which I disagree with in extent but not in substance, see Samuel Heilman, "American Orthodoxy: Where are We, Who are We and Where are We Going?" *Edah Journal*, 5:1
7. To the best of my knowledge, no significant research has been done on the mobility and careers of American modern orthodox rabbis. I thank Rabbi Elly Krinsky and Keren Simon for providing me with preliminary statistics related to the rabbinic alumni of Yeshiva College. A full study is certainly in order.
8. Statistics provided by Avi Silverman, director of aliya services from NBN
9. *Chevrusa*, 41:1 (September 2006): 17.
10. <http://media.www.yucommentator.com/media/storage/paper652/news/2006/04/03/News/University.Holds.Inaugural.Convocation.And.Colloquium.In.Israel-1764767.shtml>; *Chevrusa*, 41:2 (December, 2006): 8.
11. <http://www.jewsweek.com/bin/en.jsp?enPage=BlankPageandenDisplay=viewandenDispWhat=objectandenDispWho=Article%5El509andenVersion=0and>
12. *Chevrusa*, 41:2 (December, 2006): 8.
13. *Ibid.* My thanks to Dr. Mark Lobenberg and Rabbi Yitzchak Blau for their comments on this paper.



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# Part 6

## Zionism and Religious-Halakhic Decision Making





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Prophetic Morality  
as a Factor in R. Uziel's  
Rulings on Conversion:  
A Case Study of  
Halakhic Decision-Making  
from a Zionist Perspective

*Binyamin Lau*

**INTRODUCTION: PUBLIC DISCLOSURE  
OF DECISIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The effort to penetrate a rabbi's mind and locate the considerations that drive his *halakhic* decision-making reflects a definitive point of departure in discussing the matter of a decisor's personal involvement

in his decision-making. The issue – whether a preexisting moral and cultural stance underlies a rabbi's rulings – has attracted considerable attention in the scholarly world. Important thinkers such as Yeshayahu Leibowitz and Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik have forcefully rejected the view that the decisor's personal position enters into the process.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there are studies demonstrating that many tannaitic and amoraic disputes are grounded on preexisting worldviews,<sup>2</sup> though the decisors themselves decline to say so. Without going into all the intellectual skirmishes over this question, let me note only my view that the decisors' disinclination to disclose their inner feelings, and their inclusion only of objective halakhic reasoning in their presentations, do not attest to a divide between a decisor's cultural milieu and his rulings. To illustrate, let me cite some remarks by one of the great Galician rabbis of the early twentieth century, Rabbi David Menahem Munish Babad, head of the rabbinic court in Tarnopol:<sup>3</sup>

To begin, let me say something I heard from the *gaon* [great scholar] R. Berish Rappoport, head of the rabbinical court in Rawa, whose practice, which he had learned from his teacher, the renowned *gaon* and head of the rabbinical court in Lublin, was that whenever a question came before him, he would first use his mind to assess the reality of the matter in accord with human reason; and if it appeared to him on the basis of human reason that the matter was true, he would then examine how it should be judged in accord with the laws of our holy Torah. And so it is with me: when question of an *agunah*<sup>4</sup> or a similar case comes before me, if it is clear to me in accord with reason and human knowledge that [a particular result] is the true one, then I struggle to find a way to permit it in accord with the laws and rules of our holy Torah.

Contemporary decisors cite these comments in support of rulings based on reasoning and logic. For example, Rabbi Jacob Breish<sup>5</sup> quotes the passage in an analysis directed toward allowing the widow

of a soldier whose ship had sunk during the Second World War to remarry even in the absence of eyewitnesses to her husband's death (that is, to free her of *agunah* status). Most of his arguments are based on international law and on the political-security situation of his time, which differed substantially from the talmudic concepts on which the *Shulhan Arukh* was based. In view of those differences, he sought to rule differently than did the *Shulhan Arukh*, and he cited Rabbi Babad's previously quoted remarks in support of his position. Similarly, Rabbi Y.Y. Weiss, head of the rabbinic court of the *Edah ha-Haredit* in Jerusalem, quoted the passage in a responsum on allowing a *mamzer* (the offspring of an adulterous or other forbidden union, generally forbidden to marry anyone except another *mamzer*) to marry. Rabbi Weiss used the quotation to demonstrate that the decisor comes to a case from a particular starting point.<sup>6</sup> In the academic world, the passage was cited by Prof. E.E. Urbach as an example of how a decisor is influenced by the thinking of his time and place.<sup>7</sup> The recurring appearance of this quotation in diverse contexts has two important implications. On the one hand, it suggests there are almost no other such statements emanating from the halakhic decisor's "workshop"; that is why this one passage is so often quoted. On the other hand, it shows, as R. Babad attests, that there was a widespread tradition in Poland and Galicia regarding this sort of decision, making it the norm rather than an extraordinary measure outside the normal rules of the game.

Against this background, it is interesting to read what R. Joseph Ber Soloveitchik had to say about environmental influences on halakhic man and about the need to distinguish between that influence and the halakhic decision-making process itself:

The [historical] event certainly leaves its impression on halakhic man, rouses his intellectual powers, guides his observations, piques his curiosity, enriches his thought, directs it toward horizons that the event illuminates, and forces it to grapple with spiritual and ideal matters that have the potential to respond to the perplexities of the event. But the reciprocal relationship between

Halakhah and event manifests itself not in the realm of pure halakhic thought, but in the inner depths of halakhic man's soul. The event is the psychological impulse that sets the pure halakhic thought on its course. But the instant it has begun to move on its specific course, it progresses not in a manner subordinate to the event but, rather, in obedience to its own normative-ideal rules of governance. For example, we have always shared in the sorrow of the wretched agunah, and the rabbis exercised leniency to avoid situations in which women would become agunot. But when a rabbi sits to judge the case of an agunah, he makes his decision without being swayed by feelings of sympathy, even though his compassion has been stirred by this pitiful woman. His decision is based solely on theoretical-halakhic principles.... To psychologize or sociologize the Halakhah is to attack it mortally.... If halakhic thought depends on personal factors, it loses all objectivity and descends to the level of insubstantial subjectivity.<sup>8</sup>

Does a decisor's awareness of the socio-cultural background and of its influence on his halakhic position lead to a sense that halakhic decision-making is merely a mundane human enterprise rather than a revelation of God's word within the world? One might say that, in a decisor's consciousness, his act in deciding a case is not one of creating a ruling but one of discovering, in essence, a divine truth. That has been the fundamental position in the rabbinic world for many generations, from R. Judah Halevi and Nahmanides to the *Hafez Hayim* and R. Soloveitchik.<sup>9</sup> But that sense of discovering God's word in halakhic decision-making does not contradict the fact that the decisor approaches his task within cultural contexts that guide his thought and incline him in particular directions.

As with regard to the decisor's cultural background, so too with regard to his moral background. The rabbinic world sees autonomous morality, the product of man himself, as something entirely foreign to Judaism. Jewish morality is theonomous; God

is its source. For the sake of argument, let me cite the words of R. Shlomo Aviner:<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that our morality is not a man-made “autonomous morality.” It is, rather, a “heteronomous” morality, drawing its force from outside man; more precisely, it is a “theonomous morality” having its source in the will of God, Who created the moral and spiritual order within reality. Accordingly, one must be very careful about any idea that presumes to replace God’s word with social conventions or man-made religious norms.<sup>11</sup>

The world of Halakhah contains an array of principles that might be termed “meta-halakhic:” “better that [the people] sin inadvertently than that they sin deliberately”;<sup>12</sup> “better that a letter be uprooted from the Torah than that God’s Name be desecrated in public”;<sup>13</sup> “great is [the value of] human dignity.”<sup>14</sup> These rules are based on moral principles and serve as binding background to all halakhic rulings. In contrast to these principles, which are formulated in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds and implanted in halakhic thought, there are many rabbinic statements, based on prophetic morality, that have not found their way into the halakhic literature. They appear primarily in *aggadic* texts, and their importation into the halakhic system has been regarded as comparing apples to oranges.<sup>15</sup> But the aggada is thought of as the successor to the prophetic voice, and the desire to heed the aggadic voice stems from the same desire to hear within Halakhah the call of the prophets, of morality, rather than heeding only the measured beat of halakhic decision-making. Today, that desire has given rise to exciting discussions within religious society.<sup>16</sup>

On the surface, Rabbi Uziel (Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, 1880–1953) was no different from any other decisor. His ideological identification with the Zionist movement’s nationalist enterprise was open and straightforward. He was among the founders of the Mizrahi movement in the Land of Israel and served as the movement’s envoy throughout the world.<sup>17</sup> With the establishment of the

state, R. Uziel became involved in all matters pertaining to the state's relationship to Halakhah. That involvement exercised considerable influence on his halakhic decisions; for example, he ruled that the various communities' diverse liturgical practices (their "ancestral customs") should not be maintained – a ruling consistent with his advocacy of "national unity" (*Mishpetei Uziel*, part 1, *Orah Hayim*, sec. 1).<sup>18</sup> But while he wrote dozens of responsa, in none of them does he articulate the decision's motivation and background. Each question, of course, arises out of a local context that results in its being presented for decision, but once the decisor begins to consider it, he is liberated, as it were, from the yoke of circumstance as he ascends to the theoretical domain of decision-making. Nevertheless, one occasionally glimpses, between the lines, something beyond these theoretical processes.<sup>19</sup> In this article, I want to examine R. Uziel's use of "prophetic morality" in his rulings as part of his effort to improve and perfect the Zionist movement. I will argue that R. Uziel's worldview regarding Zionism and its ingathering of the exiles is what led him to draw on prophetic sources that take a broad view of Israel and to manifest a sense of responsibility born of a movement that strives to draw Jews together and energize them.

Specifically, I will consider R. Uziel's responsa on the subject of conversion and seek to hear the prophetic voice within them – a voice not often heard in the world of Halakhah.

Much has been written on the subject of conversion, and I do not mean to add to that literature.<sup>20</sup> R. Uziel's responsa on the subject are concentrated in *Piskei uziel bi-she'ilot ha-zeman*, secs. 59–66, and range over all the years of his rabbinate, from his days in Salonika to his service as Sefardic Chief Rabbi (*Rishon le-Zion*) in Israel. I have already written comprehensively on his lenient inclinations with respect to conversion;<sup>21</sup> here, I want to add a point not previously considered: R. Uziel's use of verses from the prophets as factors in halakhic determinations. Doing so may show the possibility of using the prophetic books of the Bible as a new and progressive component in the world of Halakhah.

**ISAIAH 1: "I WILL SMELT OUT YOUR DROSS AS WITH LYE" – EXPANDING THE RANKS OF ISRAEL**

In the first responsum (sec. 59 in the collection), written in the early 1920s while he was living in Salonika, R. Uziel was asked about a Jewish man long married to a gentile woman. The couple had children, and the wife now wanted to convert. In his responsum, R. Uziel deals with three issues: whether to convert her; whether to allow the couple to marry in accord with the law of Moses and Israel following her conversion; and whether they needed to separate for three months following conversion (to ensure that any ensuing pregnancy did not predate her conversion).

With regard to the first question, R. Uziel argued, on the basis of sources in the Talmud and the *rishonim* (halakhic authorities dating, in general, from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries) that the conversion would draw the wife closer to the husband's family and that, accordingly, "they were obligated to draw [the couple] closer and bring them into the covenant of Israel's Torah, removing the affliction of intermarriage, which is a severe affliction within the vineyard of the House of Israel." His realistic starting point for analysis was that the couple was living together. Barring the conversion would not separate them; it would only lead to further assimilation. It was therefore clear to him that the struggle against assimilation required allowing the conversion.

Turning to the second question – whether the woman in such a case should be permitted to marry a Jew after her conversion – R. Uziel recognizes that earlier rabbis tended to prohibit such marriages. He nevertheless concludes that marriage in this sort of case should be permitted; in doing so, he relies on a responsum by Maimonides, issued in connection with *takanat ha-shavim* (steps to make it easier for penitents to return to the proper path), that it is preferable to waive a lesser prohibition in order to forestall violation of a major prohibition:

These precious words of his serve as our guides in all matters not involving absolute prohibition, such as one suspected of improper relations or one married to a



gentile who later converted. For if we do not permit their marriage after her conversion, they will remain [civilly] married all their days with her still a gentile, and their children will be children of a mixed marriage, uprooted from the ground of Israel.<sup>22</sup>

R. Uziel concludes with a passage from Isaiah:

And God in his kindness will restore him to the right path, fulfilling for us “I will refine away your dross as with lye and will take away all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at first and your counselors as of yore” (Isa. 1:25–26).

R. Uziel redirects his attention from the particular convert under consideration to the family situation of her husband and the children born and perhaps yet to be born to them. That broad perspective is not something the Halakhah regards as needed. Halakhic analysis that draws on the Talmud and the codes always focuses on the individual at issue, his leanings, intentions, and ties to the community of Israel. Other motives, such as the state of the nation, are not to be found in the world of Halakhah in contexts such as these. R. Uziel’s consideration of such factors as assimilation and the loss to the Jewish community of the couple’s children says much about his perspective.

Consistent with that, the concluding reference to Isa. 1 is more than a rhetorical flourish of the sort common in halakhic writings adorned with biblical verses. R. Uziel is offering an interesting interpretation of the prophet’s responsibility for the cleansing of the Jewish nation. The chapter in Isaiah describes the blot that makes Israel ugly: “How has the faithful city become a harlot!” (1:21). In the course of answering, the prophet promises in God’s name that, following exile, God will again extend His hand over her: “I will refine away your dross as with lye and will take away all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at first and your counselors as of yore; afterwards you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

Interpreted in its plain sense, the verse seems to provide a directive to cleanse one's garments of dross by purging them, that is, passing them through fire (or caustic soda) – in other words, to remove all dross from the garment. The meaning is to wipe out the evil that makes Israel ugly. The commentators on Isaiah understood the verse in this way, as did *Midrash Yalkut Shim'oni* on Isaiah, *remez* 391: “I will refine away your dross as with lye – once the exiles are gathered in, judgment will be rendered against the wicked, as it is written, ‘I will refine away your dross as with lye,’ etc. And once judgment is rendered against the wicked, there will be no more heretics.”

The Hebrew word *tzeiruf* (the noun from the stem *tz-r-f*, rendered in the foregoing quote as “refine”) is a word having two opposite meanings. The usual biblical meaning of the stem refers to refining metal by removing its waste material. That is the sense in which it is used, for example, in Zechariah 13:9:

And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them [*u-tzeraftim*] as silver is refined [*ki-tzerof et ha-kesef*], and will test them as gold is tested; they shall call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say “it is My people,” and they shall say “the Lord is my God.”

The *Metzudot* commentaries interpret the verse as follows: “*And will test them* – that is to say, in the coming travails, I will test the remnant to see if they remain firm in their faith, just as gold is tested in the refiner's furnace to see if it is pure of dross.” Many other verses similarly describe the cleansing of the bad from the good; see, for example, Judg. 7:4 and Ps. 17:3.

The second meaning of *tzeiruf* is “joining” or “combining.” The Talmud accordingly interprets the verse *imrat a-donai tzerufah* (2 Sam. 22:31/Ps.18:31), usually taken to mean “The Lord's word is refined,” to imply “if one has merit, he is joined to life; if one lacks merit, he is joined to death” (*Yoma* 79b). The word comes into modern Hebrew in that sense; *lehitzta'ef* means “to join” or “to affiliate.”

Although there is no doubt that the verse in Isaiah uses the *tz-r-f* stem in its first sense, R. Uziel construes it in a contrary manner:

he wants to accept the woman as a convert because she is already linked to a Jew. Instead of excluding the Jewish husband from the community, thereby refining “the vineyard of Israel,” he sees him a Jew and aims to cleanse the garment by permitting the conversion of his wife and their children. He transforms the act of *tzeiruf* in the sense of removal and destruction into the act of *tzeiruf* in the sense of drawing near and including. This radical reinterpretation exemplifies R. Uziel’s direction and aspiration.

In another responsum (*Piskei uziel bi-she’ilot ha-zeman*, sec. 60), R. Uziel deals with the view of Rabbi M. Lichtman of Beirut, who questioned reliance on Maimonides’ responsum. Rabbi Lichtman argued that in a case of a gentile married to a Jew who wanted to convert and remain with her husband as man and wife under Jewish law, the applicable halakhic principle was “let the wicked stuff himself until he dies” (that is, do not facilitate a lesser offense in order to avoid a greater one; if he is unwilling to renounce all offenses, so be it). R. Uziel strongly objects to this view, arguing for the need to distinguish between one setting out to commit an offense, in which case the cited principle is meaningful, and one already in a bad situation; in the latter case, the principle to be applied is that it is better to commit a minor offense than a major one:

And do not try to refute me on the basis of the gemara’s comment “let the wicked stuff himself until he dies” (*Bava Kama* 69), for that refers only to one who wants to commit an offense, such as a thief...who enters his fellow’s field to steal [produce]; in that sort of case, we do not take pains to ensure that he does not commit other offenses related to [produce forbidden by the Torah’s agricultural laws]. But where one has no desire to sin and seeks a lenient ruling [with respect to his after-the-fact situation], we try to rule leniently for him to protect him from committing a more serious sin. In a similar matter, the sages said, “If one places a loaf in an oven, he is permitted to remove it [on the Sabbath] before he comes to an interdict involving stoning” (*Shabbat* 4a [Soncino Press

translation] and see Rif, *Milhamot ha-Shem* and Ran ad loc.). We learn from this that even though removing the loaf on the Sabbath violates the rabbinic rule of *shevut* (according to Nahmanides) or, at least, constitutes a week-day sort of activity inappropriate on the Sabbath (according to Ran), the rabbis nevertheless permitted it for the purpose of averting a more serious violation that would be punishable by stoning. The Tur and the *Shulhan Arukh* ruled that way as well: one may not place a loaf in the oven on the Sabbath, but if he did so, and even if he did so deliberately, he is permitted to remove it before it is baked, thereby avoiding a violation punishable by stoning (*Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayim* 254:6 and *Bakh* ad loc). That is the law; and one may say it applies a fortiori in the case of one married to a gentile woman who comes to convert of her own accord, not for the sake of any material or physical gain but only because she wants to be properly married pursuant to the Torah of Israel. In such a case we may permit both the conversion and the marriage – not to remedy her situation but to remedy her husband’s, saving him thereby from perpetual sin, for he violates a serious prohibition each time he has sexual relations with her while she is a gentile. The conversion and marriage are not [being authorized] *ab initio* but only *ex post facto*; and in such a case, Maimonides has taught us to rely on the rabbinic adage “act on behalf of God; they have violated Your Torah” [an interpretation of the verse “It is time for the Lord to work; they have made void Your law (Ps. 119:126)].

What is it that distinguishes R. Uziel’s perspective from that of the rabbis who favor a policy of “let the wicked stuff himself until he dies”? It seems to me that R. Uziel, to a certain degree, considers more than the individual before him and his or her reasons for wanting to convert. He looks beyond that individual to the broader context of Jewish assimilation and weighs his ability to keep a Jew

and his family within the fold. It is interesting to compare his position to that of his colleague, Rabbi Y. Herzog, who is unwilling to compromise on his consideration of the prospective convert himself and regards such a conversion as invalid:<sup>23</sup>

Know, that even though the rule since the time of the *tanna'im* has been that all of them, after-the-fact, are valid converts, I have a serious concern about that nowadays. Formerly in Israel [cf., for the phrase, Ruth 4:7], a transgressor would be despised and persecuted by his people; accordingly, even if a convert had been motivated in the first instance by a desire to marry a Jew, he knew that if, once having converted, he did not act in accord with the Torah, his status within Jewish society would be a very sorry one. That is not the case today, given the large number of non-observant Jews who not only do not suffer on that account but who occupy positions of national and communal leadership. Accordingly, there is cause for concern that the prospective convert is not really undertaking to observe the commandments and that, while his ulterior motive leads him to utter words, his heart is not really in them.... Accordingly, the rabbi today has an even greater responsibility to consider each case until he is satisfied that these people will truly observe our holy religion.

In the next responsum (*Piskei uziel bi-she'ilot ha-zeman*, sec. 61), R. Uziel deals with a case in which a gentile was converted to Judaism in Buenos Aires, despite that community's enactment of a rule that no converts at all would be accepted. The question before R. Uziel was whether or not the conversion should be annulled.

The case had previously been ruled on by R. Hezekiah Shabbtai, chief rabbi of the Sefardim in Jerusalem. R. Shabbtai forbade accepting the conversion, on the grounds that it ran contrary to the ruling of the Buenos Aires Jewish court. Nevertheless, R. Uziel was asked to express his opinion on the matter.

R. Uziel sought to see the other side of the coin:

On the other hand, there is an interest in stringency with respect to not shutting the door in the face of a penitent; not leaving him compelled to continue to violate the prohibition of relations with “a woman in menstrual impurity, a servant, a gentile, or a harlot”; and not alienating the children who, though not considered Jews, are nonetheless of the seed of Israel on their father’s side – something that obligates us to draw them toward Judaism and not to distance them forever from the Torah of Israel and from Judaism. And I doubt very much that doing so [that is, rejecting this convert] would provide a deterrent to intermarriage on the part of the masses; indeed, the contrary may be true: having despaired of being allowed to act in a permitted manner, they might act in a forbidden manner, with the result that they and their children would leave behind the Torah and community of Israel.

**FOR JUDAH HAS PROFANED THE HOLINESS OF THE LORD**

The next responsum, on the subject of conversion for the sake of marriage to a *kohen*, is addressed to Rabbi Rafael Hayim Saban, chief rabbi of Istanbul; it dates from 1944:

I have read his [i.e., your] letter of 27 Sivan with love and affection, and I am honored to respond, to the best of my limited ability, with the help of my Rock and Redeemer.

R. Uziel begins by citing the generally accepted ruling in the *Shulhan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'ah* 268:12:

1. Conversion for the sake of marriage.

It is the accepted Halakhah that the court need not accept converts who take that step in order to attain some desired purpose. And so our master [R. Joseph Karo, author of the *Shulhan Arukh*] wrote: When one

comes to convert, he is examined to ascertain whether he is doing so for monetary gain, and if the applicant is a man, he is examined to ascertain whether he has set his eye on a Jewish woman, and if the applicant is a woman, she is examined to ascertain whether she has set her eye on a Jewish man.

But R. Uziel quickly turns to contemporary needs and the concern about assimilation:

But in our time, when the calamity of mixed civil marriage has become widespread, we must often convert the man or the woman in order to save the Jewish partner from the prohibition against “espousing the daughter of a strange god” [Malachi 2:11] and in order to save the children they will bear, who would otherwise be lost to the Jewish people. And we rely in doing so on the words of Maimonides, our teacher and light, who wrote...

He goes on to explain his position that those seeking to convert are not subject to the rule of “let the wicked stuff themselves”:

And because that is so, we are permitted to look the other way [lit. to make ourselves as simpletons] and use this conversion in order to save a Jewish man or woman from this serious prohibition, a severe affliction within the House of Israel and one capable of bringing destruction on our people, as is written: “For Judah has profaned the holiness of the Lord, that which He loves, and has espoused the daughter of a strange god. May the Lord cut off from the man who does this one who calls and answers from the tents of Jacob” (Malachi 2:11–12).

The choice of these verses from Malachi nicely shows R. Uziel’s perception of his responsibility for Jewish continuity and of national realities at the time of the Return to Zion. Malachi prophesied while

the Second Temple was being built, a time when intermarriage was rife among the people returning to the Land of Israel from the seventy-year Babylonian Exile. Reacting to that, Malachi says:

(11) Judah has acted treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the holiness of the Lord, that which He loves, and has espoused the daughter of a strange god.

(12) May the Lord cut off [*yakhret*] from the man who does this one who calls and answers from the tents of Jacob and one who offers an offering to the Lord of Hosts.

The prophet determines that one who has acted treacherously and defiled the holy seed will be punished by *karet*, that is, he will be cut off from his people, unable to be a part of the community of Israel. Active in the early Second Temple period and aware of the serious threat of assimilation, Malachi nevertheless upholds the law's stringency and threatens the offenders with absolute estrangement. Rashi interprets the verses as follows:

*For Judah has profaned* – himself, for he was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of His harvest (Jer. 2:3)

*Espoused the daughter of a strange god* – they married alien women in Babylonia. Even the priests did so, as is told in the book (Ezra 9); and our sages said that Malachi is Ezra.

Rashi's interpretation is clear and hews to the plain meaning of the text. By adding the identification of Malachi with Ezra, he ties the policy of Ezra and Nehemiah to intermarriage. R. Uziel offers a very different interpretation of the verse that describes the situation; in his view, the reality of assimilation is *karet* in and of itself. He takes the verse not as warning of cause and effect – assimilation incurs the punishment of *karet* – but as describing a reality that brings about the nation's destruction. Mitigating the punishment of *karet*,



he considers the threat posed to the Jewish people by assimilation. Accordingly, he tries to make the criteria for accepting converts more elastic, to facilitate keeping descendants of Jews within the fold. He writes:

It therefore is better to convert them, so as to save them from violating a prohibition and save their children from being lost [to the Jewish people] than to leave them in their mixed marriages. [This is so] wherever the judges see that there is no means and no hope for successful use of influence and admonition to move them away from sinning. The matter is given over the discretion of the judges, as our master [R. Joseph Karo] the author of *Beit Yosef*, of blessed memory, wrote, as long as they direct their hearts heavenward; and He, being merciful, will atone.

***I WILL BRING YOU INTO THE BOND OF THE COVENANT:  
CIRCUMCISING THE CHILD OF A GENTILE MOTHER***

The next responsum we consider (*Piskei uziel bi-she'eilot ha-zeman*, sec 64) was also written in 1944 to Rabbi Saban of Istanbul, who had reacted to an earlier responsum in which R. Uziel had required a father to circumcise a son born of his marriage to a gentile woman. R. Saban noted that the responsum was at odds with other rulings that had withheld circumcision from the sons of gentile mothers and Jewish fathers. In the present responsum, R. Uziel treats the matter at length.

At the outset, R. Uziel acknowledges that even he had ruled in favor of circumcision only where the father was not prepared to divorce his gentile wife:

Were the hand of the court supreme [that is, in the best of worlds], no judge could say in accord with the law that her son should be circumcised and converted, even if the mother so wished and even if she herself agreed to convert – and that would be so not only if she were married

to a *kohen* but even if she were married to an ordinary Jew. And I have examined how our elders acted in the time of Ezra: “Let us make a covenant with our God to send away all the [gentile] wives and those born of them...and let it be done according to the Torah.... And all the congregation answered and said, “as you have said, so shall we do” [Ezra 10:3, 12]. And of this the gemara says, let it be done according to the Torah, namely, as “R. Johanan replied in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai: [you shall not marry them. Why?] Scripture stated, *For he will turn away thy son from following Me* [Deut. 7:4]; ‘thy son’ born of an Israelitish woman is called *thy son*; but ‘thy son’ who was born from a heathen is not called *thy son* but *her son*.” (*Yevamot* 23 [Soncino Press translation; footnotes omitted]) From this we learn the prohibition on intermarriage and that her child has her status (*Kidushin* 68b). That being so, the letter of the law requires that she and her sons be sent away.

But that is the rule only in the utopian situation in which a Jewish government is capable of requiring its citizenry to live in accord with absolute values. In the very different situation in the real world, in which the hand of the court is not supreme, the analysis must proceed down a different path. It follows that Ezra’s action is not a precedent for all time, except insofar as we learn from it that the child of a gentile mother has the mother’s status: It seems certain to me that whenever the hand of the court is supreme, we are commanded and obligated to prevent these intermarriages with all due force and to accept neither the woman nor the man for conversion after they have married – or even before, if it is known, or seems evident, that they are converting for the sake of marriage.

Nevertheless, it is clear beyond all doubt and question that on weekdays, their children are circumcised, as attested by the *Shulhan Gavohah*, [which says that] in Jerusalem, Jews circumcise the sons of Karaites, but he does not know if they do so only on weekdays or even on the Sabbath; but in Constantinople, they circumcise their

[i.e., the Karaites'] sons even on the Sabbath (*Shulhan Gavohah, Yoreh De'ah*, 266:38). I have likewise seen and heard that the greatest circumcisers in Jerusalem entertained the request of gentiles to circumcise their sons on weekdays. And it is established law that if the gentile intends to be circumcised, a Jew is obligated to circumcise him (*Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah* 268:9).

From this we determine that it is permitted on a weekday to circumcise the son of a Jew married to a gentile woman, albeit without reciting the circumcision blessings, for as long as the baby has not been circumcised and immersed for conversion in accord with Halakhah, he remains in all respects a gentile. But I must say to my friend that we are not at all interested in circumcising this son without converting him, for how does circumcising a gentile benefit us? Rather, our intention in circumcising him is to remove him from the influence and teachings of his gentile mother and to bring him under God's wing like all converts to Judaism.

According to the letter of the law, a child's personal status is defined by that of his mother. But R. Uziel is not prepared to end the discussion with that legal definition, and he tries to show that a child born of Jewish seed (that is, of a Jewish father) has a special status. After proving his claim (by interpretation of the verse "Do not allow any of your seed to be offered up to Moloch [Lev. 18:21]), he sums up the point as follows:

Accordingly, if he comes to be converted, we are obligated to entertain his conversion in order to atone for the father's sin by means of the conversion and to avoid ostracizing him. And we need not be concerned about his following in his mother's ways; on the contrary, if he is driven away and cut off from his source of life and seed – his father – he will certainly be assimilated to the gentiles and reject the God of Israel, fiercely hating Judaism and

its Torah. But through his conversion, he will escape from apostasy, and his father, who had him converted, will be energetic in having him taught Torah and saving him from idolatry and its associated practices. And we need not be concerned that he will annul the conversion once he is older; on the contrary, since he will have been taught Torah and been strengthened in his conversion, he will not annul it.

R. Uziel concludes his ruling with the following:

And the Lord God of Israel will fulfill for us and before our eyes the promise conveyed by His holy prophet, as is said: I will refine them as silver is refined and will try them as gold is tried and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

Evidently transcribing the biblical passage from memory, R. Uziel conflated two verses, thereby attesting to his primary purpose. The first verse, from Zechariah, deals with refining, and we have already seen the unique way in which R. Uziel interprets it:

Zech. 13: 9 – And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them [*u-tzeraftim*] as silver is refined [*ki-tzerof et ha-kesef*], and will test them as gold is tested; they shall call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say “it is My people,” and they shall say “the Lord is my God.”

The verse describes in a fairly unsettling way how God will cleanse the Land of all its stains. As a first step, He will leave only a third of the populace in the Land; the rest will be destroyed. And even the remaining third will then be refined, in order to leave only the holy seed who will call on God’s name.

R. Uziel cites these words as an optimistic expression of how God will cleanse us, with no sense of threat from the prospect of

purification by removal of the impure. His concluding words, however, are drawn not from Zechariah but from Ezekiel 20:

(34) And I will bring you out from the peoples and will gather you from the countries in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath outpoured.

(35) And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples and I will enter into judgment with you there face to face.

(36) As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, says the Lord God.

(37) And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

God promises Israel to bring them home by force. Contemplating the picture of contemporary assimilation and praying for the return to Zion in which God will bring us within the bond of the covenant, R. Uziel contributes to that return through the act of converting gentile wives married to Jews. He cites this verse within the context of circumcision, but the more general context is unchanged: Israel must return home at any cost.

**YOU HAVE NOT BROUGHT BACK THOSE WHO HAVE STRAYED: THE OBLIGATION TO SEEK CONVERTS**

The preceding point – R. Uziel’s sense of responsibility for the return to Zion – brings us to the last of my examples. In this responsum (*Piskei uziel bi-sh’eilot ha-zeman*, sec 65), R. Uziel once again deals with the conversion of gentile women married to non-observant Jewish men. The responsum, written in 1951, was addressed to R. Judah Leon Kalfon, Chief Rabbi of Titu’an:

There are others who do not observe the laws of Sabbaths and festivals, or of forbidden foods, or [other] positive and negative commandments, and we are perplexed

about what to do when they want to convert their children and their wives. Their principal desire, as far as it appears, is to have their children converted; when we ask them how gentile women can raise Jewish children, they say their wives are prepared to convert as well. And it may be that the wives are happy to be of the same religion as their husbands and children, rather than differing in their religion.

Although these men do not observe the commandments, neither do they reject Judaism outright; and they do not want to be separated from our holy Torah and be thought of as outside the religion. They call themselves Jews, and it appears they are sincere in wanting to bring their children under God's wing.

In his responsum, R. Uziel cites the overarching question of what it means, in the context of conversion, to accept the yoke of the commandments.<sup>24</sup> He decides:

From all the foregoing, it follows that it is permitted and obligatory to accept male and female converts even if we know they will not observe all the commandments, for they will ultimately come to observe them. And we are commanded to open that gate to them; and if they fail to observe the commandments, they will bear their sins and we are guiltless.

Following that determination, he concludes with remarks on the subject of responsibility with regard to assimilation:

And in our time it is a very serious matter to lock the door in the face of a convert, for doing so opens wide the [exit] gates and impels Jewish men and women to convert from Judaism and leave the community of Israel or to be absorbed among the gentiles. And the sages warned against this: "always repel [a prospective convert] with

the left hand while drawing [him] near with the right” (*Sotah* 47). And a Jew who is absorbed or driven off from Israel becomes an enemy of Israel in his soul, as history attests in many cases throughout the generations. And even if we are unconcerned and say “let the cord follow the bucket” [that is, let the sinning Jewish spouse follow the gentile spouse], we are in any event obligated to draw their children near. That is so not only if they are the children of a Jewish mother, whose children are Jews in all respects, but even if they are the children of a gentile mother and Jewish father, for even in that case they are of the seed of Israel. They are as lost sheep, and I fear that if we put them off entirely, by not accepting their parents as converts, we will be called to account and it will be said of us “you have not brought back those who have strayed, nor have you sought those who were lost” (*Ezek.* 34:4); and that reproof is greater than the reproof for accepting converts (*Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah* 265:12). Of this it is said, “Weigh the loss from performing a commandment against its reward and the profit of a sin against its loss” (*Avot* 2:1). For this reason, I say it is better for us not to stray from the words of our rabbis, who transmitted that rule to be applied by judges whose intentions are for the sake of heaven.

**SUMMARY: “YOUR PEOPLE ARE MY  
PEOPLE AND YOUR GOD IS MY GOD”**

R. Uziel’s use of prophetic sources shows the extent to which he sees the matter of conversion not as a private matter but as part of the overall process of the people’s return to its Land. The central motivation for his tendency to rule leniently in matters of conversion grows out of an overarching vision of the nation rather than the specific laws of conversion in *Yoreh De’ah*.

A question that often arises is whether a decisor’s worldview bears significantly on how he decides halakhic matters that are not necessary ideological. It goes without saying that decisors disagree

not only on questions that grow out of one's outlook, but even on questions that, in principle, could be decided solely by reference to the law books. Since the inception of Zionism, decisors have taken different tacks on many questions related to Israeli society, including, among others, the commandment to settle the Land and the military draft. The issue of conversion, too, appears to be a test case with respect to the religious significance of the third return Zion. For one who sees no religious significance in this enterprise of Jews returning to their Land and their people, the laws of conversion will remain unchanged and each case will continue to be determined on its own, without regard to the overall picture. But the Zionist ideology sought to enhance the concept of the nation, thereby resulting in a changed attitude toward the question of conversion. In the position he adopts, R. Uziel reflects something of that stance, as he relies on prophetic verses that deal with the problems of assimilation and how to overcome them. We can see a similar process of nationalistic thought and reliance on the prophetic books on the part of contemporary decisors who quote Ruth – “your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God” (1:16) – as a model for accepting converts on a national basis even before they are accepted on a religious basis.<sup>25</sup> That interpretation disregards the halakhic *midrash* on the verse, which limits the way in which the verse can be used by incorporating it entirely into religious thought.<sup>26</sup> That disregard clearly shows the tendency to grapple with the question of conversion in its broader, national sense rather than only in its narrow, personal one.

It appears that relatively wide use of other verses related to meta-halakhic concepts is characteristic of R. Uziel.<sup>27</sup> Judge Menahem Elon noted this in dealing with the question of women's eligibility to serve on religious councils:<sup>28</sup>

R. Uziel is striking in his way of citing “indirect” proofs drawn from the spirit of the Halakhah, proofs that point to the desired decisional policies.

His decisions with respect to conversion form a part of R. Uziel's decisional oeuvre, in which he incorporates the spirit of the Halakhah



and, with the help of that spirit, directs the Halakhah toward its moral position.

### NOTES

1. See A. Sagi, “*Ha-rav soloveitchik u-profesor leiboviz ke-teioretikanim shel ha-halakhah*” [Rabbi Soloveitchik and Prof. Leibowitz as theoreticians of Halakhah] *Da’at*, 29 (1992).
2. Recent studies on the concepts of “philosophy of Halakhah” and on the meta-halakhic norms within Halakhah have centered on an analysis of Eliezer Goldman’s articles collected in *Mehkarim ve-iyunim – hagut yehudit ba-avar u-ve-hovveh* [Jewish Thought in Past and Present], eds. Dani Statman and Avi Sagi (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996).
3. R. David Menahem Munish Babad, *Responsa Havazelet ha-Sharon* (Bilgorai, 1938; reprinted Brooklyn NY, 2001), sec. 28.
4. An *agunah* (pl., *agunot*) is a widow whose husband’s presumed death has not been proven; a wife abandoned by her husband without a divorce; or a wife wanting a divorce whose husband refuses to grant it. In all such cases, she is not permitted to remarry.
5. R. Jacob Breish served as rabbi of the haredi community in Zurich from 1934, when he fled the Nazis, until his death in 1976. The following quotation is from his *Responsa Helkat Ya’akov* (Tel Aviv, 1992), *Even ha-Ezer*, sec. 56.
6. *Responsa Minhat Yizhak*, part 9, sec. 150.
7. E.E. Urbach, “*Masoret ve-halakhah*” [Tradition and Halakhah] *Tarbiz*, 50 (1981): 163.
8. Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik, “*Mah dodekh mi-dod*,” in *Be-sod ha-yahid ve-ha-yahad* (Jerusalem, 1976): 223–224.
9. Avi Sagi (above, n. 1) attempts to prove that the dominant concept was of the Halakhah as the decisor’s creation. In my view, the rabbinic consciousness differed. See, for example, R. Judah Halevi, *Kuzari*, III:41: “*Do not stray* [from the sages rulings; Deut. 17:11] – because they are aided by the divine presence...and will not be misled”; Nahmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*, Deut. 17:11: “The Torah was given in accord with their interpretation...for the spirit of the Lord is on his servants;” *Hafez Hayim al ha-Torah*, ed. R. Sh. Greyman (Bnei-Brak, 1943), 30: “One whose opinion is the Torah opinion can solve any problem in the world...on condition that his thought be clear, with no prejudice or pre-inclination;” R. Soloveitchik, “Eulogy for R. Hayim Ozer Grodzinski,” in *Divrei hagut ve-ha’arakha* (Jerusalem, 1981), 12: “That priest whose mind was suffused with the sanctity of Torah...would see, through the holy spirit, the solution to all pending political questions.” See L. Kaplan, “*Da’at torah – tefisah modernit shel ha-samkhut ha-hilkhatit*” [“The Torah opinion’ – a modern concept of halakhic authority] in eds., Z. Safrai and A. Sagi, *Bein samkhut le-otonomiyah be-masoret yisra’el* [Between Authority and Autonomy in Jewish Tradition] (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad and Ne’emnei Torah va-Avodah, 1997), 105–145.

10. R. Sh. Aviner, *Am ke-lavi*, Part 2 (Jerusalem, 1983), 65.
11. See further on this in I. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), 453–459.
12. *Shabbat* 148b and parallels.
13. *Yevamot* 79a. See further R. Yuval Cherlow, “*Akirat ot ahat min ha-torah mipenei hilul ha-shem*” [Uprooting a letter of the Torah to avoid desecrating God’s name], in ed., E.H. Shenvald, *Sefer har’el – Tzeva’iyut yisra’elit be-aspaklariya toranit* [The Israeli military in the light of Torah] (Ramat ha-Golan, 1999): 203–234.
14. *Berakhot* 19b. See Rabbi A. Lichtenstein, “*Kevod ha-beriyot*” [Human dignity], *Mahanayim*, 5 (1993): 8–15. R. Lichtenstein there considers the role of this principle in the background of R. Soloveitchik’s decision-making, though it is not mentioned explicitly.
15. *Hatam Sofer* referred to it as “sowing a field with two species,” something forbidden by the Torah. *Responsa Hatam Sofer*, part 1, sec. 51.
16. On prophetic Halakhah, see R. Yuval Cherlow, “*Demuto shel ha-halakhah ha-nuvu’it – tashtit iyunit le-hithadshut ha-halakhah*” [Prophetic Halakhah: an analytical grounding for the halakhic renewal], *Akdamos*, 12 (2002): 7–48. Additional articles on the subject have been collected in ed., A. Berholtz, *Masa el ha-halakhah [Quest for Halakhah]* (Tel Aviv, 2003). For a powerful statement on halakhic Judaism’s disregard of the moral voice of prophecy, see Yehoshua Bin-Nun, “*Bakashat ha-emet mul formalizm hilkhati*” [The search for truth versus halakhic formalism], in A. Berholtz, ed. *Derekh erez, dat, u-medinah (asufat ma’amarim)* [Civility, religion, and the state – collected essays] (Jerusalem, 2002), 208–213.
17. See the monograph by S. Don Yehiya *Ha-rav ben-ziyon meir uziel – Hayav u-mishnato* [Rabbi Ben-Zion Me’ir Uziel – his life and teaching] (Jerusalem, 1956).
18. See, on that, R. Binyamin Lau, “*Ahdut ha-umah bi-sedeih ha-halakhah*” (National unity in the field of Halakhah), in M. Bar-On and Z. Zameret, eds., *Shenei evrei ha-gesher* [Two sides of the bridge] (Jerusalem, 2001).
19. This aspect of R. Uziel’s decisions has been considered by Rabbi H.D. Halevi, *Responsa Aseh Lekha Rav*, 8, 97 (1988): 306 et seq., under the heading (translated) “Halakhic decision making and love of Israel in the teachings of R. Uziel, may his memory be for a blessing.” The examples cited by R. Halevi pertain to such matters as Sabbath violators, marriage and divorce, and agunot; the subject of conversion does not come up in the article. That “extra-halakhic” tendency was severely attacked by R. Ovadia Yosef, *Responsa Yabi’a Omer*, part 6 (*Even ha-Ezer*, sec. 16:6): “The *gaon* R. Ben-Zion Uziel was drawn to his approach by his love of national unity, and love is so powerful that it distorts normal conduct.”
20. Two major studies, different in their orientation, should be noted: Menahem Finkelstein, *Mahuto shel ha-giyur – halakhah le’ma’aseh* [The nature of conversion – applied Halakhah] (doctoral dissertation, Bar-Ilan Univ., 1988); Zvi Zohar and Avi. Sagi *Giyur ve-zehut yehudit [Conversion to Judaism and the meaning of Jewish identity]* (Jerusalem, 1994).
21. See above, n. 18.

22. On Maimonides' innovation on this subject, see R. Benjamin Lau, "*Takanat ha-shavim be-giyur*" [Facilitating repentance with respect to conversion] *Devarim*, tenth collection, Herzog Center.
23. *Responsa Heikhal Yizhak, Even ha-Ezer*, 21:3.
24. This subject has been thoroughly treated in the study by Zohar and Sagi (above, n. 20), which cites this responsum by R. Uziel. See also Asher Cohen, *Masa el ha-halakhah* (above, n. 16), which considers the question with respect to conversion today; and Moshe Halbertal, "*Mihu yehudi?*" [Who is a Jew?] in eds., Avi Sagi and Nahem Ilan, *Tarbut yehudit be-ein ha-se'arah: sefer yovel li-mele'at shiv'im shanah le-yosef ahituv* [Jewish Culture in the Eye of the Storm: A Jubilee Book in Honor of Yosef Ahituv] (Ein Tsurim, 2002), 233–247.
25. These ideas appear in the writings of R. Sha'ul Yisra'eli, R. Bakshi-Doron, and R. Amital; for all of them, see Zohar and Sagi (above, n. 20). To that list may be added R. Yigal Ariel, "*Giyur olei berit ha-mo'atzot*" [Conversion of immigrants from the Soviet Union], *Tehumin*, 12, pages 81–97, which takes the same position.
26. See, on this, A. Cohen (above, n. 24), who cites an article by G. Eldar.
27. See N. Gotel's comparison of between R. Uziel and R. Kook: N. Gotel, *Shikulim hilkhatiyim u-meta-hilkhatiyim be-pesikato shel ha-rav kook* [Halakhic and meta-halakhic considerations in Rav Kook's halakhic decision-making], doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University in Jerusalem (2001), 198 et seq. Gotel is alert to R. Uziel's uniqueness: "R. Uziel in his decisions certainly makes use of extra-halakhic considerations..." (although he later tempers that assessment somewhat).
28. *Shakdiel v. Minister of Religious Affairs, et al.*, High Court of Justice 87/153, p. 257.

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# 13

## “Religious Zionist Halakhah” – Is It A Reality Or Was It A Dream?

*Aviad Hacoen*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Any attempt to define a particular *halakhic* authority or halakhic issue in a simplistic fashion, and squeeze it into a procrustean bed, into a uniform and well-delineated framework, is fated for failure,<sup>1</sup> or at the very least, serious difficulties and pitfalls. Halakhic literature, like its authors, is not characterized by a single or uniform color. It is an enormous, complex, variegated and multi-faceted system, each of its representatives standing on his own, and any attempt to consider them altogether in a single stroke is liable to miss the mark.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, if this complexity (which also characterizes other legal systems) is not enough, any attempt to follow the paths of Halakhah – both ancient and modern – leads to yet another great impediment, namely, the absence of system.<sup>3</sup> The age-old halakhic tradition, going back to biblical and talmudic times, is marked by halakhic discussion lacking order: family law intermingles with

criminal law, the laws of acquisition are set next to public law, and in between there are words of *aggada* and ethical teachings, stories and mystical visions, dreams and acts of magic.

The discussion appearing in the halakhic sources is also not always constructed in a logical fashion. It is marked by disorderly give and take, questions and answers, and disparate passages, the relationship between which often draws on nothing more than the power of association.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, by its very nature and essence, halakhic literature is constructed not out of general principles, but of specific cases. It follows a *casuistic* course,<sup>5</sup> which develops from case to case, and it is only through a combination of the individual cases, that it is sometimes – but not always – possible to piece together an orderly and structured halakhic-legal picture.<sup>6</sup>

Perforce, these characteristics effect our topic as well, for there is no single volume or set of volumes that reflect the world of Religious Zionist Halakhah<sup>7</sup> – if indeed such a world actually exists – in its full grandeur and majesty. Anyone who wishes to clarify this issue must select, out of the vast sea of Halakhah, hundreds and even thousands of halakhic works, which he thinks, objectively or subjectively, belong to “Religious Zionist Halakhah,” and from them and through them try to find characteristics that faithfully express the entirety as a whole.

This itself poses a difficulty: Before we come to define the characteristics of “Religious Zionist Halakhah,” we must first ask the more fundamental question: Does “Religious Zionist Halakhah” really exist, or is it only a dream?

And what precisely is the meaning of “Religious Zionist Halakhah” in this context? Is it determined by its bearers – halakhic authorities who include themselves in the social ranks of Religious Zionism? Or perhaps the determining factor is not the sociological affiliation of the halakhic authority, but rather the substance of his ruling?

We can sharpen the point even further and ask: Is “Religious Zionist Halakhah” found only among those authorities who are affiliated – or identified – with the sociological ranks of Religious

Zionism, or is it possible to find “Religious Zionist Halakhah” even in the works of halakhic authorities who identify themselves with the haredi camp?

In the other direction, it may also be asked: Is every ruling issued by a halakhic authority who is identified with Religious Zionism an example of “Religious Zionist Halakhah”? Or perhaps we must carefully examine its content, and only on the basis of its substance – and not on the basis of its author – are we to judge the matter one way or the other.

These questions will stand at the center of our discussion. But before we begin to expand upon these issues, let us open with an introductory remark. *A priori*, it is possible that someone might question the very attempt to categorize and catalogue Halakhah as “Religious Zionist.” Surely, Israel’s Torah is one, and we are guided by the fundamental principle that “this Torah will not be replaced and there shall be no other Torah from the Creator, blessed be His name.” If this is the case, and “Halakhah is Halakhah is Halakhah,” what room is there to distinguish between “Religious Zionist Halakhah” and other Halakhah?

In this article, I shall try to present – despite the difficulties mentioned above – several primary categories that might help us find our way in this halakhic entanglement. We must, however, note and emphasize that the variety of halakhic works and authorities necessitates a complex view of the overall picture, and in the event that, along the way, we label a specific authority or halakhic ruling with a certain designation, this is merely for the sake of convenience, and in no way does it come to establish any hard and fast rules about its identification with any particular halakhic approach.

Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, as of yet there has been no systematic and comprehensive mapping of the Religious Zionist halakhic enterprise. Such a mapping would provide us with a clearer and more reliable picture of the various parameters to which attention must be paid in an investigation of this sort.

First and foremost, it is possible to divide Religious Zionist Halakhah into chronological periods.<sup>8</sup> For convenience sake, we shall speak of three sub-periods:

- 1) The first period is that of the halakhic authorities who lived during the early days of Religious Zionism, including sages, such as Rabbis Kalischer, Alkali, Mohilever, Kook, and their colleagues. It should, however, be noted that these figures are known primarily for their ideological contributions, and that hardly any attention has been paid to their halakhic teachings,<sup>9</sup> even though they too provide invaluable insights.
- 2) “The second generation” is represented by halakhic authorities whose initial activity was outside *Eretz Israel* in the years that preceded the establishment of the state, and the rest of their lives was spent in the State of Israel, such as Rabbis Herzog, Uziel, Yisraeli, Unterman, Nissim, Zevin, Tchoresh, Friedman, Goren, and others.
- 3) The third generation is represented by rabbis whose Torah development took place for the most part in Eretz Israel, and most or all of their lives were spent in the State of Israel. This group includes city rabbis like Rabbis H.D. Halevi and Y. Ariel,<sup>10</sup> roshei yeshiva like Rabbi Lior; and the rabbis of the religious kibbutzim.<sup>11</sup>

A different division that might be considered is one that runs along a geographical axis: rabbis who were educated outside of Israel or raised on a tradition taken from there (e.g., Rabbis Herzog and Unterman) can be distinguished from rabbis who were trained and educated in Eretz Israel.

In this context, special attention should be paid to rabbis who, despite their clear identification with the Religious Zionist movement, remained in the Diaspora. Foremost in this group are Rabbi Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg,<sup>12</sup> author of “*Seridei Esh*,” and the “Rav” – Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.<sup>13</sup>

We cannot discuss in detail all of these sub-divisions. We shall suffice with the presentation of this general outline that suggests certain points of reference, and constitutes a basis that can be filled in with the more subtle details that comprise the issue.



## II. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CREATION OF “RELIGIOUS ZIONIST” HALAKHAH

*A priori*, it is possible to suggest two main axes that constitute important factors in the creation of Religious Zionist Halakhah and influence its development: the personal element, that focuses on the creator, the halakhic authority, and his addressees, the members of the community to whom his rulings are directed; and the circumstantial element, that focuses on the circumstances in which the Halakhah itself comes into being.

### 1. The Personal Element: the Creator, the Religious Zionist Halakhic Authority

On the personal level, we must define who is a Religious Zionist halakhic authority. This could be by way of a positive definition or alternatively by way of a definition by process of elimination.

As for a positive definition, a halakhic authority may be regarded as Religious Zionist if certain parameters are fulfilled in him that assign him to Religious Zionism (e.g., affiliation with a certain movement or party, affiliation with a state institution that is identified with Religious Zionism, lifestyle, or the like).

By process of elimination, a halakhic authority may be viewed as Religious Zionist if he is not affiliated with the haredi camp.<sup>14</sup>

The following parameters may be helpful in categorizing a particular halakhic authority as “Religious Zionist”:

- 1) **The halakhic authority’s biography:** A significant number of halakhic authorities who may be categorized as Religious Zionist share certain biographical markers that distinguish them from their haredi counterparts, e.g., military service, study in “Religious Zionist” Yeshivot<sup>15</sup> or university education (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Rabbi I. Herzog,<sup>16</sup> Rabbi Y.Y. Weinberg, and Rabbi Professor Eliezer Shimshon Rosenthal, who served as a halakhic advisor to the religious kibbutz movement in the early days of the state;<sup>17</sup> Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein,<sup>18</sup> Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler,<sup>19</sup> and others.<sup>20</sup> Rabbi Shlomo Goren was never officially enrolled in a

university, but according to his own testimony, in his youth he attended classes in Greek and philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, concurrently with his study in the Hevron Yeshiva, and he customarily integrated sources regarded as unconventional in the halakhic world – such as the writings of Josephus – in his own rulings).<sup>21</sup> study in yeshiva high schools and Yeshivot Hesder,<sup>22</sup> and the like. Another biographical element, almost anecdotal, that distinguishes between Religious Zionist halakhic authorities and their Haredi counterparts is the readiness on the part of some of them – e.g., Rabbis Herzog, Zevin, Hadayah, Kasher, Goren, Yosef, Kafih, Yisraeli, H.D. Halevi, and Waldenberg – to accept the Israel Prize for Torah literature awarded by the State of Israel and presented to the recipients at an impressive ceremony on Israel Independence Day.<sup>23</sup>

- 2) **Location:** Religious Zionist Halakhah is generally perceived as Halakhah whose authors live in Eretz Israel, in contrast to the vast majority of halakhic literature, which, until recent times, was created by halakhic authorities living in the Diaspora.<sup>24</sup>
- 3) **Organizational affiliation:** Affiliation with one of Religious Zionism’s institutions or with an institution that is almost exclusively identified with it, e.g., the Chief Rabbinate until the 1990s (Rabbis Herzog, Uziel, Z.P. Frank, M. Rath, Zevin, Unterman, and Goren); the Mizrachi movement (Rabbis Rath<sup>25</sup> and Zevin<sup>26</sup>); the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi movement (like the members of *Hever ha-Rabbanim* of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi, such as Rabbis Yisraeli, Tchoresh, and their colleagues); Yeshivot Hesder<sup>27</sup> (e.g., my revered teachers, Rabbis Amital and Lichtenstein, and Rabbis Ariel and Lior).
- 4) **Ideological affiliation:** This group includes rabbis who never belonged to any organizational framework affiliated with the Religious Zionist establishment, but whose ideology corresponded to the teachings of Religious Zionism, e.g., Rabbis Yitzhak Nissim, Rishon le-Zion<sup>28</sup>; Yaakov Moshe Toledano, author of *Responsa Yam ha-Gadol* and chief rabbi of the city of Tel Aviv;<sup>29</sup> and others.

- 5) **Lifestyle:** Another parameter, which is likely to help us assign a particular halakhic authority to one of the groups, is his lifestyle at the time that he issues his ruling. Religious Zionism is generally identified with living in a heterogeneous community, characterized by a lifestyle that is more modern and open than that of the haredi community. This finds expression in various ways, e.g., in dress (of a more modern style) that is different from that which is customary in haredi society; a sympathetic attitude and openness to Western culture in general and general education in particular;<sup>30</sup> a more open and tolerant attitude toward the status of women and their place in society (including assumption of leadership roles and participation in national service, or perhaps even the Israeli army);<sup>31</sup> or greater tolerance of secular phenomena.<sup>32</sup> Alongside these general characteristics, a Religious Zionist halakhic authority may be distinguished from his haredi counterpart by specific behaviors that set him apart from members of the haredi community, e.g., active participation in the special activities conducted on national holidays and days of commemoration, such as Holocaust Memorial Day,<sup>33</sup> IDF Memorial Day, Independence Day (and the recitation of *Hallel* with a blessing on that day<sup>34</sup>), combat service in the IDF,<sup>35</sup> and the like.

Even this simple division may be likely to create difficulties when we come to categorize certain Torah personalities who were active in the halakhic field. Thus, for example, Rav Avraham Isaac Hacohen Kook refrained from formal affiliation with the Mizrahi movement, and as a sign of protest against a number of its actions, he established – in an almost demonstrative manner – the *Degel Yerushalayim* movement, which he viewed as a parallel and competing movement. Should then Rav Kook be seen as a Religious Zionist halakhic authority? Judging by his influence, Rav Kook was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding figures among the creators of Religious Zionist ideology, and its proponents have claimed him as one of their own, but his affiliation with Religious

Zionism – not only organizationally, but even historically – is by no means simple.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, Rabbi Shlomo Goren is undoubtedly one of the leading figures in the Religious Zionist halakhic discussion. Despite the fact that he saw the State of Israel as a renewal of the “Kingdom of Israel,”<sup>37</sup> Rabbi Goren – in addition to his years of study in the Hevron Yeshiva in Jerusalem, a training ground for many of the leaders of the haredi establishment – on various occasions dissociated himself both from the identification of the State of Israel as “the beginning of the redemption” (*athalta de-ge-ulah*),<sup>38</sup> and from his identification with the Religious Zionist establishment, with which he often engaged in confrontation. One of his major confrontations revolved around his demand to abolish the separate religious units in the army (which were exclusively identified with the Religious Zionists), and more than once his views brought him to assert his independence vis-à-vis the Religious Zionist establishment.<sup>39</sup>

In the other direction: Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef, one of the greatest halakhic decisors of our generation, was for many years affiliated with the religious establishment<sup>40</sup> which, while he was in office, was identified with Religious Zionism. This was true at the beginning of his career, when he served as a *dayan* (rabbinic judge) on the Petah Tikva Rabbinical Court, and also later, when he was chief rabbi of Tel Aviv and Rishon Le-Zion and chief rabbi of Israel. While he served in these high offices, he even dealt with the classic questions on the Religious Zionist agenda, for example, the recitation of Hallel and *Al ha-Nissim* on Israel’s Independence Day and on Jerusalem Day, and the *heter mekhirah* which permits the temporarily selling of land to a non-Jew and to continue farming it during the Sabbatical year.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef’s roots, both in the Bukhara neighborhood of Jerusalem and in the Porat Yosef Yeshiva, whose heads – Rabbis Ades, Zedakah and Abba Shaul – were counted among the leaders of the Sefardi-haredi community, and also his activity over the past two decades as spiritual leader of the Shas movement<sup>42</sup> firmly set him in the position of halakhic decisor for the haredi community (if only the Sefardi sector). And certainly,

in the eyes of many in the Religious Zionist community, he is not perceived as a Religious Zionist halakhic authority.

Other examples of the difficulty in classifying a particular halakhic authority as “Religious Zionist” or “haredi” include Rabbis M.M. Kasher,<sup>43</sup> Z.P. Frank,<sup>44</sup> Y.M. Ehrenberg, O. Hadayah,<sup>45</sup> and others.

Another complex example is Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg. He grew up in the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem, most of whose members staunchly opposed Religious Zionism. Nevertheless, he became one of the assistants of Rabbi Ben Zion Meir Hai Uziel, Rishon Le-Zion and chief rabbi of Israel, who was closely affiliated with the Mizrachi movement and an ardent Zionist. For many years Rabbi Waldenberg sat on a rabbinical court, both regional and supreme, but in his later years he once again became identified – rightfully so, or not – with the more haredi branch of halakhic decision-making.<sup>46</sup>

Despite this identification, Rabbi Waldenberg was one of the pioneers who dealt with “laws of the State” in a systematic fashion,<sup>47</sup> and his halakhic response to the establishment of the State of Israel and the laws that govern it may in and of itself justify including him in the category of “Religious Zionist” halakhic authorities.<sup>48</sup>

The same may be said about Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin. Despite the fact that he was an impassioned Lubavitcher hassid (and that movement, as is well known, is very far from classical Religious Zionism), Rabbi Zevin recited Hallel on Israel Independence Day; he was an active partner in various Religious Zionist projects, and he even supported them in his halakhic rulings.

Alongside these figures, we can point to a number of rabbis who straddle the border between the Religious Zionist world and the haredi world, e.g., the chief rabbi of Israel and Rishon le-Zion Mordechai Eliyahu. Special attention should be paid to the exemplary rabbinic figure of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. Though, in general, he is clearly identified with the haredi world, a closer examination of his halakhic rulings reveals how far this description is from being precise.<sup>49</sup> The same may be said about certain rabbinic personalities who were close to the Po’alei Agudat Israel movement, e.g., the *roshei yeshiva* of Yeshivat Kol Torah in Jerusalem, Rabbis

Yonah Merzbach and Yehiel Schlessinger, and the Po’alei Agudat Israel rabbis, e.g., Rabbi (and later Knesset member and Deputy Minister) Kalman Kahana, and their colleagues, who, despite their identification with the haredi community, were in many areas close to Religious Zionism.

Even leaders of the haredi camp, like the *Hazon Ish* and Rabbi Y.Sh. Kahaneman, the Ponevezher Rav, are liable to be found – on certain issues – close to the Religious Zionist camp, whether in theory, or at least in practice.<sup>50</sup>

## **2. The Personal Element: the Halakhic Ruling’s Addressees**

One of the characteristic traits of Religious Zionist Halakhah is its addressees. In traditional Jewish society, a halakhic ruling was generally directed at an audience of uniform character.<sup>51</sup> Usually it was directed at a community whose members belonged to a particular stream – a particular branch of Hassidut, a particular region, or the like – and willingly accepted upon themselves the decisor’s authority and acted accordingly.

This is not true of Religious Zionist halakhic authorities. In many cases their target audience is a very heterogeneous community, comprised of diverse and variegated populations, who are more different than alike. This is certainly the case regarding a chief rabbi or a city rabbi who directs his rulings at the populace at large, which includes not only Torah-observant Jews, but thoroughly secular ones as well. This is also true regarding a halakhic ruling directed to soldiers serving in the army, who also hail from many different and varied populations.

This diversity, and especially the fact that many potential addressees of a halakhic ruling are not necessarily Torah-observant Jews,<sup>52</sup> and certainly not at a level of strict and stringent observance, often – though not always<sup>53</sup> – bring the halakhic decisor to adopt a more lenient approach,<sup>54</sup> and to take into account certain “meta-halakhic considerations,”<sup>55</sup> e.g., “so as not to put to shame,”<sup>56</sup> “human dignity,” “what will people say,” and the like. To remove all doubt, let us emphasize that such considerations are commonly found in halakhic literature throughout the generations. But the use made of

them by Religious Zionist halakhic authorities is far more intensive and on a far grander scale than the use made of them in a society whose halakhic addressees comprise a more or less uniform group, meticulous in its religious observance.

Thus, for example, one of the main justifications for the heter mekhirah during the Sabbatical year was the fact that many farmers were not Torah-observant, and stringency would only bring them to violate the *shemittah* laws. Therefore, the halakhic authorities preferred to find them some sort of allowance – even if forced – so that they not intentionally transgress the prohibition of working the land during the Sabbatical year.

The same is true regarding the issue of women's suffrage. The fact that many of the addressees of their rulings belonged to a community in which women went out into the world and actively participated in economic and community life, forced the Religious Zionist halakhic authorities to find an appropriate response – in the framework of Halakhah – that would allow for the integration of women in positions of community leadership.<sup>57</sup>

### **3. The Circumstances Surrounding the Ruling's Coming into Being: the Time and the Place**

Halakhic rulings – Religious Zionist halakhic rulings included – are not created in a vacuum. Such rulings do not appear out of nowhere, but rather emerge in the context of a world where many different factors are operative. A halakhic ruling is influenced not only by its author, his biography and personality, and not only by the identity of its addressees. Every halakhic ruling – Religious Zionist rulings included – is also influenced in great measure by the circumstances of its coming into being – the time and the place.<sup>58</sup>

Historical, social, and economic changes in the world impact upon the realms governed by Halakhah, and sometimes also upon the content of the final halakhic decision. Historical factors (for example, migration from rural communities to urban centers, the industrial revolution, wars, expulsions, immigration, and the like), social factors (for example, secularization, the growth of the Reform

movement, assimilation, and the like) and economic factors (economic plenty, inflation, shortages, and poverty) often have important halakhic repercussions.

For our purposes, the establishment of the State of Israel created a real change in the Jewish world. Historically, it created a new situation in which after 2,000 years of exile, the Jewish people had a state of their own with an army, a police force, and centralized systems of education, health and welfare. The country’s leadership was forced to grapple with varied challenges, most importantly, maintaining the security of the state and its citizens, absorbing immigrants arriving in colossal numbers from the four corners of the earth,<sup>59</sup> establishing systems of education, health and welfare that would meet the needs of the diverse populations, establishing agricultural, commercial and industrial infrastructures on scales previously unknown in Jewish society throughout the ages, and the like. These circumstances brought with them new halakhic problems that hitherto had been unknown – certainly at that intensity and scale – in the world of Halakhah. For example, operating an army and police force on the Sabbath, importing food products on such a grand scale, finding a solution for thousands of immigrants coming from assimilated families or for intermarried couples, and others.

The security and existential threat which the Jewish *Yishuv* and the State of Israel faced prior to and immediately following the establishment of the state, made it necessary to find complex, creative and at times even daring halakhic solutions. Some of them were intended as “temporary measures,” and some were accepted as permanent solutions. In any event, the “time” and the “place” greatly influenced both the realms of Religious Zionist Halakhah and its contents.

### III. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF “RELIGIOUS ZIONIST” HALAKHAH

Alongside an analysis of the personal and biographical elements, it is also possible to propose several characteristic features of the creation itself – Religious Zionist Halakhah. These characteristics relate to a



number of factors: 1) areas of occupation; 2) method of the ruling; 3) form of the ruling; 4) the media through which the ruling is communicated to its addressees; 5) the substance of the ruling.

### 1. Areas of Occupation

Many of those who could be included in the camp of Religious Zionist halakhic authorities deal with areas of Halakhah that had heretofore been entirely, or at least partly, ignored – for example, “the laws of the state” and “the laws of modernity.”

#### A) OCCUPATION WITH “LAWS OF THE STATE”

For thousands of years, Torah sages – to the exclusion of isolated exceptions<sup>60</sup> – hardly ever dealt with “laws of the state” in the wide sense of the term.<sup>61</sup> The absence of a Jewish political entity pushed this topic to the sidelines, and if anybody already dealt with it, it was only in the narrow sense of “laws of the community.” Torah authorities did not relate to the administration of a modern, democratic state, founded on the principles of equality and human rights, the operation of an army and police force, the administration of local governments, a national educational system, the treatment of social and economic problems (e.g., National Insurance) and the like.

And all the more so, the Jewish community across the ages almost never had to occupy itself with finding halakhic solutions to problems arising in a society most of whose members do not define themselves as Torah-observant, and a fifth of whose population is not even Jewish.

The years preceding the establishment of the state and the years following Israel’s declaration of independence gave rise to a rich literature dealing with “the laws of the state.”

When, however, we examine the identity of the halakhic authorities who dealt with these issues, we quickly see that it is almost impossible to find among them halakhic authorities affiliated with haredi society. These generally preferred to close their eyes to the historical changes brought about by the establishment of the state, and they continued as in the past to rule on matters regarding the Sabbath, festivals, and forbidden foods, problems that had been dis-

cussed in the Diaspora for generations, almost totally ignoring the new halakhic questions encountered by the residents of the newly founded State of Israel.

In contrast, a group of Religious Zionist halakhic authorities crystallized, who put their minds to the new situation, and tried to come up with different solutions. Thus, for example, Rabbi Y.L. Fishman-Maimon revived the idea of establishing a *Sanhedrin*,<sup>62</sup> an idea which gave rise to an extensive literature, some authorities supporting it and others sharply objecting to it.

Rabbi I. Herzog exerted great effort to revive Jewish law in the new state, and to establish it as law of the state. He even suggested practical solutions to reconcile the almost unavoidable conflict between traditional Halakhah and modern democratic principles, such as equality between sons and daughters regarding issues of inheritance.

His colleague, Rabbi B.Z.M.H. Uziel, found creative solutions that allowed for the integration of women in positions of leadership and the assumption on the part of non-Jews of positions of authority.<sup>63</sup>

Rabbi Shlomo Goren established dozens of new arrangements in matters pertaining to army life.<sup>64</sup>

Special mention should be made of the *Hever Rabbanim* group of the Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi movement, headed by Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli,<sup>65</sup> which found practical solutions to problems arising from the need to operate agricultural concerns even on the Sabbath and festivals, e.g., milking cows on the Sabbath.

Over time, “the laws of the state” expanded and came to include halakhic occupation with issues such as the halakhic status of lands belonging to the Jewish National Fund for the purpose of shemittah;<sup>66</sup> viewing the laws passed by the Israeli Knesset as *dina de-malkhuta*, law of the land; the functioning of the police, according to Halakhah;<sup>67</sup> the halakhic propriety of a census,<sup>68</sup> labor strikes, arms sales, integration of women and non-Jews in positions of leadership, and the like.

The rabbis of the “third generation” expanded the halakhic parameters of “laws of the state” even further, so that they include

issues that were almost never discussed before in classical halakhic literature, and certainly not in a deep and systematic manner, such as “the laws governing the prevention of traffic accidents.”<sup>69</sup>

### **B) OCCUPATION WITH “LAWS OF MODERNITY”**

Another characteristic feature of what could be perceived as Religious Zionist Halakhah is the expansion of the parameters of Halakhah to include issues stemming from the encounter with modernity. While there is no direct – or necessary – connection between Religious Zionism and modernity and its offshoots, the fact is that most – though, of course, not all<sup>70</sup> – of the halakhic authorities who have occupied themselves with these issues in a comprehensive manner have been identified with Religious Zionism.<sup>71</sup> Thus, articles were written and rulings issued on such topics as the Internet and treatment of AIDS,<sup>72</sup> the discussion of which is unheard of in the world of haredi halakhic rulings.

### **C) HARNESSING HALAKHAH FOR POLITICAL ENDS**

One of the most striking characteristics of Religious Zionist Halakhah, especially from the Six-Day War onward, is the way that it has been harnessed to what appears, at least in the eyes of an outside observer, as clearly political ends. Religious Zionist halakhic authorities began to issue “halakhic rulings”<sup>73</sup> dealing with clearly political issues on the political agenda of the State of Israel, e.g., the “Who is a Jew” question, handing over parts of Eretz Israel into non-Jewish hands,<sup>74</sup> “the laws of the intifada,”<sup>75</sup> and even issues such as Mafdal’s joining the government coalition<sup>76</sup> or the validity of a coalition agreement.<sup>77</sup>

In the halakhic literature itself, there is disagreement regarding the question of whether Halakhah has a stand on every “political” issue of this sort, and whether, according to Halakhah, “everything is subject to halakhic adjudication.”<sup>78</sup> According to those who expand the bounds of Halakhah and say that it has something to say on every issue, every political issue is also a halakhic question. In any event, attention should be paid to the fact that the great majority

of such “political” questions were discussed by halakhic authorities of the school of Religious Zionism, and not by haredi halakhic authorities.<sup>79</sup>

In such cases, these “halakhic rulings” were sometimes publicized by way of newspaper advertisements or by way of proclamations plastered on the city streets.

## 2. Methodology and Sources of Decision-Making

The uniqueness of Religious Zionist halakhic authorities is characterized not only by their expansion of the halakhic field to include new areas of Halakhah, never imagined by their forefathers, but also by the methodology that they employed in their halakhic decision-making. Even in the classical and “ordinary” realms of Halakhah, e.g., the realms of *Orah Hayyim* and *Yoreh De'ah*, it is possible to identify unique markers of the method of halakhic decision-making used by Religious Zionist halakhic authorities.

### A) KOHAH DE-HETERA ADIF – SHOWING PREFERENCE TO THE LENIENT POSITION – AND THE USE OF “META-HALAKHIC” TOOLS

One especially striking feature of the decision-making process employed by the halakhic authorities of the Religious Zionist school is the inclination toward leniency and allowances. Two primary reasons may be suggested for this phenomenon:

- 1) The urgent need to find solutions – and not just identify problems – to burning halakhic issues, some of which were of critical importance to the state and its citizens (e.g., resolving the *agunah* problems faced by the widows of the Dakar submarine crew; accepting the Bene Israel community arriving from India and the immigrants arriving from eastern Europe in the early days of the State; receiving the immigrants coming from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union in recent decades).
- 2) The heterogeneity of the addressees of these rulings, substantial numbers of whom, as stated above, were not Torah-observant, made it necessary for the halakhic authorities to find lenient

creative solutions, in the framework of Halakhah, that would allow them to be included among the addressees of the halakhic discussion.

Needless to say, the principle of *kohah de-hetera adif* was well known and widely utilized in the halakhic world from time immemorial.<sup>80</sup> In recent generations, however, an inclination towards stringency has been clearly evident in all realms of Halakhah, and the adoption of a lenient approach in the framework of Religious Zionist Halakhah is certainly one of its distinctive features.<sup>81</sup>

Along with the “power of leniency,” Religious Zionist halakhic authorities make ample use, relatively speaking, of many other tools in the halakhic toolbox – e.g., “better that they should act unintentionally and not intentionally,” “dignity of the community,” “what will people say,” *takanat ha-shavim* (measures instituted to encourage penitence), *tinokot she-nishbu* (children who were taken captive),<sup>82</sup> and the like – in order to reach halakhic results that can offer solutions to difficult problems on the halakhic agenda, and that can be applied even in circumstances where many of the ruling’s addressees are not Torah-observant. At the same time they generally refrain from invoking halakhic principles that create distance and separation from “the sinners of Israel,” such as “Give it to the wicked man to swallow and let him die.”<sup>83</sup>

**B) A “STATE-ORIENTED” AND UNIFYING APPROACH  
VERSUS A “SECTORIAL” AND SEPARATIST APPROACH**

One of the striking features that impact on the halakhic decision-making process is the general outlook of the halakhic decisor. As opposed to a *posek* from the haredi school, whose eyes are generally directed toward some specific addressee as has been the custom of halakhic authorities for generations, the eyes of a halakhic authority from the Religious Zionist school are pointed to a broader population.<sup>84</sup> This is all the more true when he is asked to deal with a halakhic question in the capacity of the state position that he holds (chief rabbi of the State of Israel, city rabbi, chief rabbi of the IDF, and the like). In such cases, the answer must take into consideration

not only the individual, but the entire collective – the state-wide and all-embracing ramifications of his ruling. Thus, for example, one cannot compare a ruling issued to a Torah-observant soldier regarding articles that may be handled on the Sabbath to a directive aimed at all the soldiers of IDF, many of whom are non-observant. Stringency in such a situation, which may be appropriate for the observant soldier, is liable to constitute a “decree which the community cannot bear” for the tens of thousands of non-observant soldiers, and lead to grand scale Sabbath desecration, so that the loss outweighs any benefit.

Furthermore, the haredi approach is not only sectorial and aimed at a narrow slice of the population, but also separatist by its very nature. A haredi halakhic authority sees nothing wrong in his community’s separating itself from the non-observant majority of the population, and sometimes even sees in this an important and praiseworthy value. The majority of Religious Zionist halakhic authorities, on the other hand, see the unity of the Jewish people as an important value, towards which Halakhah must strive, and whose practical realization it must promote.<sup>85</sup>

This difference is particularly striking with respect to halakhic questions related to conversion and the “Who is a Jew” issue. Stringency in this regard, which might be appropriate for a particular sector that from the outset accepts upon itself all halakhic outcomes, stringent as they might be, is liable to wreak havoc for the wider Jewish community in Israel and in Jewish communities throughout the world, and can lead to the further distancing of hundreds of thousands of Jews from their roots. A state-oriented, rather than a sectorial approach, is more likely to draw them near and make them feel connected to the Jewish people.

### ***C) USE OF SOURCES ORIGINATING IN ERETZ ISRAEL***

Some Religious Zionist halakhic authorities, such as Rabbis Kook and Goren, gave great weight, if not always decisive – and not by chance<sup>86</sup> – to halakhic sources originating in Eretz Israel, such as the Jerusalem Talmud.<sup>87</sup>

**D) USE OF MODERN RESEARCH TOOLS AND  
“OUTSIDE LITERATURE”**

The overwhelming majority of haredi halakhic authorities refrain from using modern research tools (e.g., reliance on scientific and medical findings), and do not make use of non-halakhic literature. And what is more, even when they do use them, they generally refrain from mentioning them in their halakhic rulings, lest that grant legitimacy to occupation with such sources. This is not the case with Religious Zionist halakhic authorities, who not infrequently seek assistance in scientific or philosophical literature, even that of non-Jewish authors,<sup>88</sup> and even give it expression in their rulings.<sup>89</sup>

**3. Style, Language and Form of the Ruling**

The rulings of Religious Zionist halakhic authorities are very often recognizable by their language, style, or form. In contrast to the “language of the Rabbis,” spiced with Aramaisms and talmudic expressions, that characterizes traditional halakhic rulings, many – though not all – Religious Zionist halakhic authorities adopt an entirely different style. For the most part, their responsa are written in modern Hebrew<sup>90</sup>; in many cases, these responsa are polished, divided into sections and sub-sections,<sup>91</sup> and gracefully edited.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, some Religious Zionist halakhic authorities refrain from showering upon the addressee – and upon the community that reads their works – an abundance of citations from the *poskim*, *rishonim* and *aharonim*. This is done intentionally, in order to reach a wider audience, and so that their rulings will be clear and understandable even to one who has not mastered the Talmud and codes. Typical examples of this style can be found in the nine volumes of *Responsa Aseh Lekha Rav*, by Rabbi H.D. Halevi, in the four volumes of *Yam ha-Gadol*, by Rabbi Y. Metzger, and in the halakhic writings of Rabbis Aviner and Cherlow.

**4. The Media through which the Halakhic Ruling is Communicated to its Addressees**

Another unique feature of Religious Zionist Halakhah is the relatively

wide use that its authorities, primarily those of the “third generation,” make of modern communication media. Thus, for example, several volumes have appeared, whose publishers boast about the fact that the responsa contained therein had first been communicated by fax.<sup>93</sup> There is also a very extensive literature, the ramifications of which have not as yet been seriously discussed, that uses the Internet as the medium for disseminating halakhic rulings.<sup>94</sup>

It goes without saying that haredi halakhic authorities also make use of these media, but on a much more restricted scale, and they certainly do not boast or take pride in this development.<sup>95</sup>

Another formal feature that characterizes Religious Zionist Halakhah – much more so than Halakhah emanating from the haredi school – is the way it is communicated by way of halakhic articles, rather than in codes or responsa. In the classical world of Halakhah, the responsa literature and codes dominate, both quantitatively and with respect to the great number and wide variety of issues that they deal with.<sup>96</sup>

Torah journals are a relatively recent phenomenon in the world of halakhah, and even after they made their appearance on the stage of Torah literature, the lion’s share of practical halakhic writing continued to be disseminated to the public by way of halakhic codes and books of responsa.

This is not the case regarding Religious Zionist Halakhah. When one examines the Torah literature that has been published over the past century, it readily becomes apparent that Religious Zionist halakhic authorities composed relatively few books of Halakhah and responsa<sup>97</sup> in “real time,”<sup>98</sup> in comparison with those published in haredi circles.

In contrast, in the periodicals and newspapers which publish halakhic articles dealing with timely issues, the contribution of Religious Zionist halakhic authorities is considerable. Various explanations may be offered for this phenomenon, though it seems that it is partly due to the fact that the immediate publication of a halakhic ruling is at times necessary in order to provide an answer to a current problem. Whereas the publication of a volume



of responsa containing hundreds of rulings generally takes a long time,<sup>99</sup> halakhic journals appear much more frequently, and also allow for discussion between different halakhic authorities.

It is not surprising, then, that most Religious Zionist halakhic rulings appeared in various periodicals, e.g., *Sinai* and *Torah she-be-al Peh* – the long-standing journals of Mossad HaRav Kook, edited by Y.L. Maimon, and then later by his son-in-law Yitzhak Raphael; *Mahanayyim* – the weekly journal of the army rabbinate, edited by my revered father, Rabbi Menachem Hacohen, where most of the rulings of Rabbi Shlomo Goren, chief rabbi of the IDF, first appeared; *Ha-Torah ve-ha-Medinah*, edited by Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli, in which appeared most of the halakhic articles of the Religious Zionist rabbis in the first decade after the establishment of the state; *Shevilinear*, *Gevilin*, *Shanah be-Shanah*, *Morashah*, and the like.<sup>100</sup> These periodicals provided a fitting answer to the need for a clarification of “laws of the state,” in the wide sense, and served as the primary instrument of their dissemination. *Hatzofeh*, the Mizrachi movement’s newspaper, served as an important vehicle for the publication of short halakhic articles. Interestingly, the important periodicals published by Religious Zionists in the United States – *Or ha-Mizrah* and *Ha-Darom* – also made a significant contribution to the clarification of laws relating to contemporary issues.

Over the last twenty-five years, the periodical *Tehumin* and the Torah journals issued by the Yeshivot Hesder, and the other Religious Zionist Yeshivot took over this important role.<sup>101</sup> We shall mention some of them: *Alon Shevut* and *Daf Keshet* (Yeshivat Har Etzion); *Kotleinu* and *El mi-Hutz la-Homot* (Yeshivat ha-Kotel); *Sha’alei Da’at* and *Mi-Sifra le-Saifa* (Yeshivat Sha’alvim); *Ma’aliyot* (Yeshivat Birkat Moshe in Ma’aleh Adumim); *Kol ba-Ramah* (Yeshivat ha-Golan); *Iturei Kohanim* (Yeshivat Ateret Kohanim in the Moslem quarter of Jerusalem); and *Tzohar* (rabbis of the Tzohar organization). These journals have become a massive and important collection of original halakhic writing from the school of Religious Zionism.

It may be noted that the aforementioned phenomenon has also a formal-technical dimension, influenced by the content. Whereas the vast majority of traditional volumes of responsa were published

in Rashi script, which for many members of the present generation in Israel and abroad makes them inaccessible, the periodicals issuing from the school of Religious Zionism – as well as the halakhic codes and books of responsa being published today – appear in block print, and are sometimes even translated into other languages. This leads, of course, to a wider distribution and study of this literature, and broadens the community of addressees – a goal which, as was stated above, characterizes Religious Zionist Halakhah.

## **5. The Substance of the Ruling**

The most important characteristic of Religious Zionist Halakhah is, of course, not the language, style, form, or medium, but the content and essence.

Here there is room to ponder whether a halakhic ruling emanating from a halakhic authority of the Religious Zionist camp differs from one issued by a haredi authority. This question is connected to a wider issue regarding the relationship between ideology and Halakhah, an issue many aspects of which have recently been discussed at length, in dozens of papers presented in Jerusalem at a conference devoted entirely to this issue.<sup>102</sup> In the present framework, we cannot, of course, examine all the fascinating aspects of this issue, and we will merely point to a few examples that illustrate the possible influence of Religious Zionist ideology on halakhic decision-making.

Regarding this issue, there appears to be room to distinguish between three different areas of Halakhah:

### ***A) RULINGS RELATING TO RELIGIOUS ZIONIST ISSUES***

Already upon superficial examination, the direct and immediate influence of Religious Zionist ideology is plainly evident in those matters that relate by their nature and essence to areas that touch upon Religious Zionist ideology or stand at the heart of Religious Zionist activity.

Thus, for example, a Religious Zionist halakhic authority is likely to assign religious significance to the State of Israel,<sup>103</sup> to the point that he will view it as “the Kingdom of Israel” with all the many

ramifications that follow from that designation. He is likely to take democratic principles into account (though not all of them, and not in equal measure) when he comes to decide halakhic questions.<sup>104</sup> As opposed to haredi halakhic authorities, who close their eyes and sometimes even display hostility toward “religious legislation,” which they see as a “secularization of Halakhah,” many Religious Zionist halakhic authorities view it in a positive manner.<sup>105</sup> A Religious Zionist halakhic authority will also have a positive attitude toward the fulfillment of the commandment of moving to Eretz Israel in our time, even in cases where it stands in direct confrontation with other important halakhic values (e.g., the commandment to honor one’s parents).<sup>106</sup> At the same time he will voice serious reservation about leaving Eretz Israel and traveling abroad merely for the sake of pleasure.<sup>107</sup> He will look favorably upon the observance of holiday customs on Israel Independence Day, and the recitation of Hallel – with or without a blessing – over the establishment of the state and its military victories. He will view army service as generally obligatory, and specifically, he will almost certainly support the drafting of Yeshiva students into the Israeli army.<sup>108</sup>

This ideology also impacts on the institutional dimension. A halakhic authority who sees himself as belonging to the Religious Zionist camp will presumably recognize the halakhic authority of the chief rabbinate of the State of Israel<sup>109</sup> and the special status of the State Rabbinical Courts, and strive to expand their authorities as much as possible,<sup>110</sup> and sometimes even see in them an “important court.”<sup>111</sup> Such an authority will presumably recognize the binding halakhic standing of most of the laws passed by the Israeli Knesset (to the exclusion of those relating to ritual issues);<sup>112</sup> and he will even recognize the authority of the Supreme Rabbinical Court, despite the halakhic problems surrounding its establishment and the acceptance of its authority.<sup>113</sup>

Regarding these issues and the like, it is manifestly evident that the halakhic authority’s ideological position impacts upon his halakhic decision-making. In contrast to the Religious Zionist halakhic authority, a non-Zionist halakhic authority will in many cases ignore these issues and display absolute indifference to them.

In other cases, he will sharply oppose Zionist institutions, and in certain cases he will even apply to them – if only for rhetorical purposes – the law of *yehareg ve-al ya'avor*, “one should suffer martyrdom, rather than transgress the prohibition.”<sup>114</sup>

**B) ISSUES ARISING FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT, EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

Another area of Halakhah in which Religious Zionist ideology may have a certain impact on halakhic decision-making relates to issues arising from the establishment, existence or activities of the State of Israel.

Thus, for example, the attitude towards pluralism and the various human rights, is influenced by the need to reconcile between “the Jewish and the democratic values of the State of Israel” and its government, which are the cornerstone of its existence. These issues are discussed in the writings of the halakhic authorities of the Religious Zionist school,<sup>115</sup> but find hardly any expression in the halakhic writings of the haredi sages.<sup>116</sup>

Another example is the issue of extradition. The question of handing over a Jewish criminal (or suspected criminal) to another country that is seeking his extradition is not essentially connected to Zionist or Religious Zionist ideology, and it arose already in the past in classical halakhic sources, long before anyone ever imagined that the vision of a Jewish state could be actualized. However, the fact that extradition is executed in the framework of relations between states, and that its results are liable to effect the state’s foreign relations and standing in the eyes of the world, is liable to influence the content of a halakhic ruling issued in its regard. A “sectorial” halakhic authority, whose eyes are directed exclusively at the specific matter at hand, is liable to rule against extradition, whereas his counterpart who has a broader and more “state-oriented” perspective, is likely to support the criminal’s extradition in light of broader considerations.<sup>117</sup>

A similar issue involves the attitude toward non-Jews in general, and in specific cases in particular.<sup>118</sup>

The issues of autopsies and organ transplantation were also examined differently by Religious Zionist halakhic authorities than

by their counterparts in the haredi camp. For the most part, the latter take into account narrow, “local” considerations, which relate to the specific case. Therefore, their rulings generally follow the old halakhic tradition, which is stringent in these areas, and suggest practical solutions to the problem – e.g., bringing cadavers from abroad for the study of anatomy – without considering the possible public ramifications of such rulings. In contrast, the Religious Zionist or “state-oriented” halakhic authorities, such as Rabbi Sh. Goren, also considered the public and diplomatic ramifications of such rulings, including the concern about the desecration of God’s name that would be caused by the import of non-Jewish cadavers or the almost absolute prohibition of organ transplants, and therefore they tended to find – in the world of Halakhah and within its framework – justifications for leniency in such cases.<sup>119</sup>

**C) PENETRATION OF RELIGIOUS ZIONIST IDEOLOGY INTO “TRADITIONAL” AREAS OF HALAKHAH**

The third area of Halakhah that requires discussion is comprised of halakhic questions, which at least on the surface, do not appear to be connected in any way to Religious Zionist ideology, but nevertheless we can see how that ideology impacts upon them, sometimes more and sometimes less. We shall briefly discuss two such instances.

An analysis of the halakhic rulings issued by the authorities of the Religious Zionist school teaches that ideological tendencies have indeed penetrated even into traditional halakhic realms, e.g., the laws of the Sabbath, *kashrut*, and personal status, which on the face of things have no special connection to Zionist or Religious Zionist ideology.

In this framework, we cannot expand at length with examples, but we shall note a few of them, like a drop in the sea. One of the most difficult issues that halakhic authorities must grapple with is finding ways to permit agunot to marry. We are talking about a very old field of Halakhah, about which there exists a vast literature. Indeed, the severity of the prohibition of allowing a “married woman” to remarry without having received a *get*, and the concern about creating *mamzerim* (children of adulterous or certain incestuous

relationships, who are excluded from the Jewish community), have led to the situation where many contemporary halakhic authorities refrain from dealing with such issues. Those who do deal with them, often tend to more stringent approaches, even when there are authoritative lenient positions upon which they can rely.<sup>120</sup>

Rabbi Shlomo Goren, both because of his daring and dauntless personality, and because of the offices that he occupied – chief rabbi of the IDF and chief rabbi of the State of Israel – understood that this issue could not be dismissed with a stringent ruling, not only because of classical halakhic considerations, such as “the rabbis are lenient regarding an agunah,” but also because of the ramifications on the functioning of the Israeli army. Therefore, he sought and found groundbreaking ways to permit the agunot created by the War of Independence, the Dakar submarine, and the like. His colleague, Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef, acted in a similar fashion with respect to the agunot created by the Yom Kippur War (and from 9/11).

The question of the fitness of the various “lost communities of Israel” to marry into the Jewish community is also by no means a new halakhic issue. An entire chapter of tractate *Kiddushin*, “Ten classes of Jew of traced genealogy went up from the Babylonian captivity,” is devoted to the means of clarifying a person’s Jewishness, to which were added over the course of the generations reams of commentary, novellae and rulings. But whereas for centuries, the discussion related to questions concerning specific individuals, the establishment of the State of Israel created a need to confront the genealogical fitness of entire communities, which sometimes numbered tens of thousands of people, e.g., the Bene Israel from India, the Beta Israel and Falashmura from Ethiopia, and those immigrating from the former Soviet Union.<sup>121</sup>

Also in the realm of the laws of personal modesty, one of the areas that distinguish – justly or not – between the Religious Zionist and the haredi communities, it is possible to find divergent opinions. Whereas haredi halakhic authorities tend to be stringent in matters of modesty, some authorities of the Religious Zionist school are aware – owing to their broader perspective and wider audience – that there is room for certain leniency, of course within

the bounds of Halakhah, on this issue as well. A striking example of this phenomenon is Rabbi Ovadyah's lenient ruling allowing women to wear trousers – under a skirt – a ruling that most certainly would not have been issued by a haredi halakhic authority.<sup>122</sup>

#### IV. LOOKING FORWARD: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have attempted to lay the groundwork for characterizing the world of Halakhah emanating from the school of Religious Zionism. An examination of its various levels – overt and hidden – has revealed a complex, varied, and fascinating array of forces that are factors in its formation. Some of them are connected to the creators of Religious Zionist Halakhah – the halakhic authorities who drive its engines; and some are connected to the creation itself – the circumstances of the creation of the Halakhah, the particular time and the particular place.

I have tried to briefly point to the various components operating in the world of Religious Zionist Halakhah, and its characteristic features. My analysis demonstrates that it is characterized by, among other things, greater – though not exclusive – emphasis and weight directed to issues dealing with “laws of the state” in the wide sense, issues concerning “laws of modernity,” and sometimes even the harnessing of Halakhah to “political” ends.

An analysis of the content of Religious Zionist Halakhah teaches that it is possible to identify characteristic features, e.g., intensified use of the halakhic principle of *kohah de-hetera adif*; adopting a state-oriented approach rather than the sectorial approach that characterizes the Halakhah issuing from haredi circles; and use of sources originating in Eretz Israel, of modern research tools and “outside literature.” The style, language, and form of a halakhic ruling, as well as the media through which it is communicated to its addressees, sometimes indicate that the ruling belongs to the Religious Zionist halakhic system.

What awaits us in the future with respect to the halakhah issuing forth from the school of Religious Zionism? In light of the social dynamism that characterizes the world of Judaism and the Jewish

people in general, and the world of Religious Zionism (as that of the haredim as well) in particular, we cannot know. It is possible to outline, if only in general terms, “from where we came,” but it is much more difficult to know “where we are heading” and this is for several reasons.

One reason is the great dynamism that characterizes Religious Zionism in its various forms. Like any other living movement, Religious Zionism has never been static, stuck in one place. Nevertheless, following the crystallization of its central ideas at the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially after the establishment of the state, certain institutions, practices and lifestyle (e.g., dress, speech, literature, and the like) became entrenched and have survived for many years.

In recent years, we are indeed witness to many significant changes in all these realms, as well as the development of varied and diverse currents and sub-currents,<sup>123</sup> which are often very distant from each other, but which can be defined – both because of their essential nature, and because of their self-image – as standing under the wide umbrella of “Religious Zionism.”

A second reason is the continuing decline in the world of halakhic decision-making, and the shift of leadership from halakhic decisors to roshei yeshivot. This phenomenon is characteristic of the world of Halakhah in general, but it leaves its mark on Religious Zionism as well. In great measure, the shoes of important halakhic decisors, whose authority had been recognized by all – or almost all – (even if they did not always agree with their rulings), e.g., Rabbis M. Feinstein and J.B. Soloveitchik in the United States, and Rabbis I. Herzog, Sh. Goren, E.Y. Waldenberg, and Sh. Z. Auerbach in Israel, have not been filled.<sup>124</sup> In their place, local pockets of halakhic decision-making have been created, the influence of which is far more restricted.

A third reason is the decline in status and power of the Religious Zionist establishment. The centralized political power of Religious Zionism which had in the past been concentrated in the hands of the Mizrachi-ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi movement has been divided up, and parts of it have been scattered in all directions. A



direct result of this loss of power has been the almost total cessation of “religious legislation,”<sup>125</sup> which was so characteristic of the early years of the state, and the legislation already existing is hardly enforced.<sup>126</sup> This change has brought with it a significant change in the composition of the Rabbinical Courts and the city rabbis. There has been a significant decline in the standing of the chief rabbinate of Israel, and the change in those standing at its helm has led to a dilution and depletion of the Religious Zionist halakhic rulings issued by that institution.<sup>127</sup>

It may be assumed that the changing times are also a factor. In the early years of the state, many of the halakhic problems that characterized the world of Religious Zionist Halakhah were entirely new, and every ruling involved a great novelty. This is no longer true today. Following the development and establishment of Religious Zionist decision-making over the course of a generation, a firm foundation has been formed, all – or most – additions to which are but like grains of sand falling on a great dune, the impression and novelty of which are almost unrecognizable. This is true about “laws of the state,” laws relating to the army and war,<sup>128</sup> and other realms of Halakhah as well.

It seems, however, that certain tendencies that were pointed out above, are likely to grow stronger. As for matters of external form, the use of the Internet as a medium by which to disseminate Torah teachings and halakhic rulings is growing from day to day, and it may be surmised that its place and weight in the world of Religious Zionist Halakhah will only become greater. The same applies to the appearance of collections of articles – as distinguished from classical volumes of responsa; further improvements in the printing and distribution processes will lead to an increase in the number and frequency of such works.

The tendency toward leniency and a state-oriented (as opposed to a “sectorial”) approach will remain in place, in light of the urgent need to find appropriate solutions for broad populations, e.g., the conversion issue, the plague of assimilation that is eating away at world Jewry, and the continued integration of religious soldiers in the IDF (whose numbers in senior command positions are growing),

and of Torah-observant Jews in all areas of the economy, society, and the state.

Alongside these inclinations, certain tendencies have become apparent in recent years that point to a tempering of some of the phenomena described above. The development of a new sector, the *hardali* – *haredi leumi* sector,<sup>129</sup> which vacillates on the thin rope stretched between the Religious Zionist and haredi camps, is likely to herald a more conservative and stringent tendency in the halakhic rulings issued by the Religious Zionist school, whether as an intentional change in direction, or as a reaction and response to liberal inclinations penetrating this school from the “Modern-Orthodox” movement.

Diplomatic, social and political changes – such as the disengagement from the Gaza Strip and Gush Katif, the growing diversity in the National-Religious school system (creating a variety of colors and shades of colors among the educational institutions, as opposed to the relative uniformity that characterized them in the past), and the diminished power of the Mafdal – the traditional representative of Religious Zionism – in the Knesset, and its remaining outside the government coalition, are likely to impact in various ways and to one degree or another upon Religious Zionist Halakhah in the future.

## NOTES

1. Thus, for example, there are those who wished to see the *Hatam Sofer*, the most prominent representative of Orthodoxy in the modern period, as also representing a radically stringent halakhic approach, perhaps in the wake of his famous statement that “*hadash* [something new] is prohibited by Torah law.” There is, however, a wide gap between image and reality, and on certain halakhic issues the Hatam Sofer inclines toward far greater leniency than other sages. See: M. Samet, *Ha-Hadash Asur min ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 2005), 306–318. In the other direction, Rav Kook is perceived by many as a lenient and tolerant halakhic authority. While it is true that tolerance constitutes a fundamental value in his thought, in certain areas of Halakhah he was exceedingly stringent, adopting extreme positions. Examples of this include the absolute prohibition that he cast – in opposition to the view of many of his contemporaries (e.g., Rabbi Uziel) – upon women’s right to vote and be elected, and his and his disciples’ radically negative attitude toward Christianity, which I have discussed elsewhere. See Aviad Hacohen, “*Natzrut ve-Notzrim be-Einayim Rabbaniyot be-Et ha-Hadashah – me-ha-Rav Kook ve-ad ha-Rav Ovadyah*”

Yosef,” *Mahanayyim*, 15 (2004): 89–124. Also Rabbi Mohilever, whose connection to the “*Hibbat Zion*” movement and whose support for the acquisition of a general education made him suspect of harboring “liberal” ideas, was at times stringent on matters regarding which others were lenient, e.g., the question of a *get* sent by way of the mail. See *Sefer Shemu’el*, pp. 11–12, note 8.

2. The same applies to the attempt to label a particular halakhic authority as “conservative,” “formalist,” “activist,” or “liberal,” which in most cases does not reflect the complexity of his decision-making. On this, see A. Hacohen, “*Shikkulim Meta-Hilkhatiyim be-Pesikat ha-Halakhah – Mitveh Rishoni*,” in A. Ravitzky and A. Rosenak, eds., *Proceedings of the First International Congress on the Philosophy of Halakhah* (pending publication).
3. Rambam’s great code, the *Mishneh Torah*, is, of course, the exception that proves the rule.
4. Regarding the Oral Law in its early stages, it stands to reason that what contributed to this was the fact that the mishnah and the talmud were not committed to writing, but rather taught orally, and that associative connections were utilized in order to make the texts easier to memorize. As a result, we frequently find in the talmud a series of disparate statements, dealing with totally unrelated topics, the only common denominator between them being the fact that they were all uttered by the same sage.
5. Regarding the casuistic nature of Jewish law, see M. Elon, *Ha-Mishpat ha-Ivri*, 3rd ed. (Jerusalem, 1988), 879, 1001.
6. Regarding the attempt to categorize halakhic rulings, see the fundamental article of C.I. Waxman, “Toward a Sociology of *Pesak*,” in M. Sokol, ed., *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992); idem, “The Sociology of *Psika* (halakhic ruling): An Example from American Jewry” [Hebrew], in ed, Eliezer Don Yehiya, *Between Tradition and Innovation: Studies in Judaism, Zionism, and the State of Israel* [Hebrew] (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2005). See also: Marc B. Shapiro, “Sociology and Halakha,” *Tradition*, 27 (Fall, 1992): 75–85.
7. The idea of “Religious Zionism” is itself weighed down by the heavy baggage of diverse definitions. Many authors have discussed the features of Religious Zionism, and this is not the forum to expand upon the issue. We shall merely point to several fundamental sources, for illustrative purposes, in which references may be found to additional literature: E. Shweid, “*Te’ologiyah Le’umi-Tziyyoni be-Reishitah – al Mishnato shel ha-Rav Yitzhak Ya’akov Reines*,” in eds., Y. Dan and Y. Hacker, *Mehkarim be-Kabbalah, be-Filosofiyah Yehudit, u-be-Sifrut ha-Mussar ve-he-Hagut Mugashim le-Yeshayahu Tishbi* (Jerusalem, 1986), 689–720; D. Schwartz. *Ha-Tziyyonut ha-Datit – bein Higayon le-Meshihiyut* (Tel Aviv, 1999); and elsewhere.
8. It is superfluous to mention that this division, like any division, is in a certain sense arbitrary, and made only for the sake of convenience. In the end, we are dealing with an ongoing movement, where one period merges into the next, there being no clear and distinct separation between them.
9. This, despite the fact that these sages as well wrote extensively in the field of

- Halakhah. See, for example: Rabbi Z.H. Kalischer's *Moznayim le-Mishpat* (1855), or his critique of a pamphlet written by Levi Herzfeld, a Reform rabbi from Braunschweig, who called for the abolition of various commandments, including those dependent upon the Land of Israel. Rabbi Kalischer's halakhic positions, including his call for a renewal of the sacrificial order, observance of the special commandments dependent upon the Land of Israel, and aliya to the Land of Israel – were clearly influenced by his fondness for settling the Land and his “Religious Zionist” attitude, which found strongest expression in his famous work, *Derishat Tziyyon*. Another example is the work of Rabbi Sh. Mohilever, *Hikrei Halakhah ve-She'ilot u-Teshuvot* (Jerusalem, 1944). Rabbi Avraham Isaac Hacoen Kook is exceptional; despite the fact that most scholarly attention has been paid to his ideological writings, an effort has been made, particularly in recent years, to study also his halakhic writings. See, for example: A. Malkhiel, “*Idi'ologiyah ve-Halakhah be-Heter ha-Mekhirah shel Rav Kook*,” *Shenaton ha-Mishpat ha-Ivri*, 20 (1997): 169–211; H. Ben-Artzi, “*Idi'ologiyah u-Pesikat Halakhah: Darkho shel ha-Ra'ayah Kook ke-Posek*,” in ed., A. Berholz, *Masa el ha-Halakhah* (Tel Aviv, 2003), 177–195; idem, “*Ha-Ra'ayah Kook ke-Posek: Yesodot Hadshaniyyim be-Pesikato shel ha-Rav Kook ve-Zikatam le-Olam ha-Haguti*,” doctoral dissertation, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2003; Rabbi N. Gutel, *Hadashim gam Yeshanim – be-Netivei Mishnato ha-Hilkhatit-Hagutit shel ha-Rav Kook* (Jerusalem, 2005); idem, “*Ha-Dor be-Hilkhot ha-Ra'ayah: Ma'amado he-Haguti-Histori shel 'Ha-Dor' be-Et ha-Hadashah ke-Shikkul Hilkhati be-Mishnato shel ha-Rav Kook*,” *Sidra*, 17 (2001): 23–61. Regarding the place of Halakhah in Rabbi Kook's thought, see: Rabbi H.Y. Hadari, “*Ha-Halakhah be-Haguto shel ha-Rav Kook*,” in ed., Y. Eisner, *Hagut ve-Halakhah* (Jerusalem, 1973): 57–71.
10. Rabbi H.D. Halevi devoted an entire book, *Dat u-Medinah* (1969), to a clarification of issues – halakhic and ideological – that stand at the heart of Religious Zionism. On his work, see: M. Hellinger, “*Dat u-Medinah be-Hagut ha-Tziyyonut-Datit ha-Sefaradit: Bein Zikah Me'ahedet le-Vein Middur – Ha-R.M.H. Uziel ve-ha-R.H.D. Halevi*,” in *Dat u-Medinah be-Hagut ha-Yehudit be-Me'ah ha-Esrin* (2005): 219–265; Z. Zohar, “*Arakhim Politiyyim Universaliiyyim ve-Tziyyonut Datit: Kavim le-Mishnato shel ha-Rav Hayyim David Halevi*,” in eds., A. Sagi and Y. Stern, *Yahadut Penim ve-Hutz* (Tel Aviv, 2000): 111–123; M. Fluch, “*Mishnato ha-Hilkhatit ve-he-Hagutit shel ha-Rav Hayyim David Halevi*,” *Pe'amim*, 81 (2000): 108–119.
  11. In this context, mention should be made of the halakhic authorities of the religious kibbutz movement in its early years, Rabbi E.Sh. Rosenthal (see below, note 17), and Rabbi Elimelech Bar-Shaul (Shaulsohn), who also headed the Rabbinical Court in Rehovot. Eventually, a stratum of rabbinic leadership was created in the religious kibbutzim, this being a relatively new phenomenon in the Religious Zionist world, which requires separate study. Regarding this phenomenon, see: Sh. Emmanuel, ed., *Ha-Kibbutz be-Halakhah* (Sha'alvim, 1984).
  12. Regarding his approach to Halakhah and Zionism, see: M.B. Shapiro, *Between the*

*Yeshiva World and Modern Orthodoxy: The Life and Works of Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg* (Oxford, 1999).

13. Regarding his approach to Halakhah, see. A. Hacohen, “‘Mah Nishtanah’ – *Kavim le-Heker Shitato ha-Lamdant shel ha-Rav Soloveitchik*,” to appear in *Sefer ha-Rav Soloveitchik*, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, and the sources cited therein. Another Torah scholar who should be mentioned in this context is Rabbi Y. Gershuni, who was born in Europe, studied in the Grodno yeshiva, moved to Eretz Israel, where he studied in Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav, but lived most of his life in the United States, only in his later years establishing a permanent residence in Jerusalem. In his various articles, which were later collected in *Kol Tzofayikh* (Jerusalem, 1980) and *Kol Yehudah* (Jerusalem, 1990), there is extensive discussion of “Religious Zionist” issues. It is not surprising that Rabbi Gershuni also composed a work on Maimonides’ *Hilkhot Melakhim*, which was first published by his father-in-law, Rabbi Eliezer Silver, one of the leaders of Ultra-Orthodoxy in the United States (!), only two years after the establishment of the State of Israel (New York, 1950), and that he headed the “*Shitah Mekubetzet*” project to the tractate Peshachim.
14. Needless to say, many colors and shades of colors are found in haredi society as well. Alongside the “traditional” division between Ashkenazi haredim and Sefardi haredim, and the accepted sub-categories, e.g., Lithuanian haredim and Hassidic haredim, there are tens of sub-divisions to each sub-category. For the purpose of this article, we have used the all-embracing term “haredim,” despite the fact that like any generalization, in specific cases it is liable to be misleading. For a characterization of haredi society, see: M. Friedman, *Ha-Hevrah ha-Haredit: Mekorot, Megamot, ve-Tahalikhim* (Jerusalem, 1991).
15. In the heart of the period under discussion, it was Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav, which, both during the life of Rabbi A.Y. Kook, and that of his son, Rabbi Z.Y. Kook, that produced halakhic authorities, such as Rabbis Y. Kafih, Y. Gershuni, E.Sh. Rosenthal, Sh. Sterlitz, D. Lior, and others. On the history of the yeshiva, see: Y. Rudik, *Hayyim shel Yetzirah* (Jerusalem, 1998). On the other hand, a not insubstantial number of “Religious Zionist” halakhic authorities were trained in yeshivot identified with the haredi community – the most outstanding of which in Eretz Israel being the Hevron Yeshiva – including Rabbis Sh. Goren, E. Bar-Shaul, A. Shapiro, and others. Among the halakhic authorities of the third generation, mention may be made of Rabbis Sh. Daichovsky and A. Sherman, graduates of Yeshivat “Ha-Yishuv he-Hadash,” and eventually members of the Supreme Rabbinical Court.
16. On his life, see: Sh. Avidor-Hacohen, *Yahid be-Doro* (Jerusalem, 1990). In his doctoral dissertation, “The Dyeing of Purple in Ancient Israel” (Haifa, 1981), on *tekhelet* in *tzitzit*, Rabbi Herzog integrated his Torah knowledge with his knowledge of the physical sciences. Alongside his unqualified support of the state and its institutions, he came out sharply – together with his colleague Rabbi B.Z. Uziel – against compulsory military service for women in the IDF and lamented the judicial system’s failure to adopt Jewish law as law of the land.

17. Rabbi Prof. Eliezer Shimshon Rosenthal was born in Germany in 1915. In 1934, he moved to Eretz Israel and studied in Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav. Four years later he received rabbinic ordination from Rabbis Y.M. Harlap and I.Z. Meltzer. In 1938 he joined Kibbutz Yavneh and served as kibbutz rabbi. Rabbi Rosenthal served in the army, and from 1947 when he began to study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and until his death, he was intensively involved in talmudic research. See: M. Kahana, “*Eliezer Shimshon Rosenthal, z”l*,” *Mehkarei Talmud*, 2 (1993): 9–11. On the influence of his life on his halakhic approach, see: Rabbi B. Lau, “*Babu’a shel Emet – Rabbanut ve-Akademyah be-Kitvei ha-R.E.Sh. Rosenthal al Hatzalat Goy be-Shabbat*,” *Akdamos*, 13 (2003), 7–32.
18. Clearly, however, regarding this issue as well, it is necessary to appreciate the complexity of a halakhic authority’s attitude toward the integration of Torah and science, or Torah and *derekh erez*. See, for example: Rabbi A. Lichtenstein, “*Tovah Hokhmah im Nahalah*,” in ed., Rabbi Y. Shaviv, *Mamleket Kohanim ve-Goy Kadosh* (Jerusalem, 1989 [2nd ed., 1996]): 25. And compare to Rabbi Lichtenstein’s article, “*Hinukh Yehudi u-Mada’ei ha-Yahadut – Hayelkhu Sheneihem Yahdav*,” *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Yeshivat Har Etzion*, 11 (1998): 149–161. On this issue, see also: Rabbi H. Navon, “*Talmud Torah be-Haguto shel ha-Rav Aharon Lichtenstein*,” *Akdamos*, 17 (2006): 153–170.
19. Rabbi M. Tandler, son-in-law of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, is regarded as an authority in the area of medical Halakhah. He is a professor of biology and rosh yeshiva at Yeshiva University.
20. For example, Rabbi Nachum Rabinowitz, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe in Ma’alei Adumim, who has a doctorate in mathematics, and Rabbi She’ar Yashuv Cohen, chief rabbi of Haifa and head of its rabbinical court, who earned a degree in law at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.
21. See his introduction to *Meishiv Milhamah*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1983).
22. Most of the halakhic authorities who are generally included in the “generation of the future,” the “third generation” of the Religious Zionist school, studied in Yeshiva High Schools and Yeshivot Hesder.
23. The composition of this list reflects one way through which the State of Israel “rewards,” as it were, “Zionist” halakhic authorities. Two exceptions on this list are Rabbis M.Y. Ha-Levi Epstein and Y. Abramski, who are more strongly identified with the haredi community.
24. As with any rule, this rule also has its exceptions, e.g., Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who lived his entire life in the Diaspora, but whose rulings nevertheless clearly display the markers of Religious Zionist Halakhah. It is unnecessary to point out that much of haredi Halakhah in the last generation was written in Eretz Israel, but this does not turn it into Religious Zionist Halakhah.
25. Rabbi Meshulam Rath (1875–1963) grew up in Galicia, and in addition to his Torah knowledge, had a broad familiarity with “external wisdom” (including philosophy and the German language). Rabbi Rath was counted among the heads of the Mizrachi movement in Galicia and in 1921 he participated in the Zionist

Congress held in Carlsbad. During the Holocaust period, he miraculously escaped and reached Eretz Israel in 1944 (see his introduction to *Responsa Kol Mevasser*, part 1). Some of his rulings are influenced by his Religious Zionist position, e.g., those concerning the allowance that he issued to work on the Sabbath for defense purposes, the establishment of monuments in memory of those who fell in the War of Independence, the translation of the *ketubah* into Hebrew, the celebration of a *bat mitzvah*, and the like. He stands out in his ruling to recite *Hallel* on Israel Independence Day: “There is no doubt that on this day [the 5th of Iyyar] that was established by the government, the members of the Knesset (who are the elected representatives of the majority of the population), and most of the leading Torah authorities to be celebrated throughout the country in commemoration of our deliverance and freedom, there is a *mitzvah* to make it a festive day of rejoicing and to recite *Hallel*... We have been redeemed from slavery to freedom, for we have been redeemed from subjugation to the nations, becoming free men, and achieving national independence. We are therefore certainly obligated to fix it as a holiday. Whoever wishes to recite the *Sheheheyanu* blessing may do so, and there is no concern whatsoever about a blessing recited in vain” (*Responsa Kol Mevasser*, I, no. 21). Nevertheless, Rabbi Rath did not hesitate to voice his criticism of government bodies when he thought that they were acting against Halakhah. See, for example, his sharp responsum against the establishment of monuments to perpetuate the memory of those who fell in the War of Independence, published in *Responsa Kol Mevasser*, I, no. 14. At the beginning of the responsum, he writes: “I was astonished and shocked to read about this strange plan, which involves a trace of idolatry and a severe prohibition of the laws of the Torah and Halakhah.” And at the end, he concludes: “A great obligation falls upon the Chief Rabbinate, on the representatives of religious Jewry in the government and in the Knesset, on the Jerusalem municipality, on the *Hevra Kadisha*, and on the army rabbinate to prevent execution of this plan which strikes at the foundations of Judaism and profanes the sanctity of the nation, the sanctity of the land and the dignity of the holy fallen among our Jewish brothers. May God who dwells in Zion send His assistance from the holy city to impose the laws of the Torah in our land and plant His love and fear in the hearts of all of us, and bring about our full redemption, speedily and in our days.”

26. Rabbi Sh.Y. Zevin was ordained by the author of the *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, Rabbi Y.M. Epstein, and Rabbi Y. Rozin, the “Rogotchover.” After arriving in Eretz Israel in 1934, he studied at the Teachers College of the Mizrachi, and later served as a member of the Chief Rabbinate Council and established the “Talmudic Encyclopedia” project. Rabbi Zevin was one of the first to call for the mobilization of yeshiva students during the War of Independence, by way of a pamphlet that he wrote under a pseudonym, “one of the rabbis.” On his work, see: Rabbi Y. Hutner, “*Ha-G.R.Sh. Y. Zevin ke-Pote’ah shel Tekufah be-Sifrut ha-Halakhah*” (Jerusalem, 1942) [and in condensed form: *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, vol. 16 (1980): 11–22.
27. In some of these yeshivot, some of the rabbinic figures were and continue to be



- closer to the haredi world than to the world of Religious Zionism, e.g., Rabbi H.Y. Goldvicht, founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem be-Yavneh, and Rabbis Nebentzahl and Dzimitrovski of Yeshivat ha-Kotel.
28. On the one hand, Rabbi Nissim called for support of the “*Hinukh Atzma’i*” educational system of Agudath Israel. On the other hand, while he served as Rishon le-Zion and chief rabbi, he was involved in many issues, regarding which he presented a clearly “state-oriented” approach, e.g., allowing the immigration and recognizing the Jewishness of the Bene Israel community from India. See: *Bene Israel – Piskei Halakhah u-Mekorot u-Birur Dinim* (Jerusalem, 1962). In 1964, he composed a prayer on behalf of Soviet Jewry, and in 1967 he issued a proclamation forbidding entry into the Temple Mount. On his life, see: Sh. Meisles, *Min ha-Har el ha-Am* (Tel Aviv, 1993). In his volume of responsa, *Responsa Yein ha-Tov*, there are many passages which reflect his “state-oriented” position.
  29. I have discussed the unique position of Rabbi Toledano in various areas in a lecture delivered at Tel Aviv University, entitled, “*Kol ha-Nehalim Holkhim el ha-Yam – Ha-Rav Ya’akov Moshe Toledano: Rav, Hoker, Sar,*” soon to be published.
  30. See for example, Rabbi A. Lichtenstein, *Tokh u-Kelipah be-Tarbut ha-Ma’aravit* (Alon Shevut, 1996); idem, “*Aseh Retzono, Batel Retzonkha – Hirhurim al Mifgash bein Halakhah u-Modernityut,*” *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Yeshivat Har Etzion*, 13 (1999): 123–133; and his articles mentioned above, note 18. In this matter as well, a great change has transpired over the past decade, with the growth of various sub-groups, e.g., the “*hardalim,*” – the *haredim-le’umiyim*, a continuously expanding group among members of the third generation of Religious Zionism that has not yet been adequately studied.
  31. It seems that it was not by chance that the daughter of Rabbi Goren, chief rabbi of the IDF, and the daughter of Rabbi Sh.Y. Cohen, rabbi of Haifa (who had fallen into Jordanian captivity during the War of Independence, and later served as rabbi of the Air Force during the early years of the state), served full service in the army.
  32. On this matter, see: Rabbi Y. Amital, “*Al Ma’amado shel ha-Yehudi ha-Hiloni be-Yameinu mi-Behinah Toranit-Hilkhatit,*” in ed., Rabbi Y. Shaviv, *Mamlekhet Kohanim ve-Goy Kadosh* (Jerusalem, 1989): 333.
  33. The recognition of this day which falls on the 27th of Nissan has special significance. Over and beyond the theological problem regarding the religious confrontation with the Holocaust (about which much has been written), this day falls in Nissan, during which “eulogies are not delivered.” It was not for naught that the Chief Rabbinate established the Tenth of Tevet as “*Yom ha-Kaddish ha-Kelali.*” On this issue, see for now: R. Stauber, “*Ha-Viku’ah be-Shenot ha-Hamishim bein ha-Tziyyonut ha-Datit le-vein ha-Semol ha-Tziyyoni al Mo’ed Yom ha-Zikkaron le-Sho’ah,*” in *Medina be-Derekh* (2001): 189–203; Rabbi Y. Shaviv, “*Zikkaron le-Sho’ah: Yom ha-Zikkaron/Yom ha-Kaddish ha-Kelali,*” in ed., Sh. Katz, *Ha-Rabbanut ha-Roshit le-Yisra’el*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 2002): 470; Rabbi Y. Steinberger, “*Asarah be-Tevet Yom ha-Sho’ah she-Hafakh le-Yom ha-Kaddish ha-Kelali,*” in *Ishei Mo’ed* (Jerusalem, 1998): 433–446.



34. Regarding this matter as well, the picture is obviously far more complex than may be imagined on first glance. Thus, for example, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who without a doubt was counted among the great spokesmen for Religious Zionism, refrained – for purely halakhic reasons – from reciting *Hallel* on Israel Independence Day, and for this reason, there were those who cast doubts about his Zionism. Regarding this, see: *Kol Dodi Dofek*, in P. Peli, ed., *Be-Sod ha-Yahid ve-ha-Yahad* (Jerusalem, 1976): 394–400; and Rabbi Soloveitchik’s attempt to “defend” his uncle, Rabbi Yitzhak Ze’ev (Velvel) Soloveitchik, from his followers who saw him as an outright anti-Zionist: “They said about him [Rabbi Y.Z. Soloveitchik] that he opposed the State of Israel. This statement is incorrect... My uncle was entirely detached from all socio-political thinking and response. What may be said about him is that the state did not find a place in his halakhic world of thought or on his halakhic scale of values. He was unable to translate the idea of secular political sovereignty into halakhic ideas and values” (in: “*Mah Dodekh mi-Dod*,” *Be-Sod ha-Yahid ve-ha-Yahad*, p. 241). On Rabbi Soloveitchik’s Zionist attitude, see also: Rabbi A. Lichtenstein, “*Al Yahaso shel ha-G.R.Y.D Soloveitchik, z”l, la-Tziyyonut*,” *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Yeshivat Har Etzion*, 17 (2003): 157–171; and the sources cited by A. and H. Turkel, *Mekorot ha-Rav* (Jerusalem, 2001): 194. This complex picture follows also from the collection of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s letters which were recently published: N. Helfgot, *Community, Covenant, and Commitment* (New York, 2005).
35. Needless to say, there are haredim who enlist in the Israeli army, but their numbers are miniscule in relation to the numbers of haredim who are fit to serve in the army. And furthermore, most haredi soldiers do not serve in combat positions. An exception is the haredi Nahal unit, “*Netzah Yehudah*,” which was established in recent years. See: Z. Derori, *Bein Emunah le-Tzava: Gedud ha-Nahal ha-Haredi – Sikkuyyim ve-Sikkunim* (Jerusalem, 2005).
36. On this matter, see D. Schwartz, *Ha-Tziyyonut ha-Datit bein Higayon le-Meshihiyut* (see above, note 7), p. 16, note 2.
37. See: Rabbi Sh. Goren, “*Medinat Yisra’el ke-Shelav be-Hazon Nevi’ei Yisra’el*,” *Torat ha-Medinah* (Jerusalem, 1996): 465–475.
38. On the other hand, there is the famous proclamation with the heading, “*Da’at Torah*,” from the 20th of Tevet, 5709 (1949), put out by the “United Religious Front,” in anticipation of the Knesset elections, containing thanksgiving to God “who in His great compassion and lovingkindness allowed us to see the first blossoms of the beginning of the redemption with the establishment of the State of Israel.” This proclamation bears the signatures of, among others, many of the leaders of the haredi community, e.g., Rabbis Y. Sarna, Rosh Yeshivat “Hevron”; Y.H. Sankavitz, Rosh Yeshivat “Sefat Emet”; Z. Sorotzkin, Rosh “Va’ad ha-Yeshivot”; Ya’akov Adas; Y.M. Tykocinzki, Rosh Yeshivat “Etz Hayyim”; Sh.Z. Auerbach; and others. The proclamation was published in Rabbi M.M. Kasher’s book, *Ha-Tekufah ha-Gedolah*, p. 374.
39. This is attested to by many documents found today in the Israeli State Archives,

- which echo the struggles that for many years Rabbi Goren fought against the political leaders of Religious Zionism about filling positions of power in the army rabbinate. While the latter wished to fill the positions with “their own people” who identified with the National-Religious party, Rabbi Goren filled many positions with people coming from the haredi world, some of whom (e.g., Lt. Colonel Yitzhak Meir, who would remove his army uniform as soon as he left the “*Kiriyah*” in Tel Aviv, and don the garb of a Gur hassid) demonstrably dissociated themselves from Religious Zionism. On Rabbi Goren’s fundamental approach on this matter, see: Rabbi M.H. Hacohen, “*Meishiv Milhamah: Piskei ha-Halakhah shel ha-Rav Shlomo Goren, ztz”l, be-Inyanei Dat ve-Tzava,*” *Milin Havivin* 1 (2005): 3–11.
40. More extreme examples are provided by Rabbis Betzalel Zolti, Shlomo Shimshon Karlitz, Shlomo Tene, Yoel Kloft, Ya’akov Nissan Rosenthal, Yitzhak Kolitz, Eliezer Goldschmidt, Rabbi Y.S. Elyashiv, and others. These rabbis served as judges in the official State Rabbinical Courts of the State of Israel, which had been established by secular state law, proclaimed their loyalty to the state (but not to its laws!) in the residence of the President, and sat in a court where the state emblem was displayed in all its majesty over their heads. It was only in their later years, after having retired from their posts, that some of them were first included among the most prominent flagbearers of the world of Lithuanian-haredi rabbis, rulings and scholarship.
  41. On this point, it is fascinating to follow the changes in his position between the period prior to his presiding as chief rabbi of Tel Aviv and later of Israel, and afterwards. See his articles: “*Mavo le-Hilkhot Shevi’it,*” *Kol Sinai*, 4 (1965): 394–400; vol. 5 (1966): 29–32; 102–108; 200–206; 222–227; 241–244; “*Be-Inyan Heter Mekhirah,*” *Torah She-be-al Peh*, 15 (1973): 15–49.
  42. The Shas movement itself stands on the border between Zionism and haredism. Almost all of its representatives in the Knesset served in the Israeli army, but their lifestyles and dress is much closer to the haredi world. Most of their children receive a haredi education. On this issue, see: N. Horowitz, “*Shas ve-ha-Tziyyonut: Nitu’ah Histori,*” *Kivunim Hadashim*, 2 (2000): 30–60; D. Schwartz, “*He’arot al ha-Tziyyonut ha-Datit ve-Shas: Shenei Modelim shel Hitgabrut al Mashber,*” in A. Ravitzky (ed.), *Shas – Hebbetim Tarbutiyyim ve-Ra’ayoniyyim* (Tel Aviv, 2006): 386–404.
  43. Rabbi M.M. Kasher was a hassid of Gur, and one of the most prolific writers of Torah literature. His monumental project, *Torah Sheleimah*, and dozens of additional books, which he co-authored or edited (e.g., the Torah journal, *No’am*), combine traditional scholarship with modern research methods, including examination of variant readings and intensive use of manuscripts. Relating to the question of reciting *Hallel* on Israel Independence Day, he wrote that “certainly all those who recite *Hallel* in accordance with the enactment of the Rabbis are acting properly, and they will be blessed, and God forbid, that anyone should treat this lightly.” At the same time, however, he explained why “many Haredim who are happy about the establishment of the state do not recite *Hallel* on Israel Independence Day.”

- Content-wise, his book, *Ha-Tekufah ha-Gedolah – Kol ha-Tor* (Jerusalem, 1969), constitutes a Religious Zionist document of the finest quality, despite its antiquated “rabbinic” style. Among other things, he cites the call put out by the rabbis of Israel to support the United Religious Front list, which included Mizrachi and Ha-Po’el Mizrachi, as well as Agudath Israel and Po’alei Agudath Israel, in their bid for election to the first Knesset. This call opens with the declaration: “We thank God who in His great compassion and lovingkindness allowed us to see the first blossoms of the beginning of the redemption with the establishment of the State of Israel.” See his aforementioned book, chap. 18.
44. Rabbi Z.P. Frank served as rabbi of Jerusalem and member of the Chief Rabbinate Council. His admiration for the Religious Zionist project found expression already in 1919, when he republished the work of Rabbi Z.H. Kalischer, *Derishat Tziyyon*, together with his additions.
  45. Rabbi Ovadyah Hadayah was a Jerusalem Rabbi, kabbalist and son of a kabbalist, and member of the Supreme Rabbinical Council and Chief Rabbinate Council. In his most important work, *Responsa Yaskil Avdi*, there are many responsa that reveal an independent halakhic approach. Among other things, he related positively to the recitation of *Hallel* (without a blessing) on Jerusalem Day. See also: N. Rakover, *Hilkhot Yom ha-Atzma’ut ve-Yom Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem, 1985), 66–70. Nevertheless, he occasionally ruled in a manner “not expected” from a Religious Zionist halakhic authority. Thus, for example, he asserted that despite the rule that “all go up to Eretz Israel,” a boy must not be separated from his father living in Beirut, and sent with his divorced mother who wishes to emigrate to Eretz Israel. See *Responsa Yaskil Avdi*, 11, *Even ha-Ezer*, no. 9.
  46. External testimony to this can be found in the lengthy eulogies written in his memory in haredi newspapers upon his death.
  47. At first, in articles that he wrote (e.g., “*Shofetim ve-Shoterim be-Medinah ha-Yehudit le-Or ha-Torah*,” *Sinai* 22 (1948), 155–178), and then later in his pioneering work, *Hilkhot Medinah* (Jerusalem, 1954).
  48. See, for example, his ruling regarding territories captured during the Six-Day War (*Responsa Tzitz Eli’ezer*, x, no. 1), which sees their conquest by the IDF as similar to a conquest by a king. He refers to his book, *Hilkhot Medinah*, 1, part 3, chapter 5, where he adopts the position of Rabbi Kook (which was written prior to the establishment of the state!) regarding a secular regime, which he sees as standing “in place of a king.” He writes as follows: “If so, today as well, the President, the government and the Knesset (despite all their shortcomings in the area of religion, and whose decisions regarding religion clearly have no validity whatsoever), who were elected by a majority of the Jews living in their land, numbering more than 600,000 souls, stand in the place of a king in all that relates to the general situation of the people, in accordance with the words of *Mishpat Cohen* there, and especially regarding the conquering army and their officers, who act on behalf of all the residents of the land (to the exclusion of an insignificant minority that is nullified by the vast majority), and whose ranks include tens of thousands of God-fearing

- soldiers, who have conquered the territories together with all the soldiers, of all types, and their heads. And see Ya'avetz, in *Kuntrus Yishuv Eretz Yisra'el*, ad loc., to whom it was obvious that the law of public conquest applies to all the territories conquered by Yarov'am ben Yo'ash, even though we find that Scripture testifies about him (11 Kings 14) that he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord and departed not from all the sins of Yarov'am the son of Nevat, who made Israel to sin.”
49. Beyond the biographical element, which demonstrates the strong connection between Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and many Religious Zionist rabbis [see, for example, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, “‘U-le-Yishrei Lev Simhah’ – Divrei Misped al ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, ztz”l], *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Har Etzion*, 7 (1995): 193–208; Y. Eliyahu. *Ha-Torah ha-Mesamahat* (Bet-El, 1998). His rulings also reveal that on many issues he was closer to their world than to the world of the haredi Halakhic authorities (see for example, note 52 below, regarding his attitude toward secular Jews). A very unique phenomenon was the way certain halakhic authorities who were close to Religious Zionism were, in their later years and sometimes even after their deaths, taken over by haredi society. The clearest example of this is Rabbi Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg, author of the *Seridei Esh*. See above, note 12. The same was done in an earlier period, though in other ways, to certain German rabbis, e.g., Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch or Rabbi Isaac Breuer.
  50. Thus, for example, Rabbi Kahaneman’s well-known insistence on flying the Israeli flag over the Ponevezh Yeshiva every year on Israel Independence Day. In the early days of the state, uniformed IDF soldiers were favored guests in the yeshiva. Some of the Torah authorities connected to Religious Zionism, e.g., Rabbi Sh. Goren and Rabbi H.Y. Goldvicht, Rosh Yeshiva of the first Yeshivat Hesder “Kerem be-Yavneh,” were frequent visitors in the home of the *Hazon Ish*, and he himself – in contrast to some Hasidic *admorim* – hosted in his home the Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, and supported participation in Knesset elections (as opposed to the position of certain haredi halakhic authorities). See: B. Braun, “*Ha-’Hazon Ish’: Halakhah, Emunah, ve-Hevrah be-Pesakav ha-Boletim be-Eretz Yisra’el (1933–1954)*,” doctoral dissertation (Jerusalem, 2003): 214–219. He is also known for his lenient ruling which sees the secular community as *tinokot she-nishbu* (children who were taken captive), and allows him to display leniency in their regard in many halakhic matters. See: Braun, ad loc.
  51. It goes without saying that every group of people is marked by a certain heterogeneity, for people by their very nature are different – one from the other, but some groups are more homogeneous than others.
  52. For purely illustrative purposes, one may examine the sociological make-up of the circle that corresponded with Rabbi Kook. Even though most of them did not correspond about halakhic matters, this has much to teach us about the potential addressees of Rabbi Kook. See N. Gutel, *Mi-Kotevei Ra'ayah* (Jerusalem, 2000). On this matter as well, Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef’s rulings are closer to the Religious Zionist school than to the halakhic decision-making emanating from the haredi

- camp. See on this: Rabbi B. Lau, "Petihat She'arim le-Yehudim 'Mesoratiyyim': Iyyun be-Pesikotav shel ha-Rav Ovadyah Yosef," in: Y. Blidstein, ed., *Shabbat – Ra'ayon, Historiyah, Metz'ut* (Be'er-Sheva, 2004), pp. 83–97; idem, "Al Zokhrei Shabbat ve-Einam Shomerehah: Iyyun be-Pesikotav shel Ha-Rav Ovadyah Yosef," *Geranot* 2 (2002), 31–44; A. Pikar, "Pesikato shel ha-Rav Ovadyah Yosef le-Nokhah Temurot ha-Zeman," doctoral dissertation (Ramat-Gan, 2004). Regarding this issue, as regarding other issues, attention should be paid to the relatively tolerant attitude of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach; see *Responsa Minhat Shlomo*, vol. 1, no. 35; and A. Mashiach, "The Halakhic World of R. S.Z. Auerbach," unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Ramat Gan, 2008.
53. For example, the rabbis of the city of Haifa – as opposed to their Religious Zionist colleagues from other cities – bitterly opposed the legislation of a national "Sabbath Law" that would prohibit public transportation on the Sabbath throughout the country, except for Haifa, where public transportation on the Sabbath was already permitted in the British Mandatory period. On this matter, see A. Hacohen, "Medinat Yisra'el, Kan Makom Kadosh! – Itzuv 'Reshut Rabbim Yehudit' bi-Medinat Yisra'el," in M. Bar-On and Z. Zameret (eds.), *Shenei Evrei ha-Gesher – Dat u-Medinah be-Reishit Darkhah shel Yisra'el* (Yad Yitzhak ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 2002), pp. 144–172; Y.A. Polovnik, *Hukkat Shabbat Ketu'ah le-Or ha-Halakhah* (Haifa, 1963); see also: Y. Vilian, *Dat ve-Hinukh Dati be-Haifa be-Shanim 1932–1948*, master's thesis (Ramat-Gan, 1991).
  54. Regarding the considerations which guide a halakhic authority towards stringency or leniency, see: B. Braun, "Hakhmei ha-Mizrah ve-ha-Kana'ut ha-Datit: Nekudah Likrat Behinah Mehudeshet," *Akdamos* 10 (2001), pp. 289–324; idem, "Hahmarah – Hamishah Tipusim min ha-Et ha-Hadashah," *Dinei Israel*, 20–21 (2000–2001), pp. 123–287; A. Hacohen, "Humrot ve-Kulot be-Olaman shel Halakhah," *Mahanayyim* 5 (1993), 90–103.
  55. On the important role of such considerations in halakhic decision-making, see: A. Hacohen, "Shikkulim Meta-Hilkhatiyim" (above, note 2).
  56. Regarding this consideration for halakhic decision-making, see: A. Hacohen, "Shelo Levayesh – Zeh Kelal Gadol ba-Torah," *Be-Ma'agalei Zedek*, 12 (Tevet, 2007), 22–27.
  57. Regarding this issue, see at length: M. Elon, *Ma'amad ha-Ishah* (Jerusalem, 2005); A. Shapiro and Y. Cohen, *Ha-Ishah be-Temurot ha-Zeman* (Tel Aviv, 1984); Y. Cohen, *Ha-Ishah be-Hanhatagat ha-Tzibbur* (Tel Aviv, 1991).
  58. On this point, see the aforementioned article of Waxman (above, note 6); and the classic article of H. Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: the Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition*, 24[4] (1994), 64–130.
  59. On the great challenges in this area, see at length: D. Hacohen, *Olim bi-Se'arah, ha-Aliyah ha-Gedolah u-Kelitatah be-Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 1994); *Tokhnit ha-Milyon* (Tel Aviv, 1999); *Ha-Gar'in ve-ha-Reihayyim: Hityashvut ha-Olim ba-Negev be-Esrot ha-Rishon le-Medinah* (Tel Aviv, 1999).
  60. E.g., Rambam's *Hilkhot Melakhim u-Milhamoteihem*. Regarding the novelty of

- Rambam's work in this area, see: I. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (New Haven, 1980); Y. Blidstein, *Ekrnot Mediniyyim be-Mishnat ha-Rambam* (Ramat-Gan, 2001).
61. On the uniqueness of this halakhic realm, see: Rabbi H. Navon, “*Hilkhot Medinah ke-Tehum Hilkhati Atzma'i*,” *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Yeshivat Har Etzion* 20 (2005), 221–233.
  62. See his article, “*Hiddush ha-Sanhedrin bi-Medinateinu ha-Mithadeshet*,” which was originally published in *Sinai* 36 (1955), and later appeared as a book under the same title (Jerusalem, 1957), and the biography written by his daughter, G. Bat Yehuda, *Ha-Rav Maimon be-Dorotav* (Jerusalem, 1979).
  63. See Z. Zohar, *He'iru Penei ha-Mizrah* (Tel Aviv, 2001), pp. 237–250; M. Elon, *Ma'amad ha-Ishah – Mishpat ve-Shippit* (Tel Aviv, 2005), pp. 51–101.
  64. See Hacoen (above, note 39); A. Edri, “Divine Spirit and Physical Power: Rabbi Shlomo Goren and the Military Ethics of the Israel Defense Forces,” *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, 7 (2006); idem, “Interpretation and Ideology: the Renewal of the Jewish Laws of War in the State of Israel,” *Cardozo Law Review*, 8 (2006), 187. On the novel elements of Rabbi Goren's approach to Halakhah, see also: Dunash (Shabtai Don Yehiya), “*Ha-Rav Rabbi Shlomo Goren*,” *Shanah be-Shanah*, 1974, pp. 267–279; M. Meir, “*Ha-Pulmus al Hatza'at ha-Rav Goren Leshanot et ha-Bittui 'Ve-Eini Yakhol Lingo'a Bakh'*, *be-Ikvot ha-Nehitah al ha-Yare'ah*,” *Derekh Aggadah*, 9 (2006), 213–221.
  65. Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli left Russia for Eretz Israel and studied with Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook in Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav. He served as the first rabbi of Kefar Haro'eh, and was also one of the pioneers of teaching Jewish thought in Midrashyat No'am. He was later appointed to serve on the Supreme Rabbinical Court and on the Chief Rabbinate Council. At the end of his life, he served as Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav and headed Kollel Eretz Hemdah. On his life, see: Rabbi A.Y. Sharir, *Ga'on be-Hanhagah u-be-Midot* (Jerusalem, 1999). On his attitude toward Eretz Israel, see: Y. Blidstein, “*Torat ha-Medinah be-Mishnat ha-Rav Shaul Yisraeli*,” in: M. Bar-On and Z. Zameret, eds., *Shenei Evrei ha-Gesher* (Jerusalem, 2002), pp. 350–365; H. Burganski, “*Kehilah u-Mamlakhah: Yahasam ha-Hilkhati shel ha-R.I.E.H. Herzog ve-ha-Rav Yisraeli le-Medinat Yisra'el*,” in *Dat u-Medinah be-Hagut ha-Medinah be-Me'ah ha-Esrin* (2005), pp. 267–294.
  66. See Rabbi Sh.T. Rubenstein, “*Admat ha-Keren ha-Kayemet u-Karka Yerushalayim – le-Dinei Shevi'it*,” *Torah She-be-al Peh*, 8 (1966), 46–50. See also: N. Gutel, “*Hilkhot ve-Halikhhot haKaKaL ve-ha-Hug ha-Hityashvuti be-Ma'arekhet Hitkatvuyotav shel ha-Rav Kook*,” *Sinai* 121 (1998), 103–117.
  67. See Rabbi I. Herzog, “*Al Darkhei Shemirat ha-Bitahon ha-Penimi ba-Medinah be-Shabbat u-be-Yom Tov*,” *Ha-Torah ve-ha-Medinah* 5–6 (1953–1954), 25–33. See also Rabbi E. Bar-Shaul, “*Ba'ayat ha-Mishtarah lefi ha-Halakhah*,” *Da'at*, 9 (Pesah, 1959), 91.
  68. See, for example, the responsum of Rabbi Y.Y. Weinberg, author of *Responsa Seridei Esh*, “*Teshuvah al Mifkad ha-Am be-Eretz Yisra'el*,” *Ha-Pardes*, 35, issue 10 (Tammuz,

- 1961), 7–9; Rabbi Sh. Yisraeli, “*Bi-Devar Mifkad ha-Akhlusin*,” *Shanah be-Shanah*, 1962, pp. 166–182 (*Amud ha-Yemini*, no. 13, pp. 138–147); Rabbi M.Y.L. Sachs, “*Mifkad Benei Yisra’el*,” *Ha-Torah ve-ha-Medinah*, 11–13 (1960–1962), 432–435; Rabbi N.Z. Friedman, “*Mispar u-Minyan Toshavei, ha-Medinah – le-Or ha-Halakhah*,” *No’am*, 16 (1973), 84–89. For a fascinating discussion of this issue from the theoretical perspective, see: Z. Horowitz, “*Hilufei Teshuvot bein ha-Chatam Sofer ve-Rabbi Yisra’el mi-Shklov*,” in: *Sefer ha-Yovel le-Binyamin Menasheh Levin* (Jerusalem, 1940), pp. 321–334.
69. See: Rabbi Sh. Daichovsky, “*Ha-Internet ba-Halakhah*,” *Tehumin*, 22 (2002), 325–333; Rabbi Y. Bin Nun, *Me-Hevyon Oz* (Ein Tzurim, 2006), pp. 19–36.
70. Thus, for example, the issue of the status of women and their right to vote and be elected to public office also engaged the halakhic authorities living in eastern and central Europe, and belonging to traditional haredi society. See, for example, Rabbi E.M. Preil, “*She’eilat ha-Behirah le-Nashim*,” *Yagdil Torah*, 11 (1920), 157–165; idem, “*Al Devar She’eilat Zekhut ha-Behirah le-Nashim*,” *Ha-Pardes*, 2, 8 (Heshvan, 1929), 15–17; Rabbi Sh.M. Fein, “*Minnui Nashim be-Misrot ha-Medinah*,” *Tevunah*, 1 (1932), no. 13, pp. 2–3; no. 14, pp. 2–3; Rabbi A.Sh.B. Spitzer, “*Ke-Torah Ya’aseh Beirur Din be-Inyan Zekhut Behirah le-Nashim*,” *Sefer ha-Yovel le-Rabbi Yaakov Rosenheim* (Frankfurt, 1932) [Heb. Section], pp. 1–43. In this context, note should be made of the various responsa of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein regarding the status of women, for example, his responsum regarding the appointment of a woman to serve as a kashrut supervisor, which first appeared in the rabbinical journal *Ha-Pardes*, 35 [1] (1961), pp. 11–13, and then later in his *Igrot Moshe*. His years in the United States certainly influenced his halakhic rulings, and it is doubtful whether he would have issued such rulings had he remained in eastern Europe.
71. This, of course, can be connected to the constant and intensive contact, both their own and of their community – far greater than that in haredi society – with modern phenomenon, such as technological innovations (e.g., television, computers, Internet) and the like.
72. See: Rabbi Sh. Daichovsky, “*Kefiyat Bedikah ve-Tippul – Hebbetim Hilkhatiyyim al Mahalat ha-Aids*,” *Assia*, 45–46 (1989), pp. 28–33.
73. Their categorization as “halakhic rulings” must be examined in each individual case, for in many instances they are void of any halakhic argumentation, and in some cases not a single halakhic source is even cited.
74. This question engaged many Religious Zionist halakhic authorities, but is almost not discussed at all in the writings of the halakhic authorities of the haredi community (to the exclusion of Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef and certain Habad figures, who, as stated above, are exceptional in that community). On this issue, see: H. Burganski, “*Yahaso ha-Hilkhati shel ha-Rav Yisraeli le-Sugyat Hahzarat ha-Shetahim*,” *Dinei Israel*, 22 (2003), 241–267; see also: idem, “*Lo Tehanem’ – le-Gilgulo shel Tzivui*,” in *Tarbut Yehudit be-Ein ha-Se’arah* (Tel Aviv, 2002), pp. 537–568.
75. Rabbi Y. Ariel, “*Haganah Atzmit – ha-Intifadah ba-Halakhah*,” *Tehumin*, 10 (1989), 62–75. The laws themselves, of course, are not new, and deal with the law of “*rodef*.”



- They are, however, clothed in modern garb, which was clearly influenced by political ideas as well. See also: Rabbi Sh. Aviner, *Responsa Intifadah* (Bet-El, 1990).
76. *Supreme Court vs. Rabbi Shlomo Goren*.
  77. Rabbi Y.M. Ehrenberg, *Pa'amei Ya'akov*, 35 (1996), pp. 31–39. Rabbi Ehrenberg was a *dayan* in a Tel Aviv rabbinical court, and his responsa, *Responsa Devar Yehoshua*, and his various articles, deal extensively with “laws of the state.”
  78. See Rabbi Yehuda Amital, “*Lo ha-Kol Halakhah*,” *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Yeshivat Etzion*, 13 (1999), 95–98; Y.Z. Stern, *Pesikat Halakhah be-Sugyot Mediniyot* (Ramat-Gan, 2000); H. Burganski, “*Od al Pesikat Halakhah be-Sugyot Mediniyot*,” *Tarbut Demokratit*, 7 (2003), 49–72.
  79. As in other matters, regarding this issue as well, Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef’s famous ruling regarding the permissibility of giving back territories and the halakhic rulings emanating from the school of Habad stand out as exceptions against the general picture of haredi Halakhah authorities. See: Y. Englard, “*Ha-Ba'ayah ha-Hilkhatit shel Mesirat Shetahim me-Eretz Yisra'el: Mishpat ve-Idi'ologiyah*,” *Ha-Peraklit*, 41 (1993), 13–34.
  80. On this point, see for now: E. Shochetman, “*Kohah de-Hetera Adif*,” *Mahanayyim*, 5 (1993), 72–89. On the importance of this principle in the rulings of Rashi, see: A. Hacohen, “*Teshuvot Rashi*,” to appear in: A. Grossman and Sh. Yefet, eds., *Sefer Rashi* (Merkaz Zalman Shazar) (in press).
  81. Needless to say, here too the picture is not uniform, and in certain cases we find a clear inclination toward stringency among Religious Zionist halakhic authorities as well. This tendency toward stringency may possibly be influenced – directly or indirectly – by the wider phenomenon of the influence of global fundamentalism. Regarding the place of fundamentalism in the Jewish world, see: C. Waxman, “*Is Fundamentalism Inherent to Jewish Traditionalism?*” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 13 [no. 3] (Spring 1995).
  82. It is unnecessary to note that regarding this matter as well, the picture is not uniform. One of the great halakhic authorities who made the argument of *tinokot she-nishbu* into the cornerstone of his lenient approach to the non-observant community was the *Hazon Ish*, leader and spokesman of haredi Jewry. Despite his image that was in great measure created after his death, the *Hazon Ish* – like Rabbi Sh.Z. Auerbach – maintained strong connections with many halakhic authorities identified with Religious Zionism. For his halakhic approach, see at length, B. Braun, “*Ha-'Hazon Ish: Halakhah, Emunah, ve-Hevrah be-Pesakav ha-Boletim be-Eretz Yisra'el (1933–1954)*,” doctoral dissertation (Jerusalem, 2003).
  83. For the development and application of this principle, see: Y. Ahituv, *Al Gevul ha-Temurah* (Jerusalem, 1995).
  84. This was also the goal underlying the foundation of “the Movement for Torah Judaism” which among other things established a Halakhah committee headed by Rabbi E.Sh. Rosenthal, the aim of which was to provide halakhic solutions based on a state-oriented approach. See: Rabbi B. Lau, “*Iyyun be-Darkhah shel*



- 'Ha-Tenu'ah le-Yahadut shel Torah,*" in *Sefer ha-Zikaron le-Ze'ev Falk* (Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 371–383.
85. Regarding this point, the unique contribution of the Rishon le-Zion, Rabbi B.Z.M.H. Uziel, stands out in particular. See: Rabbi B. Lau, "*Ha-Rav B.Z. Uziel: Ahdut ha-Umah bi-Sedeh ha-Halakhah,*" in M. Bar-On and Z. Zameret, eds., *Shenei Evrei ha-Gesher* (Jerusalem, 2002), pp. 297–319.
  86. This is a fascinating instance of history repeating itself. We find a similar phenomenon among the Sages of the sixteenth century who had been expelled from Spain, many of whom made their way to Eretz Israel where they revived the study and use of the Jerusalem Talmud. Regarding this phenomenon, see at length: A. Hacohen, "*Ha-Talmud ha-Yerushalmi be-Dor Geirush Sefarad u-le-Aharav,*" in M. Abitbul, G. Chazan-Rokem, Y.T. Assis, eds., *Hevrah ve-Tarbut* (Jerusalem, 1997), pp. 139–163; idem, "*Al Midat Shimusho shel R. Yosef Karo be-Talmud ha-Yerushalmi,*" *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Jewish Studies*, III, 1 (1993), 209–216.
  87. Regarding Rabbi Kook's attitude toward and use of the Jerusalem Talmud, see: A. Hacohen, "*Eretz Israel in the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Kook,*" *Alon Shevut Bogrim* (1995), pp. 113–132; R.N.M. Gottel, "*Torat Eretz Yisra'el: Ha-Talmud ha-Yerushalmi be-Mishnat ha-Rav Kook,*" in: A. Warhaftig, ed., *Yeshu'ot Uzo* (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 390–412; Rabbi Y. Cherlow, *Torat Eretz Yisra'el le-Or Mishnat ha-Ra'ayah* (Hispin, 1998). Rabbi Goren refers to the Jerusalem Talmud in almost every one of his responsa, and even began publishing his commentary, "*Ha-Yerushalmi ha-Mefurash*" (Jerusalem, 1961), for which he was awarded the Israel Prize. Later, he even wrote a book on the Jerusalem Talmud and the Vilna Gaon (Jerusalem, 1991). According to various testimonies, Rabbi M. Rath also wrote a commentary, "*Raglei Mevasser,*" on the Jerusalem Talmud, but it was never published.
  88. Needless to say, this too is not a new phenomenon, but rather an old debate regarding philosophy and the permissibility of using non-Jewish writings. Regarding this point, see: A. Hacohen, "*U-Shema ha-Emet mi-Mi she-Amrah' – Ze Kelal Gadol be-Torat Nechama Leibowitz, a"n,*" *Alon Shevut Bogrim*, 13 (Shevat 1999), 71–92, and the sources cited therein.
  89. The same applies to the United States of manuscripts, so popular among academic scholars of the Talmud. It is very rare to find in the writings of a haredi halakhic authority that he based a halakhic ruling on manuscript evidence. Sometimes, there is even expression of fundamental objection to such an approach (the *Hazon Ish's* opposition to deciding Halakhah on the basis of newly-discovered manuscripts is well-known). On this matter, see: Y.Sh. Spiegel, *Amudim be-Toledot ha-Sefer ha-Ivri* (Ramat-Gan, 1996), pp. 488–514, and note 33 for additional bibliography. In contrast, personalities like Rabbi M.M. Kasher and Rabbi Shlomo Goren (who in his halakhic rulings made frequent use of the Leiden and Vatican manuscripts of the Jerusalem Talmud) and Rabbi Nahum Rabinowitz (who uses manuscripts of Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*) see nothing wrong in this. Regarding Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef's interesting approach in this matter, which expresses once again his borderline status between haredi rabbis and Religious Zionist rabbis, see: Rabbi B. Lau,

“*Arba'ah Iyyunim Metodologiyyim be-Pesikato shel ha-Rav Ovadyah Yosef*,” *Netu'im*, 9 (2002), 95–117. On Rabbi Prof. E.Sh. Rosenthal's use of scientific tools to decide Halakhah, see Rabbi Lau's article, cited in note 17, above.

90. It goes without saying that the style of writing found among Religious Zionist halakhic authorities, especially of the second generation, was influenced by their “mother tongue” which they imbibed in their homes and in the institutions where they studied. As for the younger rabbis, their army service and integration in society at large, impacted on their language and style, for better or worse, in both their written and oral expression.
91. Particular influence in this regard may be attributed to one of the main journals of Religious-Zionist Halakhah, *Tehumin*. Over the twenty-seven years that it has appeared, and beginning already in the first volume, its editors were meticulous about dividing the articles and responsa into clear sections accompanied by their own sub-headings.
92. Regarding the price paid for this stylistic change, see the observation of my revered teacher Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, Rosh Yeshivat Har Etzion: “There are those who ignore, and even strive to ignore, the development of the [Hebrew], language, and continue to write Torah novellae in traditional ‘rabbinic Hebrew.’ The advantages of this approach – primarily, the continuity with the tradition of generations and the connection to the source of the sanctified words – are clear; but so, too, the disadvantages. Not everybody is capable of so doing, and not everybody desires to do so. Besides the aversion to a florid style, one senses among many of them an element of artificiality in the erection of barriers between the language through which I relate to words of Torah and that which I use in every other realm. Beyond the personal plane, the connection to the past is acquired, in a certain measure, through a certain detachment from the present and the future – for the penetration of the general language into the world of halakhic literature... is a process that is growing stronger before our eyes; go out and see what the people are doing. On the other hand, there are those who have been carried away – whether unawares or by choice – by the general verbal current, and have adopted modern Hebrew, in its entirety, as an instrument to express words of Torah. This approach has clear advantages as well – both the connection to the readers of the generation, and certain features of this style: clarity, order, precision, and the like. This approach, however, also extracts a price that is clear – and even dangerous. The orderly and sometimes even ‘embellished’ style; the clear and refined expression; the partly scientific and legal terminology – all these tend to draw from and inspire an academic atmosphere. They characterize a world in which intellectual objectivity that requires a certain keeping of distance is venerated as a supreme value; and they suffice to weaken the burning ardor of the *bet midrash* and the fear of the holy that must be felt when approaching the word of God.” See: Rabbi A. Lichtenstein, “*Aharit Davar*,” *Madrikh li-Ketivat Hibbur Torani* (Jerusalem, 1992), p. 84. And in another place, he writes: “In the Yeshiva world today, and to a certain degree in the Torah world in general, it is customary to write and publish Torah novellae in

an idiom called the 'language of the Rabbis.' This idiom does not correspond to the spoken language in any contemporary *bet midrash*, in Israel or abroad, but it is anchored in an age-old literary tradition, which itself, in its various stages was usually detached from a living social and cultural environment, and which fashioned and perpetuated a linguistic island of holiness (sometimes, only a peninsula), in the midst of a verbal sea of the mundane. The nature of this tradition is two-faced. On the one hand, it is artificial to a significant degree, and perhaps even intentionally so, and one senses the element of dryness that follows from that. On the other hand, its objective and uniqueness bestow upon it an elevated, and perhaps even festive, character. This aspect finds expression, first and foremost, in the spicing of Hebrew and Aramaic that defines its very identity, but is also reflected in various fundamental characteristics: a select and defined vocabulary, florid and even colorful expression, awkward sentences and lengthy paragraphs, penetration of the personal element in the direct address of the author to the reader, emphasis upon the process of confronting the issues and its development, alongside the presentation of the conclusions. All these join together to create a picturesque and unique style, that bestows significant freedom for the personal involvement of the author... [In contrast, the advantage of the modern Hebrew language lies] in the fact that it is connected to the lives of the hearers and readers; it is that to which they are exposed in their immediate and distant surroundings, that in which they conduct their affairs, that in which they talk and dream, learn with their study partners, communicate or quarrel with colleagues or opponents. As such, it is spiced with less Aramaic, but woven into it are no few expressions drawn from modern foreign languages, which have become permanent fixtures, to the displeasure of many, and the satisfaction of others, in the Israeli language of culture, and which deplete the component of the Holy Tongue, but not infrequently raise the level of precision. Along with this, the language is influenced in no small measure by the prevailing nature of modern expression. Whoever is familiar with the transition from the Renaissance style to that of modern times feels the extent to which, in general, and in comparison to its predecessor, modern language achieves naturalness at the expense of loftiness. It is more lively, but less vital, more alive, but also paler, glorifying caution, but forfeiting color and ardor... Our 'language of the Rabbis' as well, relative to the demonstrative coolness of modern Torah literature, preserves the burning coal which sometimes breaks out into a flame, which is so detached in one sense, but so deeply planted in another sense" (introduction to *Shi'urei Dina Harav Aharon Lichtenstein al Dina de-Garmi* [Alon Shevut, 2000], p. 7).

93. See *Respona Be-Mar'eh ha-Bazak*, published by the Eretz Hemdah Institute in Jerusalem, of which six volumes have thus far appeared between the years 2000–2006. The title of the books emphasizes the use of a modern medium – the fax machine (and later E-mail) – as a tool for the transfer of halakhic information.
94. See for now: A. Hacoheh, "Ha-Rav ha-Virtu'ali – al She'ilot u-Teshuvot Internet u-Sefihav," *Meimad*, 27 (2004), 21–23; Rabbi B. Lau, "Aseh Oznekha ke-Afarkeset:

- Aharayut, Tzenzurah, ve-Limmud ha-Torah be-Idan Ma'agarei ha-Meida*,” *Akdamot*, 14 (2004), 155–174.
95. As for use of the Internet, a contributing factor is certainly the aversion felt by many haredi halakhic authorities to using the medium and allowing it to enter one’s home. Using it for the dissemination of halakhic rulings is liable to give it legitimacy, something that many haredim fear. Regarding this matter, see for now: N. Horowitz, “*Ha-Haredim ve-ha-Internet*,” *Kivunim Hadashim*, 3 (2001), 7–30.
  96. On this point, see M. Elon, *Ha-Mishpat ha-Ivri*, p. 1215–1221; idem, *Mavo le-Mafte'ah shel Hakhmei Sefarad u-Tzefon Afrikah* (Jerusalem, 1981).
  97. This is not true regarding works of Jewish thought and biblical exegesis, where Religious Zionist authors are clearly in the majority. This phenomenon also leaves its mark on the Religious Zionist Yeshivot – high school and post high school – and in the distancing from the traditional world of Torah scholarship which rested primarily on intensive Talmud study.
  98. The most important and famous works of responsa include: the responsa of Rabbi A.Y. Kook, *Da'at Kohen, Ezrat Kohen, Mishpat Kohen*; *Responsa Mishpatei Uziel*, by Rabbi B.Z.M.H. Uziel; *Responsa Heikhal Yitzhak*, by Rabbi I. Herzog; *Responsa Shevet mi-Yehudah*, by Rabbi A.Y. Unterman; *Responsa Yayin ha-Tov*, by Rabbi Y. Nissim; and *Responsa Meishiv Milhamah*, by Rabbi Sh. Goren. The extensive and prolific writings of Rabbi E.Y. Waldenberg, author of *Responsa Tzitz Eli'ezer*, and Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef, author of *Responsa Yabi'a Omer* and *Yehaveh Da'at*, are exceptional, but as stated above, these sages are unusual, and straddle the border between the haredi world and the world of Religious Zionism.
  99. It would seem that it is not by chance that a substantial portion of the responsa of Rabbis Herzog, Goren and others appeared only at the end of their lives, or even posthumously.
  100. In lesser measure, fascinating discussions of burning halakhic issues occasionally appeared, though in a less pure halakhic style, in the periodical *Amudim*, published by the religious kibbutz movement, and in the periodical *De'ot*, of the Association of Religious Academics. The many parallel journals that issue from the haredi school (e.g., *Moriyah*) deal, for the most part, with the clarification of talmudic passages and issues, rather than with practical Halakhah. Even when they deal with halakhic issues, they are usually classic halakhic topics, and not “laws of the state.” An exception to this rule is the periodical *No'am*, edited by Rabbi M.M. Kasher (see above, note 43); *Ha-Pardes*, published in the United States and edited by Rabbi Simcha Elberg (though relatively speaking, deals little with “laws of the state,” in light of its audience and authors); *Ha-Ma'or*, edited by Rabbi M. Amsel; *Ha-Ma'ayan*, of the Isaac Breuer Institute of Po'alei Agudath Israel, a movement which straddles the border between Religious Zionism (in great measure owing to its youth movement, Ezra, and its settlement movement); and *Kol Torah*, a periodical to which many Sefardic haredi rabbis (but not only them) contributed, and which served as the primary vehicle for the dissemination of the rulings of Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef, who, as stated above, is a unique figure in the context of

- the issue under discussion, and stands on the border between Religious Zionism and the haredi community on issues of halakhic decision-making. On this matter, see the articles of Rabbi B. Lau (above, note 52) and Rabbi A. Pikar (above, note 52). See also: Z. Zohar, *He'iru Penei ha-Mizrah* (Tel Aviv, 2001), 312–352.
101. In this context, consideration should be given to the paucity of halakhic writing – as distinguished from ideological and philosophical writing – emanating from Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav in Jerusalem. This phenomenon is connected to a wider phenomenon relating to the path adopted by the Yeshiva and its crystallization from the years immediately following the establishment of the state until our day, but this is not the forum to discuss the matter at greater length. For now, see: Y. Rudik, (above, note 15); Y. Rozen-Zvi, “*Metafizikah be-Hithavutah: ha-Pulmus be-Yeshivat Merkaz ha-Rav – Iyyun Bikorti*,” in A. Sagi and D. Schwartz, eds., *Me'ah Shenot Tziyyonut Datit* (Ramat-Gan, 2003); Y. Ahitov, “*Ha-Rav Tau al ha-Umah ha-Palistinii*,” *Akdamot*, 17 (2006): 137–152.
  102. A conference on “Halakhah and Ideology” was conducted in Jerusalem under the auspices of the Department of Jewish Thought of the Hebrew University and the Van Leer Institute, and most of the papers presented there will be published in the near future.
  103. See Rabbi Y. Amital, “*Mashma'utah ha-Datit shel Medinat Yisra'el*,” *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Yeshivat Har Etzion*, 11 (1998): 109–117; compare to the words of Rabbi Goren, cited above.
  104. See below, note 115.
  105. See: Rabbi A. Sherman, “*Hovat ha-Hakikah ha-Datit al pi ha-Halakhah*,” *Tehumin*, 5 (1984): 366–377; idem, “*Mishpetei ha-Torah – Hakikatam ve-Yissumam be-Hukkei ha-Medinah*,” *Torah She-be-al Peh*, 30 (1989): 66–80. To understand the matter, one ought to listen to the music issuing from the words of Rabbi Israel Rosen, head of the Tzomet Institute in Alon Shevut and editor of *Tehumin*: “From a theological perspective, the Law of Return rises to the level of holiness and kingdom (!), and it constitutes a cornerstone of our clinging to the framework called the State of Israel” (Rabbi Israel Rosen, “*Yekutzatz Hok ha-Shevut*,” *Nekudah*, 216 [Tammuz 1998]: 40.) A similar expression was used by Knesset member Michael Hazzani, in the course of the discussion preceding the first reading of Basic Law: Israel Lands: “We are happy that the fundamental law...and I am not afraid to say the **sanctified** law, the source of which is in the Torah...” (cited by A. Rubinstein, *Netivei Memshal u-Mishpat* (Tel Aviv, 2003), 144. Needless to say, there is no necessary correlation between a Religious Zionist world outlook and a positive view of religious legislation. For a position that negates such legislation, see: Rabbi M.Z. Nehorai, “*Ha-Im Efsar Likhpot al Ma'aseh Dati?*” *Da'at*, 14 (1985): 21–34; see also: Y. Leibowitz, *Yahadut, Am Yehudi, u-Medinat Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv, 1975), 121; Y. Levinger, *Bein Shigrah le-Hiddush* (Jerusalem, 1973), 91; and compare: E. Shochetman, “*Hakikah Datit be-Hevrah Hilonit*,” *Mahanayyim*, 13 (1996): 270; N. Bar-Ilan, “*Ha-Im Bet Din Kofeh Kofer be-Ikhar le-Kiyyum Mitzvot Aseh*,” *Or ha-Mizrah* (1989): 224; A. Goldman, “*Ha-Yitakhen Viku'ah Takhliti al Kefiyah Datit?*” *Amudim*, 222 (Heshvan, 1965); M. Elon, *Hakikah Datit* (Jerusalem, 1968).

106. Regarding this matter, see at length: A. Hacohen, “*She-Atah ve-Avikha Hayyavim bi-Khevodi’ – Kibbud Av va-Em Mul Arakhim Aherim*,” in Y. Shaviv, ed., *Devarim she-Yesh Lahem Shi’ur*, (Alon Shevut, 2005), 383–415, and the sources cited therein.
107. See, for example: Rabbi Sh. Aviner, “*Nesi’ah le-Hutz la-Aretz*,” *Itturei Kohanim*, 54 (1989): 24; Rabbi Sh. Yisraeli, “*Yetzi’ah le-Hul le-Shem Matarah Limmudit*,” *Shema’atin*, 10 (1966): 33; Rabbi H. Sabbato, “*Yetzi’ah le-Hutz la-Aretz*,” *Tehumin*, 9 (1988): 258; Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef, *Responsa Yehaveh Da’at*, v, no. 57. On this matter, there are also some haredi halakhic authorities who have issued stringent rulings. See: Rabbi M.D. Walner, *Responsa Hemdat Tzvi*, 1, no. 1; Rabbi M. Sternbuch, *Responsa Teshuvot ve-Hanhagot*, 1, no. 900. Compare to the responsum of Rabbi Sh. Wasner, *Responsa Shevet ha-Levi*, v, no. 173. Characteristic is the comment of Rabbi M. Stern, *Responsa Be’er Moshe*, VII, p. 325: “For a pleasure trip, there is **almost** no allowance, and it is certainly forbidden to say that all those residents of Eretz Israel who leave Eretz Israel to go abroad for a pleasure trip act improperly, for surely they asked the opinion of a rabbinic court in Eretz Israel and found an allowance.” His view is cited by A. Arnakh, “*Tiyyul le-Hul – Akh Yatzo Yetze*,” *Alon Shevut Bogerim*, 4 (1995): 107, and see there additional sources.
108. The issue of drafting women into the army, or at the very least, into national service, is far more complex and sensitive. See: Y. Cohen, *Giyyus Banot ve-Sherut Le’umi* (Tel Aviv, 1982).
109. Regarding this point, see: Rabbi A. Lichtenstein, “*Ha-Rabbanut ha-Roshit le-Yisra’el – Mabat Torani Akhshavi*,” *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Yeshivat Har Etzion*, 13 (1999): 107–124 [*Tradition* 26 (1992): 26–38]. On the tension created in the wake of this issue, see: A. Hacohen, “*Ha-Rabbanut ha-Roshit le-Yisra’el: Hebbetim Mishpatiyyim*,” in A. Warhaftig, ed., *Ha-Rabbanut ha-Roshit le-Yisra’el: Shiv’im Shanah le-Yissudah* (Jerusalem, 2000), 159–219.
110. See, for example: Rabbi Sh. Daichovsky, “*Battei Din Rabbaniyyim-Mamlakhtiyyim: Ba’ayoteihem ve-Hesegeihem*,” *Dinei Israel*, 13–14 (1988): 7–19; idem, “*Battei Din Mamlakhtiyyim be-Medinat Yisra’el*,” *Mada’ei ha-Yahadut*, 39 (1999): 115–119. Rabbi Daichovsky studied in the “*Shevet mi-Yehudah*” *kollel* headed by Rabbi Unterman, and serves as a *dayan* on the Supreme Rabbinical Court. At the same time, he serves as a congregational rabbi in Tel Aviv. Rabbi Daichovsky integrates in his halakhic rulings – in contrast to most of his colleagues – references to rulings issued by civil courts, and his name has been mentioned as a candidate for the Israel Supreme Court after having been proposed for the position by its chief justice, Aharon Barak. See also: Rabbi A. Sherman, “*Samkhuyot Battei ha-Din ha-Rabbaniyyim Ladun be-Inyanei Mammon ve-Yerushah*,” *Mishpatei Eretz*, 1 (2002): 85–96.
111. See, for example: Rabbi Sh. Meron, “*Ma’amadam shel Battei ha-Din ha-Rabbaniyyim be-Yisra’el al Pi ha-Halakhah*,” *Torah She-be-al Peh*, 22 (1981): 94–106.
112. On this point, see Rabbi Sh. Daichovsky, “*Dina de-Malkhuta ve-Din Torah: Hilkhata ha-Shittuf’ be-Re’i ha-Halakhah*,” *Torah She-be-al Peh*, 39 (1998): 50–65; and compare to the position of his colleague, Rabbi A. Sherman, “*Hilkhata ha-Shittuf le-Or Mishpetei ha-Torah*,” *Tehumin*, 18 (1998): 32–40. Rabbi Sherman learned in a yeshiva high school, Yeshivat “*Ha-Yishuv he-Hadash*,” in Tel Aviv, and also served as an

- army rabbi. Since he was appointed as a *dayyan*, first on a Regional Rabbinical Court and later on the Supreme Rabbinical Court (similar to Rabbi Y. Efrati, loyal follower of Rabbi Elyashiv who learned in the Sha'alvim Yeshiva high school, and then in Yeshivat "Kerem be-Yavneh"), he became a devotee of Rabbi Y. Sh. Elyashiv, who has been designated as "the *posek* of the generation," of the haredi community. Rabbi Sherman deals extensively with laws of the state. See, for example, his article: "*Hukkei Yesod Zekhuyot ha-Adam le-Or Torat Yisra'el u-Mishpatehah*," *Torah She-be-al Peh*, 36 (1995): 79–93. See also: E. Shochetman, "*Rubo mi-Tokh Kulo – Tokefam shel Hukkim ha-Mitkabelim bi-Mele'at Keneset she-Einah Mele'ah*," *Tehumin*, 9 (1988): 82–102.
113. This despite the traditional ruling that "a court that follows another court is not exacting," and therefore there are many doubts regarding the authority of appellate courts. Regarding the struggle over recognition of this court, see: E. Radziner, "*Ha-Rav Uziel, Rabbanut Tel-Aviv-Yafo, u-Bet Din ha-Gadol le-Ir'urim: Mahazeh be-Arba Ma'arakhot*," *Mehkarei Mishpat*, 21 (2004): 129–243.
  114. Thus, for example, some haredi halakhic authorities refer to Israel's Independence Day by the derogatory term, "*yom haga*," an expression used in reference to the holidays of idol worshippers, and not only do they recite *Tahanun*, but they observe other mourning rites as well.
  115. See, for example: Rabbi A. Lichtenstein, "*Im ke-Banim im ka-Avdim – Zekhuyot ha-Perat le-Or ha-Halakhah*," *Alon Shevut Bogerim*, 12 (1998): 103–112; idem, "*Rav Tarbutiyut be-Hevrah ha-Yisra'elit*," *Alon Shevut Bogerim*, 10 (Nissan 1997): 123–138; idem, "*Mah bein Yahadut le-Demokratyah?*" *Alon Shevut Bogerim*, 21 (2005): 63–72. And see: Rabbi A. Sherman, "*Demokratyah ve-Shilton ha-Kahal be-Mekorot ha-Halakhah*," *Shanah be-Shanah*, (1998): 215–222.
  116. Here too Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef's approach stands out in its uniqueness, for in various places in his writings he speaks of "the spirit of freedom and liberty," as a component in the considerations underlying his halakhic rulings. On this matter, see: A. Pikar, "*Ha-Rav Ovadyah Yosef be-Hitmodeduto im 'Dor ha-Hofesh ve-ha-Deror*," in A. Ravitzky, ed., *Shas – Hebbetim Tarbutiyim ve-Ra'ayoniyyim* (Tel Aviv, 2006): 228–283; 284–326; Rabbi B. Lau, "*Ha-Yahas le-Medinat Yisra'el u-le-Ezrahehah be-Kitvei ha-Rav Ovadyah Yosef*."
  117. Both considerations of state in light of the fact that the State of Israel might itself seek the extradition of criminals in the future, and the considerations of "what will people say" and the desecration of God's name. On the importance of the latter factors, see at length: A. Hacohen, "*Lamah Yomeru ba-Goyyim – Tadmit Yisra'el be-Einei ha-Amim ke-Shikkul be-Hakhra'at ha-Halakhah ve-ha-Din be-Mishpat ha-Ivri*," in Rabbi B. Lau, ed., *Am Levadad* (Jerusalem, 2006): 88–123.
  118. See, for example, Rabbi B. Lau's article regarding saving a non-Jew on the Sabbath, cited above, note 17; Y. Ahitov, "*Ha-Rav Tzvi Tau al ha-Umah ha-Palistinini*," *Akdamot*, 17 (2006): 137–152.
  119. See: Rabbi H.D. Halevi, "*Hashtalat Eivarim min ha-Hai u-min ha-Met ba-Halakhah*," *Assia*, 27–28 (1981): 5–13; Rabbi O. Yosef, "*Teshuvah be-Heter Hashtalat Keliyah*,"



- Dinei Israel*, 7 (1977): 25–44; Rabbi Sh. Goren, “*Hagdarat ha-Mavet ba-Halakhah, Shanah be-Shanah*, (1934): 125–130; idem, “*Limmud Anatomiyah be-Battei ha-Sefer le-Refu'ah le-Or ha-Halakhah*,” *Shevilinear*, 31–32 (1979): 16–27; and his articles in *Kovetz Me'orot*, 2 (1980) regarding the determination of the time of death, and removing life support systems from a dying patient. Compare: Rabbi M. Eliyahu, “*Hashtalat Eivarim al Pi ha-Halakhah*,” *Barkai*, 4 (1987): 18–31. See also: Rabbi A. Pikar, *Terumat Eivarim* (Jerusalem, 2003).
120. Regarding *agunot*, see what I wrote in my book: A. Hacohen, *The Tears of the Oppressed – An Examination of the Background and Halakhic Sources About the Agunah Problem and its Solutions* (New York, 2004). This phenomenon is connected to the far more general inclination towards stringency in our generation, but this is not the forum in which to expand on the issue.
121. Concerning this issue, see, for example, the position of Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef, *Responsa Yabi'a Omer*, VIII, *Even ha-Ezer*, no. 11; Rabbi M. Waldman, “*Ha-Rav Herzog, ztz"l, al Yehudei Eti'opiyah*,” *Tehumin*, 8, p. 121; idem, “*Da'at Hakhmei Yisra'el al Yehudei Eti'opiyah*,” *Tehumin*, 4, p. 314; M. Corinaldi. *Yahadut Eti'opiyah: Zehut u-Masoret* (Jerusalem, 1989); Rabbi A. Pikar, *Ha-Pesikah ha-Hilkhatit Bat Yameinu ve-ha-Hitmodedut im Ba'ayat ha-Hitbolelut* (Ramat-Gan, 2003).
122. Regarding this ruling, see at length: A. Pikar, “*Loveshot Bigdei Peritzut ve-Shokedot al ha-Moderniyut Lishmor Orhot Pariz (Paritz): Pesikato shel ha-Rav Ovadyah Yosef le-Nokhah ha-Shinuyyim be-Orhot ha-Levush*,” in *Tarbut Yehudit be-Ein ha-Se'arah* (2002): 592–622.
123. For purely convenience's sake, we shall note the rainbow of colors between the right wing – religious and political (though there is no necessary identification between the two) of the “*hardalim*” (*haredim le-umiyyim*), through the “hilltop youths” and the “*Habakooks*” (*Habad-Breslav-Kook*), to the “left” wing (such as the strange mutations of *datlashim* [*datiyyim le-she'avar*, formerly religious], *datlamim* [*datiyyim le-mehtzah*, partly religious], *datlapim* [*datiyyim le-fa-amim*, sometimes religious]), many of whom see themselves – but are not necessarily seen as such by many of the members of the group to which they wish to belong – as still belonging to the family of “Religious Zionism”), or institutions such as the religious kibbutzim, “*Ne'emanei Torah ve-Avodah*,” the Hartman Institute, Meimad, *Kolekh*, the *Shirah Hadashah* community, and others. Needless to say, each one of these has its own complex character, and one should not describe them with a single simplistic label. Each of these streams has its own leadership – official or unofficial – literature and press. This is not the forum to discuss the matter at greater length.
124. One of the exceptions, and perhaps the last of the great decisors, whose breadth of rulings and influence go well beyond their narrow confines, is Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef. In contrast, the identification of Rabbi Y.Sh. Elyashiv among many in the haredi community as “decisor of the generation” finds hardly any expression in a written work. The exception is the volume, “*Kovetz Teshuvot*,” published by his students in 2000. Even this collection, however, reflects an exceedingly narrow scope of ruling, and it is difficult to guess what will be its long-term impact. For



our purposes, Rabbi Elyashiv's rulings reflect a very stringent approach. See, for example, no. 20, regarding offering food to someone who does not recite a blessing; no. 44, regarding demonstrations against the desecration of the Sabbath; no. 124, regarding use of a "purity calculator"; no. 104, regarding halakhically-valid conversion; and others.

125. Perhaps as a counter-response, and perhaps for apologetic reasons, more and more prominent figures in Religious Zionism have been voicing their opposition to religious legislation on the fundamental level. See, for example, the statement of Rabbi Mordechai Elon, Rosh Yeshivat ha-Kotel: "I was not angry at those youths who ate and drank on Tish'a be-Av; in a convoluted way, I, in fact, rejoiced. Perhaps this will finally liberate us from our fixed way of thinking, that the Jewish character of the state will be established through municipal by-laws achieved through the party. After two hundred years, the time has come that we free ourselves from [such thinking]" (*Makor Rishon*, September 21, 2001). A similar and courageous opinion was voiced about fifty years earlier by Rabbi H.D. Halevi in his book, *Bein Yisra'el la-Amim* (Jerusalem, 1954), 82–85: "This is the reason for our failure, the failure of religious Jewry. We are unknowingly being carried away by the political stream drawn for us by others. Our politics are not at all identical with the way of the Torah. We have a strong desire to give our state a religious character where the Torah of Israel will be its law (though none of us believe that we will succeed, at least not in this generation). But does anybody think that we will achieve this by way of party tactics and parliamentary politics, based on coalition promises, having the nature of 'Watch out for me, and I will watch out for you, give me, and I will give you'? Obviously, this approach as well should not be totally rejected, but this is not the way of the Torah, and this is not the way we will succeed... Even coalition promises have certain limits, and we will never be able to force our views and beliefs on the entire country by way of the law. We will certainly succeed in passing a larger number of laws that will guarantee the Jewish nature of the state, but will this suffice to guarantee their fulfillment? How can we impact upon beliefs and opinions through the help of statutes? Moreover, besides the nice impression that a religious law makes on the book of statutes, what is the concrete benefit as long as it is not implanted in the conscience and belief of the heart? There are many laws and municipal by-laws in the country which are almost not carried out at all, because the public does not understand their value. What good are laws regarding the Sabbath, family purity and kosher food when the community upon which we come to bestow the Torah of life, sees them merely as coercion, since they are so far removed from these eternal values? Precisely as Hoshea prophesied, 'Though I write for him the great things of my Torah, they are reckoned a strange thing' (Hoshea 8:12). Therefore, even statutes and punishments will not help very much to improve the poor religious and spiritual situation. It is our obligation then to embark on a grand and comprehensive campaign to fortify Israel's belief in God and his Torah, by teaching Torah and disseminating it among the masses of the house of Israel."

126. A striking example of non-enforcement is the Hours of Work and Rest Law and the local by-laws that forbid the conducting of business and opening of stores on the Sabbath. So too the Rabbinical Courts Jurisdiction Law, the “flagship” of religious legislation (since the “status quo” letter of 1947 and on), which states that the marriage and divorce of Jews in Israel will be conducted according to Torah law, has lost much of its magic and power. Practically speaking, there are thousands of couples living in Israel not in conformity with the objective of this law, whether without formal marriage, but with state recognition of their “common-law marriage,” which allows them to enjoy all the civil benefits of marriage, or by way of circumventing the law, by way of civil marriage outside of Israel, the numbers of which grow from year to year.
127. To help understand the matter, compare the degree of influence of Rabbis Herzog, Goren, and Yosef (and to a far lesser degree: Rabbis Unterman and Nissim) who filled the office of chief rabbi during the first thirty years of the State, to that of their heirs, Rabbis Shapira, Eliyahu, Lau, Bakshi-Doron, Metzger and Amar.
128. Almost all of the extensive halakhic literature regarding the army that has been written in recent years (e.g., Rabbi A. Krim’s *Melumadei Milhamah* and Rabbi A. Rontzki’s [chief rabbi of the IDF] *Ke-Hitzim be-Yad Gibbor*) is merely a supplement to the principles set by Rabbi Sh. Goren decades ago.
129. As part of the change, note should be taken of the tendency toward heightened use of terms that have always characterized haredi discussion of halakhic decision-making, e.g., “*da’at Torah*” (“the Torah view”). On this matter, see: Rabbi Y. Amital, “*Da’at Torah’ min ha-Torah – Minayin?*” *Alon Shevut le-Bogerei Yeshivat Har Etzion*, 12 (1998): 97–101. Needless to say, this sector is also not all cut from the same cloth, but rather made up of different colors and shades. This sector has not as yet been subject to a fitting scholarly analysis.



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# Part 7

## Israel's Impact on American Orthodoxy



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# 14

## Holy Land in Exile: The *Torah MiTzion* Movement – Toward a New Paradigm for Religious Zionism

*Adam S. Ferziger*

### INTRODUCTION

The familiar sights and sounds of the *beit midrash* drew me in. Young men wearing knitted skullcaps and sandals, some of them bearded, were sitting in twosomes and debating the intricacies of ancient talmudic texts. The large study hall was lined with books and panels made of Jerusalem Stone that were engraved with citations from the works of Rabbi Avraham Isaac Hacoen Kook.<sup>1</sup> Huge volumes rested upon the tables that separated the pairs, most of them in

their twenties. As I watched these students engaged in intellectual duel, *tzitzit* fringes spilling out of their untucked shirts, their excited Hebrew discussions brought back warm memories. It was soon after finishing high school that I went to Israel, enrolled in a yeshiva and learned side-by-side with young *hesdernikim* who dedicated five years of their lives to a program mixing intensive Jewish study with service in the Israel Defense Forces.<sup>2</sup>

But this time I wasn't in the hills of Jerusalem, I was in Cleveland.<sup>3</sup>

How had this Israeli-style institution sprouted in Middle America? Indeed, how had more than twenty such kollels (loosely, post-yeshiva centers for Torah fellows),<sup>4</sup> all predicated on that quint-essentially Israel-based model, taken root throughout the world? In the following discussion I will argue that the emergence of this framework points to a strengthening of the global, "transnational"<sup>5</sup> direction within Religious Zionism.<sup>6</sup>

That day in September 2004 was my first encounter with the beit midrash of the Cleveland Torat Zion Kollel (Torah of Zion, henceforth *CTTK*). This institution had been created ten years earlier through a collaborative effort between Bob Stark, philanthropist and Orthodox activist, and the leaders of Yeshivat Har Etzion, one of the oldest and best known Israeli hesder yeshivas.<sup>7</sup> Har Etzion committed to sending senior rabbis to Cleveland for two-year stints, along with a group of post-Army married students.<sup>8</sup> There they established a study hall in a local day school that served as a base both for advancing their own talmudic erudition and for educational activities with the student body. In addition, they created an open beit midrash to offer Torah learning opportunities in the evenings and on weekends for the surrounding Orthodox community.<sup>9</sup> Stark provided the initial annual budget of \$250,000 for the first few years.<sup>10</sup>

Almost simultaneously, a similar framework was initiated by Har Etzion alumnus Rabbi Jonathan Glass in Cape Town, South Africa.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after, the *Torah MiTzion* organization (henceforth *TMZ*) was inaugurated in Jerusalem. Under the guidance of founding executive director Zéev Schwartz, also a former Har Etzion student,<sup>12</sup> it became a worldwide movement that today encompasses twenty-

two such Religious Zionist kollels. They range now from Moscow<sup>13</sup> to Montevideo<sup>14</sup> and from Melbourne<sup>15</sup> to Memphis.<sup>16</sup> Fifteen of them are located in North America, in addition to seven affiliated Jewish Learning Initiative (JLI) programs on major university campuses.<sup>17</sup>

TMZ is part of a broader phenomenon: the emergence since the 1970s – both within the modernist and haredi (traditionalist) Orthodox sectors – of the community kollel as a new framework for Jewish education.<sup>18</sup> The community kollel can be described as a cottage industry within American haredi Jewry, with over thirty functioning programs and an average of four new start ups each year.<sup>19</sup> The growth of these initiatives implies, among others, a change in focus away from collective ritual and toward individualized study as the method for strengthening Jewish life in America. Indeed, Yeshiva University (henceforth YU) the flagship institution of American Modern Orthodoxy, sponsored its first community kollel in 2004, and is in the process of trying to create its own nationwide network.<sup>20</sup>

In previous articles I have explored the commonalities and differences between TMZ and Lithuanian-style haredi community kollels,<sup>21</sup> as well as between the latter and the hasidic Chabad House.<sup>22</sup> Among others, I have focused on the ways that kollels were developed by the haredi Orthodox as vehicles for “reaching out” to nonobservant and unaffiliated Jews. By contrast, from the outset the main orientation of TMZ (and more recently YU’s kollels) was inreach – strengthening the religious and ideological commitments of active participants in Modern Orthodox schools and synagogues. This distinction offers insight into the main concerns and outlooks of each group and the local communities that sponsor them.<sup>23</sup>

Here the focus is more specifically on TMZ and the implications of this nascent movement for the evolution of Religious Zionism. While reference is made to TMZ activities throughout the world, the basis for the discussion is the Israeli headquarters and its North American branches. My central contention is that TMZ points to a shift away from conceptions that until recently dominated Israeli Zionism in general and Israeli Religious Zionism in particular. This



is reflected in its global character, its ambivalence in respect to promotion of *aliya*, or immigration to Israel, as well as in the cooperative Israeli-Diaspora nature of the project. Toward the conclusion of the discussion I will also suggest an alternative to the prevailing TMZ model that would address some of the critiques that have been leveled against the movement.

To this end, I will first describe two ideals that long stood at the core of Israeli Zionism's approach to Jewish life outside of Israel, *shelilat ha-galut* (negation of the exile) and *shelihut* (sending emissaries) and the evolutions that took place in these terms from the last decades of the twentieth century. In addition, I will offer some brief comments about the place of Zionism within American Orthodoxy that will serve to contextualize some of the tensions that will be described afterwards. Subsequently, I will explore how TMZ navigates these concepts and explain why its structure, outlook and activities represent a modification in the previous paradigms. While TMZ is the main subject, data regarding the haredi and YU kollels, as well as Chabad, will be utilized to sharpen appreciation of the relative uniqueness of the Religious Zionist model.

### SHELILAT HA-GALUT AND SHELIHUT

One of the fundamental motifs of the Modern Zionist rebellion against tradition was its negative perception of Jewish life outside the Land of Israel. Initially, this attitude found its most vehement expression among the anti-religious streams of the movement. The exile was the venue where the Jews had lost their historic national character and mutated into a powerless and passive minority lacking the will as well as the skills to take their destiny into their own hands. Religious beliefs that centered on praying for divine intervention had replaced national pride and ingenuity. Obsession with ritual law and practices symbolized the stagnation and abnormality of the ghettoized *galut*, or exile.<sup>24</sup> Naturally, this was an issue that generated a great deal of ambivalence among the Religious Zionists who sought to synthesize the modern political aspirations of Jewish nationalism with rabbinic tradition and authority.<sup>25</sup>

During the late twentieth century *shelilat ha-galut* began to

lose credibility among the predominant secular Zionist schools of thought.<sup>26</sup> The distancing of Israelis from this previously-held notion can be understood as part of a societal maturation process that no longer needed the negation of the Diaspora “other” and its religious traditions to sustain a cohesive collective identity. Alternatively, one can view this change as a symptom of a broader sense of ideological malaise<sup>27</sup> – or possibly an example of the influence of Post-Zionism that seeks to detach the State of Israel from its role as a unique homeland for the Jewish people.<sup>28</sup>

Concurrent with this secular about-face, the anti-exile position was championed from the late 1960s by the dominant trend in Religious Zionist thought and education, the Kook Messianic school.<sup>29</sup> Already in the ideas of Rabbi Avraham Isaac Hacohen Kook, whose writings achieved canonic stature among his disciples,<sup>30</sup> the galut is described as placing limits on the Torah and the Jewish people (*zimzum* in kabbalistic terms). This stagnant condition is juxtaposed with the boundless spiritual creativity that comes to fruition when the Jewish people live in their natural habitat. It is in the ideology of his students, most prominently his son Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, as well as their followers, that negation of the exile actually transformed into demonization. The Land of Israel is the wellspring of holiness, while the galut is the home of the *goyim*, or gentiles, who despise the Jews. Living beside them is the seed of Israel’s destruction. Thus, “The only true Israel is redeemed Israel: Israeli sovereignty, Israeli Armed forces, the nation as an integrated whole and not in Diaspora exiles.”<sup>31</sup>

This position was partially a reaction to the Holocaust which, in Kook the younger’s opinion, was the “absolute negation of a Jewish reality in the exile.”<sup>32</sup> “The destruction of the exile...clarifies substantively...that the true existence of the Torah is only in our place – here, which exists exclusively for us.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, this radical rejection of galut existence was part of a broader messianic ideology that began to dominate mainstream Religious Zionism after the Israeli victory in 1967. It focused on expanding the borders and strengthening Jewish sovereignty over all of biblical Israel in conjunction with the prophetic promise of ingathering of the exiles. Not only did a

flourishing Jewish exile run counter to the new redemptive reality, it was also a stumbling block to nurturing an Israeli population large enough to control the entire Land.<sup>34</sup>

Since the 1970s, the ideology put forward by the Kook school gradually infiltrated and eventually set the tone for Israeli Religious Zionism both on a political and educational level. To offer but a few examples, the students of Zvi Yehuda Kook were highly influential in the rise and development from the 1970s of the Gush Emunim settlement movement.<sup>35</sup> Educationally, the Kookian Mercaz ha-Rav yeshiva in Jerusalem became the standard bearer for high level Religious Zionist Torah study. In addition to establishing an independent national educational network that runs from pre-school on up, many of its graduates created their own offshoots, while others gained leading positions within the state educational system. Similarly, Bnei Akiva, Religious Zionism's largest youth movement and the sponsor of an independent network of Religious Zionist high schools throughout Israel (as well as two high schools in North America), has long been led by prominent disciples of the Kook school.<sup>36</sup>

To be sure, not all of the followers adopted a thoroughly demonic perception of the exile,<sup>37</sup> and other voices were heard within Religious Zionism besides the greater Kook camp.<sup>38</sup> Notwithstanding, the core messianic Zionism that it promulgated – which emphasizes Jewish control over all of historical Israel, the illegitimacy of galut existence and the need to advance the process of ingathering of the exiles – rose to dominate Religious Zionist ideology and education since the War of 1967.<sup>39</sup>

Below I will explore to what degree the self-stated mission and activities of TMZ, a movement predicated on servicing the Jews of the galut, is consistent with the aforesaid approach of Israeli Religious Zionism toward the Diaspora. Does the growth of TMZ support the idea that “the true existence of the Torah is only in our place?” Before doing so, however – due to the classification of the TMZ rabbis and students as Zionist emissaries, I will first describe the evolution in the concept of shelihut that took place during the course of the twentieth century.

Since its inception in the 1920s, the Jewish Agency has pro-

moted sending out emissaries to Jewish communities in the Diaspora as a central mission of Zionism and the Jewish State. The *shelihim* (emissaries) were involved in a host of activities ranging from teaching Hebrew and Jewish studies and running youth movements, to facilitating clandestine illegal immigration, providing medical care, and serving as nature counselors and kitchen workers at Jewish summer camps. From the Zionist and Israeli perspective, the main aim and justification for this complex and costly campaign was to convince Diaspora Jews to immigrate to Israel – or at least facilitate this goal indirectly by encouraging them to visit. This was, of course, consistent with the negative view of the exile that had long dominated classical Zionist discourse. Religious Zionists, even those who did not share the Kook school's extreme antagonism toward the exile, also viewed generating immigration to Israel as the main goal in working with Jews abroad. As the former National Religious Party (NRP) figure, Moshe Haim Shapiro, put it, "In the Diaspora top priority must be accorded to the encouragement of aliya on the part of religious Jews who wish to settle in Eretz Israel."<sup>40</sup> Indeed the members of the communities throughout the world who hosted the emissaries may have viewed them more as reinforcements for their own local educational needs than as aliya agents. That being said, particularly since 1948, for the most part they presented the Israelis as the exclusively authentic Jews who came from the center of the Jewish universe to share some of their pure Jewish identity and spirit with their fractured and assimilation prone brothers and sisters.<sup>41</sup>

Recent scholarly discussion of shelihut has pointed to the abandonment of the classical Zionist view of aliya as the central purpose in sending government funded emissaries abroad. Along with the decline in the shelilat ha-galut approach to secular Zionism, alternative perceptions of the Israel-Diaspora relationship were introduced which filtered down into the shelihut enterprise. Rather than the center going to the periphery in order to encourage its inhabitants to return home, new terms like Jewish peoplehood, partnership, and *mifgash* (meeting) became the main reason for sending emissaries, as well as encouraging visits to Israel.<sup>42</sup> The implication of this fresh terminology is that both sides of the Israel-diaspora axis possess

inherent legitimacy and that the relationship is reciprocal. Rather than encouraging the galut to join or at least idealize the Zionist collective, each participant has what to learn from the other. Ultimately, the goal is to facilitate the quest of individual Jews throughout the globe – including Israelis – to discover their particular Jewish identity and connection to the Jewish people.<sup>43</sup>

A third position has also been articulated since the 1990s regarding the goal of shelihut that seeks to compromise between promotion of aliya as the only response to the galut and the complete removal of the State of Israel from its pedestal above all other Jewish communities. The adherents of what has been termed “New Zionism” want to create a fresh paradigm that recognizes the importance of individual quest and appreciates Jewish life throughout the world. Yet they feel that ideally and practically speaking, Israel is the cultural and spiritual center of the Jewish people to whom all other communities turn for enrichment and inspiration. To a certain degree this is a reversion to or fulfillment of Ahad Ha’am’s (Asher Ginzburg) vision of cultural Zionism. Unlike almost all other early Zionist ideologues, he sought to downplay the contradiction between the political aims of Zionism and the continuation of Jewish life in exile.<sup>44</sup> The shelihim in an age of New Zionism are sent abroad to act as cultural agents who stimulate and reinforce the idea that Israel is the center of Jewish life and the deepest reservoir of Jewish culture and knowledge. Yet in the spirit of partnership, they are meant to learn through their exposure to other Jews, and to strengthen their sense of connection with them. Aliya is certainly a valuable option, but it is far from the *raison d’être* for sending shelihim.<sup>45</sup>

As part of examining which paradigm of serving as an emissary is closest to the model developed by TMZ since 1994, it bears noting that the Zionists were not the only Jewish group in the twentieth century that turned shelihut into a central aim of their movement. Particularly after the rise of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson to the helm of the Chabad-Lubavitch hasidic sect in 1951, this Brooklyn based movement turned shelihut into its most hallowed vocation. Rather than promoting a land-centered ideal, however, the shlichim of Chabad seek to fulfill their leader’s aim of

bringing all Jews closer to his vision of God and the Torah by creating religious centers known as Chabad houses.<sup>46</sup> Chabad is truly a global organization, with over four thousand emissaries serving in sixty countries.<sup>47</sup> Partly in response to Chabad, since the 1980s the non-hasidic haredi world also introduced shelihut as part of its worldview, a significant adjustment from the enclavist position that it previously championed. The Jerusalem-based yeshiva organizations Aish Hatorah<sup>48</sup> and Ohr Somayach,<sup>49</sup> for example, both established their own outreach centers to nonobservant and unaffiliated Jews in communities throughout the world.

As pointed out above, from the late 1980s American Lithuanian-style yeshivas also internalized the shelihut ethos and created outreach kollels in North American communities. Similarly to TMZ, these frameworks are built around a group of young men and their wives who divide their time between personal daily study in the kollel beit midrash and providing Torah learning opportunities and informal programming to local Jews. Yet like Chabad, Israel orientation and aliya are by no means the educational aims of these organizations. Rather, strengthening connections to Judaism and raising levels of observance are the exclusive goals of these initiatives. Both Chabad shelihim and haredi community kollel *jungerleit* (fellows) are encouraged to remain permanently in their postings.<sup>50</sup>

On the surface, then, TMZ shares characteristics with both the Zionist shlihit concept and the haredi variants. Exploring how the organization and its branches navigate the tense path between these models will offer insight into the new paradigm for Religious Zionism that it engenders.

### AMERICAN ORTHODOXY AND SPIRITUAL ZIONISM

American Orthodox Jews, as Chaim Waxman has demonstrated, show a stronger attachment to Israel than any other Jewish denomination. They visit more often, send their children regularly to study for extended periods, and thousands have made Israel their permanent home.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, they account for a great deal of the increase in North American aliya from 1400 in the year 2000 to 3201 in 2006.<sup>52</sup> Yet since the founding of the State of Israel, only some 120,000 North

American Jews have made it their permanent home. By contrast, the American Jewish population is estimated to be between five and six million.<sup>53</sup> Thus, there is an increased interest in aliya, and the Orthodox may be leading the way. But like their fellow American Jews, most of the Orthodox are not motivated to uproot themselves. This does not mean that they are anti-Zionists or even neutral on the issue. This view certainly has its proponents among the American Orthodox, including some who actually choose to settle in the Land of Israel, but it is a minority opinion. Certainly for most Modern Orthodox Jews, Zionism or some form of connection to the State of Israel functions as a core tenet of their American Judaism.<sup>54</sup>

The approach of Modern Orthodoxy to the role of Israel resembles the “Americanized version of spiritual Zionism” articulated by Israel Friedlander in the early twentieth century and adopted by the Conservative movement. “The vision that now evolved,” in the words of Evyatar Friesel, “was that of an American Judaism made richer by the Zionist influence.”<sup>55</sup> Mordedcai M. Kaplan too saw Zionism as a core element for cultivating a worldwide sentiment of Jewish peoplehood, and deeply opposed the negation of the galut. He believed that one of Zionism’s main functions was to motivate diaspora Jewry to advance their own connection to their Jewish heritage.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the aim for the Modern Orthodox is for Zionism and the existence of the State of Israel to inform their Judaism and inspire all aspects of their spiritual lives. As long as Orthodox Jews can alleviate their concerns regarding the halakhic imperative of settlement in the Land, living in America is not necessarily viewed as contradicting identification with Zionism. Alternatively, there are certainly Modern Orthodox Jews who would prefer to acknowledge that they are living a non-ideal existence in the galut, with all the guilt that this entails. In both cases, however, the common approach is that Zionism is meaningful, and even central, to living a Modern Orthodox life in America.<sup>57</sup>

With an appreciation for the historical changes that have taken place in Israeli approaches to the Diaspora and to shelihut since the end of the twentieth century, as well as for American Orthodox perceptions of Zionism, I will now look more closely at TMZ itself.

The discussion is split into five main categories: Israeli Perspectives, North American Viewpoints, Two Zionist Yeshivas, A Post Modern Alternative, and Conclusion: *Torat Eretz Israel* and the Transportation of Place. The first focuses on what ideals the TMZ organization and its emissaries hope to achieve. The second looks at motivations, attitudes and developments among TMZ's North American hosts. The third highlights one of the possible sources for the alternative direction in Religious Zionism through a brief consideration of the roles of Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush) and Kookian yeshivas in TMZ. The fourth section suggests a variation on the community kollel that addresses some of the problems that have been raised regarding the current predominant TMZ model. In the conclusion, I expand upon how TMZ points to a shift in the prevailing Religious Zionist paradigm.

### ISRAELI PERSPECTIVES

Haim Zohar is the former Israel Consul in New York and Secretary General of the World Zionist Organization, and currently the vice-chairman of TMZ. In 2006, he published an article about TMZ in a collection honoring the centennial of Religious Zionist education. There he asks: "What is our direction? Outreach or inreach? Aliya?"<sup>58</sup> His answer is inreach, strengthening the commitment of the "hard-core Jews."<sup>59</sup> As to encouraging aliya, he states unequivocally that he is against any talk on the subject by the kollel emissaries with the local Jews. Such discussions are ineffective and at best tend to produce immigrants motivated by fear for their personal welfare rather than deep-seated love for the Land. Mass Western immigration will only take place after the Torah of Israel is planted in the hearts of Diaspora Jewry. The practical goal of the kollels, according to Zohar, is to help educate the Jews of the world toward an appreciation of the Torah and Zion as fundamental and inter-related concepts within Judaism.<sup>60</sup> This mission is predicated on full partnership between the shelihim and the local communities, and must be devoid of any sense of superiority or condescension on the part of the Israelis. Broadly speaking, he hopes that by Israeli yeshiva graduates teaching the Torah and interacting with Jews from



around the globe, “a world-wide fellowship of those who study in Zionist kollels will arise – an ideological-spiritual movement and not a political-organizational one.”<sup>61</sup>

This statement by one of the founders and main figures in the TMZ hierarchy shows no hint of the negativism regarding the galut that entered mainstream Religious Zionist education through the Kook school. Moreover, it significantly downgrades aliya as the central message of shelihut. It encourages, instead, the creation of a global network that is reminiscent of the land-neutral “Jewish Peoplehood” approach to shelihut on one hand, and the haredi Torah-focused community kollel on the other.<sup>62</sup> More likely, however, it can be understood as consistent with the “New Zionism” model of shelihut that seeks to balance between a reciprocal Israel-diaspora relationship and an Ahad Ha’am-like effort to bring forth the fruits of Judaism’s cultural and spiritual center to the periphery. As such, Zohar’s mandate seems perfectly suited to the “spiritual Zionism” of American Modern Orthodoxy.

From a number of standpoints it can be argued that Zohar’s article should not necessarily be viewed as representative of the TMZ approach. For one, it is the opinion of a single individual who is offering his vision of the movement. In addition, it appears in a *festschrift* published by the World Religious Zionist Mizrachi organization. In the interest of not alienating the diaspora communities who sponsor the TMZ kollels, the author may have taken pains to downplay the underlying desire to promote aliya. Nevertheless, I believe that, for the most part, Zohar’s essay is an accurate representation of the tension inherent in the TMZ concept, and a reliable expression of the ideological implications that it entails.

The TMZ organization and emissaries certainly would like to see more of the Diaspora Jews with whom they interact immigrating to Israel. Like the outreach activist who is empowered when a previously unaffiliated Jew accepts full halakhic observance, for Israeli Religious Zionists aliya remains the ultimate confirmation of their ideal. Yet the focus of contemporary haredi outreach has shifted from full transformation to the less demanding aim of strengthening connection to Judaism.<sup>63</sup> Following this analogy, TMZ’s main thrust

is toward buttressing the identification of Orthodox Jews with Torah study and the Land of Israel, not encouraging them to uproot their lives. As such, the aliya imperative has not been renounced, but it has been downgraded significantly.

This interpretation is supported by the official literature published by TMZ and that which appears on the main website of the organization. Consistently the emphasis is placed on expanding and upgrading the opportunities and level of Torah study taking place in local communities, strengthening Jewish identity and Israel-diaspora relations, and promoting what is referred to as the “values of Religious Zionism” – the most prominent of them being an undefined, almost mystical idea called “*Torat Eretz Israel*” (Torah of the Land of Israel).<sup>64</sup> Rarely in any of the publications does the idea of direct promotion of aliya appear. When it does pop up, it is low on the priority scale, almost hidden.

To offer a number of representative examples: on the inside cover of the folder given out both to communities considering opening up a TMZ kollel, as well as to yeshiva students being recruited for shelihut, the following aims are listed in order:

...to transmit the values of Religious Zionism by promoting the lofty ideal of *Torat Israel*, *Am Israel* and *Eretz Israel*

[TMZ] stresses the importance of building ties between all Jews and undertakes to strengthen Jewish identity and unity.

[TMZ] aims to bridge the gap between Israel and Diaspora communities, emphasizing the centrality of Israel, as it is written: “from Zion the Torah will come forth...”

It is notable that the end of the first paragraph is an inverted allusion to the Mizrachi Religious Zionist movement slogan attributed to Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan: “*Am Israel, be-Eretz Israel, al pi Torat Israel*” (the nation of Israel, in the Land of Israel, according to the Torah of Israel). Whereas in the original statement the Torah is intended to

define the nature of life in the Land, here it is the “Torah of the Land” that is being carried by the emissaries to the nation in the Diaspora. In addition, as opposed to the original attempt at combining the three components into one cohesive whole, here each value can stand independently. Consistent with this tone, the self-description of TMZ on its official website states: “The aim of the program is to assist the local leadership to strengthen Judaism in their communities through the creation of a unique Torah atmosphere which includes Judaism and Zionism.”<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in a letter dated Kislev 5767 (November-December, 2006) recruitment director Moshe Gadot focused on the idea that “Today, more than ever, there is great importance to spreading Torah, and particularly ‘*Torat Eretz Israel*’ among the Jewish communities that are struggling with problems of assimilation and problems of Jewish and religious identity.”

The end of the aforesaid letter, however, hints that while shelilat ha-galut of the Kookian sort is clearly nowhere to be found, the classical Zionist approach to shelihut that focused on promoting aliya still makes an appearance. When describing the positive results of the TMZ effort, Gadot lists the following (in order):

*Batei Midrash* in the spirit of Religious Zionism.

Many community members have begun to dedicate time to Torah study and as such strengthen their connections to the Torah and the nation.

A growing number of young men and women from the diaspora come and participate in Zionist oriented programs in Israel.

Families come on exploration and identification trips, and Thank God, we are beginning to see the results in aliya to the Land.<sup>66</sup>

Clearly the immediate goal is to create bastions of Torah and Religious Zionism abroad, but increasing aliya remains a distant and certainly highly laudable endeavor. In the same spirit, the guidelines to the shelihim on the TMZ website, include:

Aims of the *Kollelim Tzioniim* in the Diaspora

1. To endeavor to disseminate the study and knowledge of Torah amongst *Am Israel* by religious *Shlichim*, who shall be Zionist models of Torah scholars, acting in the spirit of: “Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.”
2. To strengthen Jewish identity and to forge links with all Jews.
3. To bridge between Israel and Jewish communities in the Diaspora, while emphasizing the centrality of the State of Israel.
4. To disseminate the values of religious Zionism by promoting the ideal of “*Am Israel* in *Eretz Israel* according to *Torat Israel*” and by personal example to the various target populations: students, youth, adults, men and women.
5. To encourage *Aliya*; to encourage educational programs in Israel, of both short and long duration.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike in the TMZ folder cited earlier, a more accurate rendition of the Mizrachi slogan appears. More significantly, the goal of promoting aliya is stated openly. That being said, it remains last on the list of priorities.

The fact that encouraging aliya only appears on a list that is intended for the consumption of the Israeli shelihim is significant. The classical Zionist approach to shelihut has not disappeared from TMZ’s Religious Zionism. It remains a hallowed goal or a prized achievement, but in practice it has been severely downgraded. For one, most Western Jews will not immigrate and therefore concentrating the efforts of the shelihim on this aim would be self-defeating. In addition, even if the Israelis want to talk about aliya, if the host communities were to know that this was their main purpose they might be less eager to support the programs. Indeed, the former head of the TMZ kollel in Detroit – himself a graduate of a yeshiva headed by a Kookian disciple – was lambasted by some of the local kollel sponsors for focusing too much on aliya. When time came

to replace him, a request was made to send a head emissary with a different focus.<sup>68</sup>

These tensions suggest sublimation, rather than a full renouncement of efforts to increase immigration. Yet the end result remains that TMZ is a banner Religious Zionist initiative that has grown dramatically since its inception in 1994, in which encouraging aliya has been formally removed from center stage. This does not contradict the fact, expressed by both its supporters and critics, that its existence in North American communities has raised consciousness regarding aliya and studying in Israel. What it does say, is that this is not its reason for being. Its primary focus is on strengthening the existing religious atmosphere among American Modern Orthodox Jews.

Indeed, a review of questionnaires filled out by TMZ shelihim upon return from their period abroad suggests that for most of them encouraging aliya was not the central focus. Among the five that returned from the Chicago TMZ kollel in 2003, for example, only one wrote that his main goal was to convince local Jews to immigrate. The others spoke primarily in terms of increasing the amount of Torah learning within the Modern Orthodox community, providing a “Zionist alternative” to the many thriving haredi community kollels in the area, and doing outreach with the non-affiliated Jewish population in the area. Actually, one of the chief causes of disappointment among the group was that, unlike their initial expectations, the sponsor community wanted them to work almost exclusively with the observant families. Reaching out to more rapidly assimilating Jewish populations, by no means an inherently Zionist endeavor, was not part of their mandate.<sup>69</sup>

It would appear that the role models put forward by the TMZ emissaries certainly inspire individuals to consider immigration to Israel more seriously or at least a term of study. At the same time, TMZ’s heightened position and expansion within Modern Orthodox communities in America, and for that matter throughout the globe, insinuates an alternative to the classical Religious Zionist focus on aliya. TMZ creates and sustains dynamic Religious Zionist enclaves within American Modern Orthodox neighborhoods. By doing so it

helps to instill a new vitality to Orthodox communal life outside of Israel – paradoxically one that makes aliya less of a necessity. When *Torat Eretz Israel* is so easily accessible, and without the sacrifices that full-fledged uprooting entails, there is less motivation for taking the more radical step. This is particularly so at a time when Israeli society has abandoned much of the collectivism and idealism that was once its main drawing card. Individuals will always exist whose commitment to Zionism leads them to move. But among the majority who are inclined toward “spiritual Zionism,” there is comfort in knowing that one can live in the diaspora and still interact with *hesder yeshiva* graduates and their wives. It certainly makes the task of preserving a utopian picture of modern day Israel easier. As to the cathartic experience of a visit to the Western Wall, to Hebron, or to Masada, the heightened availability and lower cost of international air travel can satisfy this need on a regular basis without having to revamp one’s life.<sup>70</sup>

Taken a step further, in the process of creating this network of Israeli Torah centers outside the country, TMZ’s Religious Zionism has buttressed its global, transnational quality. Certainly such a shift from the mainstream approach of Religious Zionism was not the intention of its Israeli leaders. Neither was this clearly what the North American sponsors of the TMZ kollels had in mind. Yet it is consistent with the “spiritual Religious Zionism” that prevails within North American Modern Orthodoxy. The following section, which focuses on three TMZ chapters, supports the transnational quality of TMZ that I have identified. In addition, it raises critiques that call into question the ongoing viability of the current TMZ model.

### NORTH AMERICAN VIEWPOINTS

TMZ is a movement that is predicated simultaneously on centralization and decentralization. Through the base office in Jerusalem, an organ has been created for recruiting kollel members from Israeli yeshivas, providing them with some basic training, generating interest among diaspora communities, matching the Israelis with appropriate locales, handling the complex financial issues and logistics that such a mass endeavor entails, and providing the *shelihim* with

the sense that they are part of something larger than an individual kollel.<sup>71</sup> Sometimes it even helps raise seed money for new chapters. On the other hand, the decision of each community to sponsor a kollel is highly individual. It may stem from the private initiative of a wealthy local Jew, but it generally results from the collective efforts of a coalition of rabbis and laymen. In addition, the communal needs that motivate the establishment of TMZ are not identical, but as will be seen below, are often quite similar. While the TMZ headquarters may have both a vision for the movement and a plan for achieving it, its loosely affiliated communities may see things differently. This has resulted in a great deal of tension and accounts for some of the ups and down of various branches. Keeping this complex dynamic in mind, it is instructive to look at the variety of motivations, goals, and critiques expressed by communal representatives.

Like the TMZ Israeli representatives, some of their North American hosts express the tension between a classical Zionist approach to shelihut and a less well-defined recognition of the centrality of Israel. Still others appreciate the energy and dynamism of the Israeli yeshiva graduates, but primarily because they feel that they can be effective disseminators of Torah. Indeed, in certain cases it would appear that the main attraction of TMZ has little to do with the specifics of Israel and Zionism. What TMZ offers is simply an educational product that is perceived by Orthodox Jews as authentic without being haredi. To offer one bold example, in 2003 a group of local rabbis and laymen tried, unsuccessfully, to create a TMZ kollel in Toronto. In their application to TMZ they expressed intense feelings of being attacked from both the haredi and liberal sides of the spectrum:

Toronto has numerous haredi kollels and even a very successful kollel run by a Female Reform Rabbi, but none in the “centrist orthodox community”... The *Dati-Leumi, national religious* community in Toronto suffers from a sense of inferiority. Many look toward the *haredi* community for serious learning and religious commitment. We would like our community to learn that intense learning and deep Torah knowledge is not limited to the *haredi*

world. Our goal in having a Kolel Mitzion in Toronto is to demonstrate that seriousness and dedication to learning and Torah observance exists in the *Dati Leumi* community as well.<sup>72</sup>

Here I will concentrate on three of the veteran TMZ kollels: Cleveland, Chicago, and Montreal. Through the analysis of these branches I will describe the variety of attitudes and the complexities that arise from the perspective of the North American sponsors. A good example to begin with is the first Zionist kollel in North America, CTKK.

When Bob Stark, the driving force behind the founding of the CTKK, was asked to describe the idea at the basis of creating an Israeli kollel in Cleveland, he declared: "I wanted to bring Israeli scholars to Cleveland who are living Torah a different way than those of us in exile... Theirs is the Torah of redemption and as such has a different flavor."<sup>73</sup> According to former CTKK Kollel Head, Rabbi Binyamin Blau, the current principal of the Fuchs Mizrachi Upper School (henceforth FMUS) where CTKK's weekday activities are housed, Stark is an avid follower of the Kookian school. His aim, therefore, was to create a "total *Zioni* (Zionist) experience." This, Blau claimed, was expressed in the hope that by the time an FMUS student was graduated, they would "no longer feel comfortable with living in the diaspora." Indeed, according to Blau, since CTKK was established there has been a marked increase in aliya among Modern Orthodox Jews in Cleveland.<sup>74</sup> Yet even in CTKK, as the kollel developed, the aliya thrust was tempered by other more locally-oriented goals. As Blau acknowledged, when tension arises between strengthening connections to Torah and Zionism, clearly Torah is the priority.<sup>75</sup>

Rabbi Michael Unterberg is another veteran FMUS teacher who has maintained his affiliation with CTKK since its establishment. Like other Judaic studies instructors in the school, in the afternoons he studies in a program that allows for continued enrichment and personal intellectual growth known as the Kollel Mechanchim. On the issue of whether Torah or Zionism comes first, he is emphatic about Torah. The main motivation for the founding of CTKK, in his view, was actually defensive. As a community under the strong influence



of the haredi Telz Yeshiva, Modern Orthodoxy in Cleveland had “a bad self-image.” “Zionist-Orthodox” role models were testimony to the existence of an “authentic” non-haredi brand of Judaism that was not just a product of compromise. In his opinion, the type of “Israel-centric extremism” that Stark had sometimes promoted was detrimental to CTTK’s main goal of generating heightened excitement regarding Torah study.<sup>76</sup> Consistent with this critique, the current CTTK mission statement seems closer to the view of Zionism as an integral part of American Modern Orthodox identity than as a practical directive:

This “Torat Tzion” inspires those of us in *Galut* (Diaspora) to develop a profound commitment to Torah and to cultivate a real relationship with Israel. Through this process we are invigorated and motivated to assume the responsibilities of a people who have been returned to our land...<sup>77</sup>

Recent events suggest that in the battle within CTTK between Torah and Zionism, the pendulum has swung clearly toward Torah. According to Blau, due to economic difficulties that developed since Stark cut his yearly funding to \$50,000, as well as dissatisfaction with the caliber and language skills of the kollel heads and emissaries being sent by TMZ, “for the moment we have taken a step back from the Israeli model.”<sup>78</sup> As much as the Israeli component was cherished by the community, if the emissaries were ineffective Torah disseminators, it was preferable and more financially viable to bring in native English speakers, albeit ones who identify with Religious Zionism.<sup>79</sup>

This retreat from the Israeli model by one of the pioneering kollel outposts clearly calls for TMZ to critically review and possibly revamp its offerings. It highlights the difficulties in sustaining a kollel that has no permanent staff and whose emissaries may be equipped with the amorphous *Torat Eretz Israel*, but not necessarily functional English. In this case, then, even the transnational Israeli Religious Zionism that was being put forward could not overcome

other cultural and linguistic barriers. Indeed, the roots of this more dramatic move away from the Israeli model can actually be found in the year 2001. That was the year when *CTTK* chose to hire Binyamin Blau, the first American resident to serve as rosh kollel. His three predecessors in the position were all Israeli hesder rabbis who had taught or studied at Yeshivat Har-Etzion.

Unlike *CTTK*, causing Modern Orthodox Jews to feel uncomfortable about living outside of Israel was never part of the Chicago *TMZ*'s mandate. But the history of the Chicago kollel, which was founded in 1997, also illustrates a number of the tensions inherent in the *TMZ* model.<sup>80</sup>

Rabbi Dr. Leonard A. Matanky is the Dean of Chicago's Ida Crown Jewish Academy and rabbi of the Orthodox Congregation *K.I.N.S.* of West Rogers Park.<sup>81</sup> He has served as the driving force in creating and sustaining the *TMZ* kollel since its inception. In his opening letter to the first group of emissaries in 1997, he stated enthusiastically, "We are convinced that this wonderful experiment will bring, not only an extraordinary resource of *Torat Eretz Israel* to our community, but also a rebirth of Religious Zionism as well."<sup>82</sup> Yet in his response to my oral presentation of this paper, Matanky acknowledged that efforts were made to make sure that the focus was on strengthening local Jewish life rather than on *aliya*, so as not to disturb our sense of equilibrium living in the Diaspora."<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, when the first Rosh Kollel, Rabbi Moshe Aberman of Yeshivat Har-Etzion, was asked in 1999 "Why the need for an Israeli-style Torah Center?" he referred more directly to the desire to offer an alternative to the learning opportunities provided by the Chicago haredi kollels. "The feeling had been that one could choose between Zionism or Torah. Our goal is to show that the two can blend together."<sup>84</sup> Moreover, their aim was to provide the Zionist community with opportunities to study Torah "with people more up their alley in way of life – open minds, more modern, broader viewpoints."<sup>85</sup> Here the "spiritual" role of Zionism as a vehicle for cultivating Modern Orthodox group identity rather than for focusing on Israel as a religious goal onto itself is manifest.

Even if Aberman's fellows possessed the qualities that he

described, his comments point to one of the ironies of TMZ. American Modern Orthodox Jews may think that they and the Israeli Zionist yeshiva graduates share the same perspectives on the modern world, but this is far from clear. It is actually more likely that, other than regarding the State of Israel, the worldview put forward in many of the Religious Zionist yeshivas has more in common with American haredism than with Modern Orthodoxy.<sup>86</sup>

In August 2006 Matanky and Rabbi Yehuda Sussman, a former rosh kollel who currently heads a yeshiva for Americans in Jerusalem, produced a highly informative retrospective on their experience with TMZ in Chicago. Here they affirmed that the founding of the kollel was in response to the haredi programs:

...major communities have witnessed the emergence of community *kollelim*. Whether staffed by alumni of Ner Yisrael, Beth Medrash Gevoha of Lakewood, Chafetz Chaim or other charedi yeshivot, these *kollelim* have made tremendous in-roads, not only among like-minded lay leaders, but also among those who in the past, had identified with Modern Orthodoxy/Religious Zionism. In essence, for many, these community *kollelim* and the ideals that they represented became the prime source of an authentic Jewish voice, but one that was often at odds with modernity, and the *hashkafa* (worldview) of *Tzionut Datit* (Religious Zionism). In response to this, a group of lay leaders and rabbis in our community sought to establish a community kollel that would not only be a serious voice of Torah, but also reflect the values of Tziyonut and Modern Orthodoxy.<sup>87</sup>

The authors go on to list the many benefits that Chicago's Modern Orthodox community has gained from the TMZ's existence, including "strengthening both the Torah atmosphere and Religious Zionist identity of the high school" and providing "a place for those seeking a more direct connection with Torat Eretz Israel." Despite these achievements, like in Cleveland, there have also been problems in

sustaining an Israeli kollel. Prominent among the difficulties are the obvious cultural differences between Israelis and Americans, and the lack of staff continuity – particularly in regard to the kollel head who sets the tone. As they point out, this dilemma is built into a program whose message is secured by the very fact that the emissaries return to Israel after a year or two. In a tone of frustration that hints at the apparently more seamless success of the haredi alternatives, Matanky and Sussman concede, “*Kollel Torah Mitzion* can never truly be an ‘American’ Community *Kollel*. The ramifications (be they positive or negative) should not be underestimated.”<sup>88</sup> This frustration has led them to experiment with other models such as integrating American yeshiva graduates and working more directly with Yeshiva University. Yet Matanky and Sussman acknowledge the difficulty in finding local fellows who possess “strong Religious Zionist identities.”

Unlike Cleveland and Chicago, in Montreal the main motivation in 1998 for starting what eventually became known as the *Kollel Torah miTzion* (КТМ) was neither ideological battles, nor a search for Modern Orthodox role models, and especially not a strong yearning for Zion. The rabbis and laymen who initiated the idea were simply looking for any way possible to “jump start” intensive Torah study in the Modern Orthodox area of Cote St. Luc/Hampstead. In fact, they first turned to the existing “Lakewood” haredi kollel in the neighborhood of Utremont and asked its head to start one in their area. Only after the haredi kollel board turned down the invitation did the Modern Orthodox group approach YU, which brought TMZ in as a partner.<sup>89</sup>

As to the original group, the two emissaries were Israelis and one was a Har-Etzion hesder graduate, but the rosh kollel came from an American haredi yeshiva and had previous experience serving in the haredi community kollel in Seattle. His personal description of the mission of the kollel makes no mention of the Land of Israel or Zionism, “The *Kollel*’s general mission is to raise the level and enthusiasm for Torah u’Mitzvot (religious commandments) in the modern orthodox community of Cote St. Luc/Hampstead.”<sup>90</sup>

During the second year, the effectiveness of the КТМ grew, along with the role of Zionism. This was due to the arrival from Israel

of a highly capable and charismatic rosh kollel.<sup>91</sup> Upon coming to Montreal in the Summer of 1999, Rabbi Yitzhak Neriah created a very ambitious program that, among others, expanded the activities of the kollel from working exclusively with the Modern Orthodox to outreach on college campuses as well as investing greater energies in communal Israel programming.<sup>92</sup> Over time, the TMZ organization attained a more dominant position in guiding the direction of the branch and the Zionistic character became well-established. Like in Chicago and in Cleveland, however, this was for the most part a spiritual Zionism that buttressed the Modern Orthodox identity of the community, but did not challenge its taken-for-granted approach toward living in the Diaspora. As the current kollel mission statement declares: “*Kollel* Torah MiTzion is a unique initiative designed to aid Jewish communities throughout the world grappling with the problems of assimilation and disunity, strengthen its Jewish young leadership and to bridge the gap between the Diaspora and the State of Israel.”<sup>93</sup>

The Montreal example highlights a number of points that have not been raised until this juncture. For one, it demonstrates how crucial the rosh kollel is to the success and direction of the institution. In addition, it shows that if the community is interested or open to the idea, TMZ kollels can be effective vehicles for outreach in addition to inreach. Indeed, Rabbi Ya’akov “Jack” Bieler of Silver Spring, Maryland, suggested that the lack of language skills that so often limits the ability of the TMZ emissaries to lecture effectively in the communities might be less of an impediment in working with nonaffiliated Jews. Such outreach activities, in his opinion, are more individually based and generally do not demand the same level of sophisticated oral communication that is needed in a public presentation to a large crowd of knowledgeable Modern Orthodox Jews.<sup>94</sup> A third point that emerges from the Montreal example is that creating a hybrid Israeli/American TMZ model is a particularly challenging endeavor if the Zionist element of the kollel is meant to play a central role. Finally, KTM offers another illustration of the complex dynamic between focus on Torah and on Zionism that is symptomatic to all TMZ frameworks. As Rabbi Michael Broyde, of

the Young Israel of Taco Hills and the permanent rosh kollel at the Atlanta Torah MiTzion (ATM) kollel, argued, Israeli yeshiva graduates can serve as role models, but “Religious Zionism can’t be the center of Modern Orthodoxy.”<sup>95</sup> Here I would add the caveat, “the classical, territorial oriented Religious Zionism.”

### **THE POST MODERN ALTERNATIVE**

Unlike Israeli emissaries, haredi kollel couples are encouraged to settle permanently in the communities to which they are sent. Another distinction is that as North American natives, they are more familiar with local cultural language. One example of this knowledge is their focus on the individual rather than the collective. The main activity with the public is study of Jewish texts and ideas in *hevrutot* (pairs) or in small groups.<sup>113</sup> The goal is to enable Jews of all ages to learn about the Torah in an active way. Certainly the kollel member will share his understanding of the material, but as opposed to frontal lectures, such text learning is oriented to give and take. Implicit within this dynamic is the recognition that the opinion of both individuals is valuable and worthy of expression. The community kollel offers contemporary Jews an environment that can facilitate their personal religious quest.<sup>114</sup>

But like in any match, what if the kollel member and the person with whom he has begun to study just don’t “hit it off”? As is well known in formal education, the lack of chemistry between a teacher and student can have a highly negative influence on the child’s attitude toward the particular subject taught by the said instructor. Here the community kollel, by presenting a number of members as possible study partners, offers at least a partial solution to this problem. Some may be more charismatic, while others more cerebral. Some may be more philosophically oriented, while others possess musical and theatrical talents. Once a number of options exist, the likelihood of finding the appropriate facilitator for one’s individual spiritual journey rises dramatically.

Adoption of such an orientation may remedy some of the deficiencies that have been expressed by veteran sponsor communities within the TMZ movement. Rather than following the relatively

homogeneous model of purely Israeli kollel fellows that has prevailed until now, a diverse group might ultimately be more effective and sustainable. For some in the target audience a full-fledged Kookian Messianic Zionist may be just the inspiration that they need. For others, a more cerebral individual who focuses on texts rather than on Zionist ideology might be more meaningful. Moreover, with all the problems that it entails, a hybrid kollel that includes both Israeli hesder-type graduates and Americans seems to be the most promising long term-model. Clearly the cultural and ideological gap between the emissaries and the local members would demand proper management. Such a conglomeration, however, offers many of the advantages of the Israeli TMZ approach, while at the same time engendering greater continuity and immediate communal impact. The spiritual vitality and *Torat Eretz Israel* that touches the souls of many American Jews would remain part of the formula, while the kollel would gain credibility with communal members of all levels of knowledge as a resource for Torah knowledge. Assuming that the sponsor communities would consider it to be a value, such a framework could more easily encompass a *shaliah* (emissary) or a local member whose focus would be on outreach to the Jewish population beyond the Modern Orthodox community. Clearly the one issue that would not change is that the key to the success of the community kollel is the choice of a rosh kollel who possesses the leadership and interpersonal skills necessary to create an environment that will utilize the talents of each individual.

The hybrid model clearly offers an alternative atmosphere to the concentrated “Israeliness” of the TMZ beit midrash. At the same time, in a kollel that thrives on diversity rather than homogeneity, there would be less pressure on those Israeli representatives who wanted to promote aliya to repress or downgrade their more activist orientation toward the Land of Israel. Some may view this kollel as a mixed message. An alternative perception is that the individualistic nature of the framework itself engenders a less ideologically cohesive orientation, and offers its greatest promise for long term viability within diverse American Jewish life.

Having suggested the hybrid model as a viable alternative, I

should point out that despite their criticisms of aspects of the TMZ model, some American educators who have long worked with TMZ are reluctant to take this route. Rabbi Jack Bieler of Silver Spring, Maryland, for example, believes that “Part of the attraction of the Kollel is that it is a bit exotic, different, other-worldly, featuring individuals who think differently, and have had different experiences. Partnering with YU will ‘normalize’ the Kollel to the point that it will lose some of its attraction.”<sup>115</sup>

The best precedent that I have observed for the hybrid model is The Community Kollel in Boca Raton, Florida. In the past the kollel included young college-educated YU rabbis – some of them more oriented toward ideological Modern Orthodoxy and others who expressed sympathy for the haredi approach – as well as TMZ Israeli emissaries. Depending on the skill-set of the individual kollel member, he was assigned to a particular niche, including outreach, inreach and adult education. Clearly what enabled this diverse group to be effective was the skill and charisma displayed by the kollel’s founder and dean, Rabbi Kenneth Brander of the Boca Raton Synagogue.<sup>116</sup>

Since my encounter with the Community Kollel in Boca Raton in 2003, Brander has moved on to head YU’s Center for the Jewish Future (CJF), which is responsible for its community kollel initiative.<sup>117</sup> Simultaneously, the Israeli board of directors of TMZ has placed greater emphasis on working with strategic partners such as YU.<sup>118</sup> The stage is set, then, for a reconceptualization of the TMZ model along the line outlined here.

## TWO ZIONIST YESHIVAS

Throughout this article I have pointed out that many of the key figures in TMZ, particularly at its initial stages, were associated with Yeshivat Har-Etzion (Gush). While by no means monolithic, this institution has projected an approach to Religious Zionism, Israeli politics, and many other aspects of contemporary life that differs dramatically from the worldview promoted by the Merkaz ha-Rav Kook Yeshiva and its offshoots. One of its leaders is Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein. An American-bred and Harvard-educated scholar, he



was head of the kollel in Yeshiva University until moving to Israel in 1971 and joining Rabbi Yehuda Amital at the helm of Har-Etzion.<sup>96</sup> Lichtenstein himself is the son-in-law and disciple of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993). Soloveitchik was Yeshiva University's most respected rabbinic authority, and the leader of Religious Zionism in America. Nevertheless, he remained settled in the United States until his passing. The Zionist philosophy that he articulated, moreover, was devoid of the messianism and negation of the galut that pervades the Kook school.<sup>97</sup> Beyond exposure to Lichtenstein and to the writings of his father-in-law, the Israeli Har-Etzion students experience directly the ideal of Israeli Religious Zionism contributing to Modern Orthodox communal life through daily interaction with foreign students. The yeshiva runs a large program for young men from North America as well as other English speaking countries who study Torah for one or two years before returning to their country of origin in order to attend university.

Lichtenstein and his yeshiva are committed to Israel as the ideal place for Jewish existence,<sup>98</sup> but neither disdain nor lack of familiarity with the diaspora characterize the institution.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, one of its major initiatives, the *Virtual Beit Midrash* (VBM), is an Internet-based archive that makes a broad range of lectures and homiletical material available to the English speaking public around the world.<sup>100</sup> The advancement of major projects such as the VBM to the diaspora communities is reflective of Har-Etzion's self stated message:

Since its establishment, the Yeshiva has been dedicated to producing top-quality Jewish educators and communal leaders for Israel and the Diaspora. Alumni of the Yeshiva hold prominent positions in Jewish schools, organizations and youth groups throughout the world and have made a significant contribution to improving the level of Jewish education in their respective geographic areas.<sup>101</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that products of this orientation would

have taken the lead or at least been inclined to the TMZ model of Torah study in service of the diaspora communities.

What is more notable, however, is that TMZ did not remain a “Gush” project. Numerous hesder yeshivas as well as other Zionist yeshivas that are wholly identified with the Kook school are associated and send their students as TMZ emissaries.<sup>102</sup> These include institutions like the Beit El and Har Berakhah yeshivas. The former is led by Rabbi Zalman Melamed, a disciple of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, while the latter is directed by his son. Boaz Genut, the executive director of TMZ, pointed out that the son is particularly eager for his students to dedicate time to shelihut abroad.<sup>103</sup> In addition, TMZ has received the imprimatur of two of the most authoritative figures in the Kook camp, the former chief rabbis Mordechai Eliyahu and the late Avraham Shapira.<sup>104</sup>

Does this mean that the Kook school has abandoned the negation of galut that was so vehemently promulgated by its founders? Are these rabbis comfortable with a Religious Zionism that deemphasizes territory and focuses on presenting Torat Eretz Israel as a foundation for American Modern Orthodoxy? I discussed this matter with Rabbi Chaim Druckman, the Head of the Bnei Akiva Movement and one of the former leaders of Gush Emunim, as well as a strong supporter of TMZ. Druckman feels that TMZ is totally consistent with Kookian ideology. Even if there is minimal direct influence on aliya, TMZ is crucial for American Orthodoxy because it introduces Israel and Zionism into local discourse. To his mind, the alternative for most American Jews is assimilation, while for the Modern Orthodox it is haredization. Furthermore, he was unconvinced by the conclusion being reached by some communities that Americans are more effective at teaching the Torah. “Torah without Eretz Israel, is not Torah,” he said.<sup>105</sup>

Druckman certainly does not acknowledge the global, transnational direction engendered by TMZ. At the same time, he supports the drafting of Israeli yeshiva students to battle assimilation and to buttress ideological Modern Orthodoxy in North America. In both cases the value of the people of Israel, without connection to their

geographic location, is supreme. Moreover, in contradistinction to those medieval commentaries who suggested that there was an inherent difference in performing the commandments outside the Land,<sup>106</sup> Druckman's last statement highlights the content of the Torah and not the location where it is taught.

Acknowledged by them or not, I suggest that prominent representatives of the Kook school have thrown their support behind a project that engenders an alternative perception of the galut and of shelihut than that expressed by their mid-twentieth century mentors. The interest on their part in promoting TMZ is particularly illuminating in light of the heavy influence of teachers and graduates of Yeshivat Har-Etzion on its emergence and development.<sup>107</sup>

The support given by the Kook camp to the TMZ concept can be understood in the context of the upheaval within the Religious Zionist camp that arose in the aftermath of the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and in response to the 2005 disengagement from the Gaza Strip. After years of focus on settlement as the primary activity of Religious Zionism, the abandonment by much of the Israeli Jewish population of this enterprise and its ideals caused a partial shift away from this monolithic path or at least a diversification. Many within this population reached the conclusion that "settling the Land" had not engendered "settling in the hearts" of most Israelis. As such, alternative Religious Zionist initiatives began to appear.<sup>108</sup> One of the local Israeli examples is the *Tzohar* organization which proffers rabbinical services to the nonobservant public in a user-friendly manner.<sup>109</sup> Another is Rabbi Moti Elon's *Mibreishit* outreach movement that seeks to raise the level of religious interest and commitment within broader Jewish society. The latter, in particular, shares certain common ground with TMZ, since its activities are not limited to the State of Israel. Its educational materials are distributed widely throughout the world in numerous languages and Elon himself has promoted *Mibreishit* on numerous visits to communities throughout the Diaspora.<sup>110</sup> It is notable that Elon, as well as numerous members of *Tzohar*, have strong connections to the Merkaz ha-Rav Kook inner circles.<sup>111</sup> Another new direction within Religious Zionism that has direct parallels with TMZ is the option

made available to girls to spend the second year of their national service (*sherut leumi*) on shelihut abroad.<sup>112</sup>

### **CONCLUSION: TORAT ERETZ ISRAEL AND THE TRANSPORTATION OF PLACE**

The shelihut of TMZ differs dramatically from the classical formula that focused almost exclusively on aliya. Not only is encouraging immigration to Israel low on the priority scale, the main focus of activity – as illustrated both from the Israeli and American perspectives – is actually on strengthening Jewish life in the diaspora. Like the haredi community outreach kollels, this is done primarily by creating a vibrant beit midrash that can attract Modern Orthodox children and their parents and in some cases unaffiliated Jews to Torah study. Without declaring so in words, the very structure and goals of TMZ's activities in America neutralize any attempt to preserve negation of the galut as a serious element in the Religious Zionist worldview.

Not only has the diaspora gained greater legitimacy through TMZ, in the process Religious Zionism has acquired a new global character. The TMZ emissaries do not leave their sacred Israeli territory as individuals. They travel as small collectives called kollels, whose mandate is to cultivate a Religious Zionist atmosphere in a given Jewish community somewhere in the world. But these Israel-like environments are not created as appendages to the home territory that will necessarily facilitate the arrival of more Jews. This may happen in some cases but it is not the main objective. Certainly for the North American Modern Orthodox communities, the value of the Zionistic spirit of the emissaries lies primarily in its potential to reinvigorate the local environment. This process points to a move of Israeli Religious Zionism away from its territorial character. Instead, it acquires a cultural or spiritual ambience that shares much in common with the role that Zionism has long played in the lives of most American Orthodox Jews.

Surely the shelihim return home and on an individual level reassert their territorial Zionistic identity. But they are immediately replaced by others who sustain the Zionist enclaves that were

established and continue the role of nurturing American Judaism with their Zionist spirit. Indeed, the term Torat Eretz Israel is quite accurate. A culture of the Land has been articulated that exists independently from the Land itself. As this network grows larger, the idea of a Torat Eretz Israel that stems from the Land but does not exist for it exclusively, becomes more real.

In 2005 the photographers Max Becher and Andrea Robbins opened a new exhibit entitled “770.” The two had taken pictures of the Lubavitcher hasidic movement’s Brooklyn headquarters (770 Eastern Parkway), and of 11 replicas of this building that serve as Chabad centers throughout the world. The display included photos from Brooklyn, Buenos Aires, Haifa, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Milan, Montreal, New Brunswick, and Sao Paolo.<sup>119</sup> In the explanation that accompanies the exhibit, the artists refer to the phenomenon portrayed through their pictures as “the Transportation of Place:”

The primary focus of our work is, what we call, *the transportation of place* – situations in which one limited or isolated place strongly resembles another distant one... Traditional notions of place, in which culture and geographic location neatly coincide, are being challenged...<sup>120</sup>

This, essentially, expresses the feeling that I had that day in September 2003 when I first entered the beit midrash of the Torat Tzion Kollel in Cleveland. Right in the middle of America I had come across a study hall whose sounds and sights I identified directly with Israel. In this paper I have claimed that this seemingly surreal sensation was indicative of a broader phenomenon. Parallel to Chabad and “770,” TMZ reflects a new direction for Religious Zionism from a Land focused movement that encouraged those outside to come in, to a global network that is Land based but emphasizes Judaism’s “transnational” character, in which the Torah of the place is being transported to other distant venues.

## NOTES

1. Rabbi Avraham Isaac Hacoheh Kook (1865–1935), was the first Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Palestine and was the most prominent rabbinic authority to support the early twentieth century Zionist settlement movement. Through the efforts of his students, including his son Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook (1891–1982), his writings became the centerpiece for the dominant trend in contemporary Religious Zionism. See, for example: Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 79–144; Dov Schwartz, *Faith at the Crossroads: A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 131–230; Chaim I. Waxman, “Messianism, Zionism, and the State of Israel,” *Modern Judaism* 7, 2 (May, 1987): 175–192.
2. On the hesder program and concept, see: Stuart A. Cohen, “The Hesder Yeshivot in Israel: A Church-State Arrangement,” *Journal of Church and State*, 35 (1993): 113–130; Aharon Lichtenstein, “The Ideology of Hesder,” *Tradition* 19, 3 (1981): 199–217.
3. See picture at <http://www.torahmitzion.org/cleveland/section.asp>.
4. On the history of the kollel as a modern institution that provides fellowships and a framework for advanced Torah study, see: Mordechai Breuer, *Ohalei Torah: Ha-Yeshivah, Tavnitah ve-Toldotehah* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 2004), 28, 149; Adam S. Ferziger, “The Emergence of the Community Kollel: A New Model for Addressing Assimilation,” Position Paper 13 (Ramat-Gan: Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research – Bar-Ilan University, 2006), 15–32; Shaul Stampfer, *Ha-Yeshivah ha-Litait be-Hithavutah* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 2005): 360–382.
5. On globalization and transnationalism, see for example, M. Kearney, “The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24 (1995): 547–565. “Transnationalism,” according to Kearney (548), “operates worldwide,” but is “centered in one home nation.”
6. The primary sources utilized below include: official Torah MiTzion (henceforth TMZ) organizational literature and websites; TMZ questionnaires filled out by participants upon return to Israel; interviews with TMZ officials, former kollel heads and members, American rabbis and laymen involved in TMZ, American Jewish educators, rabbis, and laymen who have observed TMZ, haredi community kollel officials, heads and members; written correspondence with American rabbis and laymen involved in TMZ; correspondence between TMZ officials and kollel members, local communal officials, and representatives of other American Orthodox organizations; essays and communications written about TMZ by those involved in TMZ; applications by communities for a TMZ kollel; TMZ kollel mission statements; articles in the American Jewish press; and personal site visits to ten North American community kollels. All interview transcripts and tapes are stored at Rehov ha-Ramah 3a, Kfar-Sava, Israel 44538 or at Bar-Ilan University, Faculty of Jewish Studies, Room 32, Ramat-Gan, Israel 52900.
7. See: Conversation with Robert L. Stark, Beachwood, Ohio, September 6, 2003; <http://www.torahmitzion.org/cleveland/section.asp>. On Stark, see Samuel G.

- Freedman, *Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2000), 284–287. On Yeshivat Har Etzion, see David Morrison *The Gush: Center of Modern Religious Zionism* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2003).
8. From 1997, single students were also integrated. See: “Site Visit by David Roth and Ze’ev Schwartz to Cleveland,” November 2001. TMZ Cleveland File, TMZ Jerusalem Office, 54 King George St., Jerusalem 91710, entrance floor; Interview with Rabbi Binyamin Blau, former rosh kollel of סתק and principal of Fuchs-Mizrachi High School, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Sept. 8, 2003.
  9. Blau Interview; Interview with Vicky Epstein Frolich, סתק Administrator, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Sept. 8, 2003.
  10. Blau Interview; Frolich Interview.
  11. See <http://www.torahmitzion.org/CapeTown/section.asp>.
  12. Moshe Green, an American philanthropist who was active in Religious Zionist circles, gave the initial support for the TMZ organization and served as chairman until his death in 1999. One testimony to the prominence of the movement within the Religious Zionist camp is the recent appointment of Schwartz as general secretary of World Bnei Akiva, the main Religious Zionist youth movement. Rabbi Boaz Genut, who returned to Israel in the Summer of 2006 after three years as head of the TMZ kollel in St. Louis, was appointed the new executive director. Schwartz remains formally involved through the position of chairman of TMZ. See the letter from Larry Roth, president of TMZ, announcing the change, <http://www.torahmitzion.org/eng/news/view.asp?id=290>.
  13. See <http://www.torahmitzion.org/Moscow/section.asp>.
  14. See <http://www.torahmitzion.org/montevideo/section.asp>.
  15. See <http://www.torahmitzion.org/melbourne/section.asp>.
  16. See <http://www.torahmitzion.org/memphis/section.asp>.
  17. For a full list see <http://www.torahmitzion.org/eng/aboutus/kollels.asp>. On JLI, see <http://jli.co.il/>.
  18. On distinctions between American Modern Orthodox and haredi Orthodoxies, see for example: Samuel C. Heilman, *Sliding to the Right: The Contest for the Future of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Charles S. Liebman, “Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life,” *American Jewish Year Book* 66 (1965): 21–97; Chaim I. Waxman, “From Institutional Decay to Primary Day: American Orthodox Jewry Since World War II,” *American Jewish History* 91 (2003): 405–21.
  19. For a list of haredi kollels, see <http://ajop.net:80/ajop/KollelDoc.cfm>.
  20. Discussion with Rabbis Ronny Schwarzberg, Director, and Rabbi Elli Krimsky, Associate Director, Department of Rabbinic Placement, Center for the Jewish Future of Yeshiva University, Ramat-Gan, February 7th, 2007.
  21. See: Adam S. Ferziger, *The Emergence of the Community Kollel*; idem, “Church/Sect Theory and American Orthodoxy Reconsidered,” *An Ambivalent Jew: Charles S. Liebman Memorial Volume*, eds. Stuart Cohen and Bernard Susser (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary Press, 2007): 107–124.



22. See Adam S. Ferziger, "From Lubavitch to Lakewood: The Chabadization of American Orthodoxy," in *Reaching for the Infinite: The Lubavitcher Rebbe – Life, Teachings and Impact*, eds. Naftali Loewenthal, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Elliott R. Wolfson (forthcoming). Since the movement spells its name "Chabad" – see [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org) – it is spelled that way throughout this article.
23. On this distinction, see Adam S. Ferziger, "Between Outreach and 'Inreach': Redrawing the Lines of the American Orthodox Rabbinate," *Modern Judaism*, 25, 3 (2005): 237–63.
24. See, for example: Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Galut in Zionist Ideology and in Israeli Society," in *Israel and Diaspora Jewry: Ideological and Political Perspectives*, ed. Eliezer Don-Yehiya (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991): 219–257; Arnold Eisen, *Galut* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986).
25. See Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "The Negation of the Galut in Religious Zionism," *Modern Judaism*, 12 (1992): 129–155, esp. 129–30. For an updated and expanded Hebrew version, see idem, "Shelilat ha-Galut ba-Ziyonut ha-Datit," *Me'ah Shenot Ziyonut Datit*, 3, eds. Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003): 229–258, esp. 229–32.
26. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Shelilat ha-Galut ba-Ziyonut ha-Datit," 229. There are, however, prominent figures such as novelist A.B. Yehoshua who continue to promote negation of the galut as a central secular theme. See, for example, Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Galut in Zionist Ideology," 233–36.
27. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Galut in Zionist Ideology," 253.
28. See E. Nimni, "From Galut to T'futsoth: Post Zionism and the Dislocation of Jewish Diasporas," *The Challenge of Post Zionism*, ed. E. Nimni (London: Zed Books, 2003): 122.
29. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "The Negation of the Galut in Religious Zionism," 229–32.
30. See note 1.
31. Citation from his famed sermon delivered at the Mercaz ha-Rav Yeshiva in Jerusalem on the Israel Independence Day that immediately preceded the War of 1967, see Zvi Yehuda Kook, *Le-Netivot Yisrael*, vol. 2 (Beit El: Beit El, 2003 [Cited in Don-Yehiya, "Negation," 142]. See also Dov Schwartz, *Erez ha-Mamashut ve-ha-Dimayon* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), 101–127.
32. Zvi Yehuda Kook, *Le-Netivot*, 1, 100 [cited in Don-Yehiya, "Negation," 143].
33. Zvi Yehuda Kook, *Le-Netivot*, 1, 68 [cited in Don-Yehiya, "Negation," 143].
34. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "The Negation of the Galut in Religious Zionism," 145.
35. See Gideon Aran, "From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion: the Roots of Gush Emunim," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 11 (1986): 116–143; Ella Belfer, "Bezipyat ha-Yeshua ha-Shelemah: The Messianic Politics of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook and Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook," *Tolerance, Dissent and Democracy: Philosophical, Historical and Halakhic Perspectives*, ed. Moshe Sokol (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 2002), 311–61; Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism, Religious Zionism and Israeli Politics: The Impact and Origins of Gush Emunim," *Middle Eastern Studies* 23, 2 (1987): 215–34.



36. See Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "The Book and the Sword: The Nationalist Yeshivot and Political Radicalism in Israel," *Fundamentalisms Observed*, eds. Martin Marty and Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994): 264–308.
37. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Shelilat ha-Galut," 243–44.
38. See an alternative position in Moshe Unna, "The State of Israel and the Diaspora," in *Religious Zionism: An Anthology*, ed. Yosef Tirosh (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1975): 259–97.
39. Schwartz, *Erez ha-Mamashut ve-ha-Dimayon*, 228–31.
40. Moshe Haim Shapiro, "The Mission of Religious Zionism," *Religious Zionism: An Anthology*: 117.
41. See Ezra Kopelowitz, "Between *Mifgash* and *Shlichut*, Paradigms in Contemporary Zionist Education and the Question of the Ideological Relationship between Israel and Diaspora," Version Presented to the Research Seminar of the Department of Jewish Zionist Education (March 12, 2003), <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/moriya/newpdf/Eparadigms-kopelowitz.pdf>.
42. See, for example, Erik Cohen, "Mifgashim: A Meeting of Minds and Hearts," *Journal of Jewish Education*, 66 (2000): 23–37.
43. Kopelowitz, "Between *Mifgash* and *Shlichut*," 11–15.
44. See Yitzhak Conforti, *Zeman Avar* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2006), 125–126; Eliezer Schweid, "Shte'i Gishot la-Ra'ayon 'Shelilat ha-Golah' ba-Ideologiyah ha-Zionit," *Ha-Zionut: Me'assef*, 9 (1984): 21–44.
45. Kopelowitz, "Between *Mifgash* and *Shlichut*," 13–17.
46. On Chabad and its emissaries, see for example: Sue Fishkoff, *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch* (New York: Schocken, 2003), 27–32, 111–117; Yitzhak Kraus, *HaShevi'I – Meshihyut be-dor ha-shvi'I shel Habad* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Sefarim, 2007).
47. For the official list and information on all the Chabad houses, see <http://www.chabad.org/centers/default.asp?AID=6268>.
48. For details on Aish Hatorah international branches, see <http://www.aish.com/aishint/branch/>. On Aish Hatorah and the approach of its founder, Rabbi Noah Weinberg, see Janet Aviad, *Return to Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 28–29, 38–41; Aaron Joshua Tapper, "The 'Cult' of Aish Hatorah: *Ba'alei Teshuva* and the Newly Religious Movement Phenomenon," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 44, Nos. 1–2 (2002): 5–29.
49. For details on Ohr Somayach's international branches, see <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/2208>. On Ohr Somayach, see Aviad, *Return to Judaism*, 23–28; for an in-house description of its history and activities, see *The Ohr Somayach Story* (Jerusalem, 1982).
50. See Adam S. Ferziger, *The Emergence of the Community Kollel*, 32–48; Ya'akov Feitman. "It Takes a *Kollel*: How Higher Learning is Transforming American Jewry," *Jewish Action*. 63, 2 (2002), <http://www.ou.org/publications/ja/5763/5763winter/ITTAKEA.PDFN.A.>; "Kollelim," *Nitzotzot Min HaNer*. 16 (Jan-March, 2004), <http://www.nerleef.com/janmar4.pdf>.

51. See Chaim I. Waxman, "Israel in American Orthodox Identity," *Israel, World Jewry and Identity*, eds. Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2007): 52-61.
52. See [www.Jewishagency.org/jewishagency/English/press+room/aliyah](http://www.Jewishagency.org/jewishagency/English/press+room/aliyah); [www.wzo.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1508/aliyah+statistics](http://www.wzo.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1508/aliyah+statistics).
53. The *National Jewish Population Survey*, Year 2000, reached the figure of 5.2 million. See [http://www.ujc.org/content\\_display.html?ArticleID=83784](http://www.ujc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=83784); According to a study by Brandeis University published in 2007, the figure is closer to six million. See Shmuel Rosner, "Brandeis Finds One Million More Jews than Thought," *Haaretz* (February 9th, 2007), <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/823218.html>.
54. See: Yoseph Salmon, "The Mizrahi Movement in America: A Belated but Sturdy Offshoot," *American Jewish Archives* 48 (1996): 161-175; Chaim I. Waxman, "Preface," *Israel as a Religious Reality*, ed. Chaim I. Waxman (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1994): xiii-xviii.
55. Evyatar Friesel, "The Meaning of Zionism and Its Influence among the American Jewish Religious Movements," *Religion and Zionism*, eds. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinhartz, and Anita Shapira (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1998): 177-179.
56. I thank Dr. Yoel Finkelman for suggesting that I look at Kaplan's model of Zionism. See, for example, Mordecai M. Kaplan, *A New Zionism* (New York: Herzl Press, 1955): 41, 119; idem, *Judaism Without Supernaturalism* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1958): 165; Arnold M. Eisen, "Reflections on the State of Zionist Thought," *Modern Judaism* 18, 3 (1998): 256, 259; Emanuel S. Goldsmith, "Salvational Zionism and Religious Naturalism in the Thought of Mordecai M. Kaplan," *Process Studies*, 22, 4 (Winter, 1993): 204-210.
57. To my understanding, Rabbi Shalom Carmy's essay on Religious Zionist existence in the galut offers a philosophically oriented articulation that is quite similar to the approach described here. See Shalom Carmy, "A View from the Fleshpots: Exploratory Remarks on Gilded Galut Existence," *Israel as a Religious Reality*, 34.
58. Haim Zohar, "Mai Kollel Zioni," *Me'ah Shenot Hinukh Zioni-Dati*, ed. Shlomoh Raz (Jerusalem: Histadrut ha-Mizrachi - Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi - Ha-Merkaz ha-Olami, 2006): 365.
59. Haim Zohar, "Mai Kollel Zioni," *Me'ah Shenot Hinukh Zioni-Dati*, ed. Shlomoh Raz (Jerusalem: Histadrut ha-Mizrachi - Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi - Ha-Merkaz ha-Olami, 2006): 367.
60. Haim Zohar, "Mai Kollel Zioni," 368-69.
61. Haim Zohar, "Mai Kollel Zioni," 367.
62. Indeed, the haredi community kollels have also articulated their own version of the "Jewish peoplehood" model. In March 2005 a number of community kollels turned the completion of the seven year *daf yomi* Talmud study cycle into a "celebration of Jewish unity." As part of their "unity" activities, the Phoenix Community Kollel developed a curriculum on different expressions of peace in the Talmud. Workshops were held utilizing this program with children from local Orthodox

- and non-Orthodox schools as well the Hillel houses of Arizona State University and the University of Arizona. At the central public event, the kollel hosted Hadassah Lieberman, the wife of the former Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee. Unity awards were also given by the kollel to the leaders of the local Federation, Jewish Community Center, United Jewish Committee and the Jewish National Fund. The regional director of the Anti-Defamation League chaired the evening that was “designed to bring Jews of all backgrounds together in celebration of that which truly unites us – our Torah.” See Leisah Mann, “Jewish Unity 2005 Makes World Debut,” *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix* (February 18, 2005), <http://www.jewishaz.com/jewishnews/050218/unity.shtml>; <http://www.jewishunitylive.com/>.
63. See Adam S. Ferziger, “Between Outreach and ‘Inreach,’” 244–45.
  64. The term appears in the writings of Avraham Isaac Hacohen Kook. See, for example, *Orot ha-Kodesh* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1985), 13.
  65. See <http://www.torahmitzion.org/eng/aboutus/default.asp>.
  66. Open Letter from Moshe Gadot, Recruitment Coordinator, TMZ, Nov.-Dec., 2006.
  67. See [http://www.torahmitzion.org/eng/aboutus/shlichut\\_guidelines.asp](http://www.torahmitzion.org/eng/aboutus/shlichut_guidelines.asp).
  68. Telephone discussion with Rabbi Boaz Genut, Executive Director of TMZ, February 1, 2007.
  69. The questionnaires are on file in the respective *kollel* site folders at the TMZ office, 54 King George St., Jerusalem 91710, entrance floor.
  70. As Chaim I. Waxman noted in his description of the close ties between American Orthodoxy and Israel, the Orthodox travel to Israel far more frequently than other American Jews. See Chaim I. Waxman, “Israel in American Orthodox Identity.”
  71. The questionnaire for returning fellows asks whether they thought that the midyear weekend meeting for all the TMZ emissaries was beneficial. Interestingly, all the respondents agreed that it was, but few could articulate why.
  72. Rabbi Chaim Sacknovitz, Rabbi Jay Kelman and Yisroel Dov Meyer, “Kolel Mitzion Application – Toronto Shvat 5763,” TMZ Montreal File, TMZ Jerusalem Office.
  73. See “Cleveland is Springboard for *Kollel* Movement,” *Cleveland Jewish News* (Dec. 1, 2005), appears on <http://torahmitzion.org/eng/news/view.asp?id=237>.
  74. Blau Interview; See also his essay on TMZ published on the Lookjed educational website as “Creative Solutions to Current Educational Challenges: The Torah MiTzion *Kollels*,” <http://www.lookstein.org/lookjed/read.php?f=1andi=13437andt=13437>.
  75. Blau Interview.
  76. Interview with Rabbi Michael Unterberg, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Sept. 8, 2003.
  77. See <http://www.fuchsmizrachi.org/kollel.htm>.
  78. Email communication from Rabbi Binyamin Blau, February 7, 2007.
  79. Telephone Interview with Rabbi Binyamin Blau, February 7, 2007.
  80. See, for example, the email letter from Rabbi Moshe Aberman to Ze’ev Schwartz, June 13, 1997, TMZ Chicago File, TMZ Jerusalem Office: “It would seem to me that each community would know best what its needs are and should decide the goals and format of its kollel. Your organization should work in the direction of helping bring to fruition these goals.”

81. On Matanky, see [www.rabbis.org/news/article.cfm?-10071](http://www.rabbis.org/news/article.cfm?-10071).
82. Email message from Leonard Matanky to Ze'ev Schwartz and Moshe Aberman, August 4, 1997, TMZ Chicago File, TMZ Jerusalem Office.
83. Leonard A. Matanky, "Israel's Impact on American Orthodoxy: A Response," 19th Orthodox Forum, New York, March 12, 2007.
84. Sid Singer, "Kollel Torah MiTzion: Torah Study, Israeli Style," *JUF News* (January 1999): 21.
85. Singer, "Kollel Torah MiTzion," 21.
86. On distinctions between Israeli and American Orthodoxies, see Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Orthodox Jewry in Israel and in North America," *Israel Studies*, 10, 1 (2005): 170–184; idem, "Does Place Make a Difference: Jewish Orthodoxy in Israel and in the Diaspora," *Israel as a Religious Reality*, ed. Chaim I. Waxman (Northvale N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1994), 43–74.
87. Leonard A. Matanky and Yehuda Sussman, "Creative Solutions to Educational Challenges – The Torah MiTzion Kollels II," *Lookjed Forum*. (Aug. 28, 2006), [www.lookstein.org/lookjed/read.php?f=1+1=13474andt=13437](http://www.lookstein.org/lookjed/read.php?f=1+1=13474andt=13437).
88. Matanky and Sussman, "Creative Solutions II."
89. See "Internal memo from Rabbi David Israel to Rabbi Robert Hirt and Ze'ev Schwartz." (April 30, 1998), TMZ Montreal File, TMZ Jerusalem Office.
90. Email letter from Rabbi Avi Hyman to Ze'ev Schwartz (February 5, 1999), TMZ Montreal File, TMZ Jerusalem Office.
91. Email response by Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz to questions posed to him by Adam S. Ferziger (January 31, 2007).
92. Email letter from David Noveseller to Ze'ev Schwartz and others (Sept. 29, 1999), TMZ Montreal File, TMZ Jerusalem Office; "Letter from Yitzhak Neriah to *Kollel Emissaries*," (July, 1999), TMZ Montreal File, TMZ Jerusalem Office.
93. See "About КТМ," <http://www.ktmmtl.org/about/index.php>.
94. Interview with Rabbi Yaakov "Jack" Bieler, Kemp Mill Synagogue, Silver Spring, Maryland (September 11, 2003).
95. Interview with Rabbi Michael Brody, Young Israel of Taco Hills, Atlanta, Georgia (September 18, 2003).
96. On Lichtenstein, see: Alan Brill, "An Ideal Rosh Yeshiva," *Edah Journal*, 5, 1 (Tammuz, 2005), [http://www.edah.org/backend/JournalArticle/5\\_1\\_Brill.pdf](http://www.edah.org/backend/JournalArticle/5_1_Brill.pdf); David Singer, "For Torah and Culture," *First Things* (May 2005), [http://www.first-things.com/article.php?id\\_article=197](http://www.first-things.com/article.php?id_article=197).
97. An enormous amount has been published about Soloveitchik since his death. Regarding his approach to Zionism, see for example: Chaim Navon, "Tefisato ha-Zionit Datit shel ha-Rav Soloveitchik," *Tzohar* 22 (Summer 2005): 159–170; Dov Schwartz, "Mishnato shel Ha-Rav Y" D Soloveitchik be-Re'i ha-Hagut ha-Zionit-Datit: ha-Hilun ve-Hamedina," *Emunah be-Zemanim Mishtanim*, ed. Avi Sagi (Jerusalem: Sifriyat Eliner and Merkaz ha-Rav Herzog, 1996), 123–148.
98. See for example, Lichtenstein, "The Ideology of Hesder."
99. In Aharon Lichtenstein, *By His Light*, adapted by Reuven Ziegler (Jersey City and Alon Shevut: Ktav and Yeshivat Har Etzion, 2003), 152–155, 234–37, he addresses

- some of the distinctions between his approach and the Kook school regarding Zionism and the State of Israel.
100. See [www.vbm-torah.org](http://www.vbm-torah.org).
  101. See [www.vbm-torah.org/yheprog.htm#SAKS](http://www.vbm-torah.org/yheprog.htm#SAKS).
  102. See the list of TMZ partners at [www.torahmitzion.org/eng/aboutus/partners.asp](http://www.torahmitzion.org/eng/aboutus/partners.asp).
  103. Genut Discussion.
  104. Email letter from Ze'ev Schwartz to Leonard Matanky and Moshe Aberman (April 17, 1997), TMZ Chicago File, TMZ Jerusalem Office.
  105. Telephone interview with Rabbi Chaim Druckman, February 9, 2007.
  106. Nahmanides, *Commentary to the Torah*, Leviticus 18:25.
  107. In the interest of maintaining full transparency, I should like to acknowledge that I studied at Yeshivat Har-Etzion during the school year 1983–84.
  108. See, for example, Michael Avraham, “Ha-Derekh ha-Sheleesheet o: ‘al Zionut Datit’ le-lo Makaf,” *Tzohar* 22 (Summer 2005): 131–140, and the responses that it provoked in the same volume 141–158; Yair Sheleg, “Lo Maspik le-Hitnahel, Zarikh gam le-hithazek” (Sept. 10, 2003), <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/pages/ShArtPE.jhtml?itemNo=348351>.
  109. See Adam S. Ferziger, “Religion for the Secular,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7 (March 2008): 67–90.
  110. See [www.mibreishit.org](http://www.mibreishit.org).
  111. Rabbi Ya'akov Ariel is the chief rabbi of Ramat-Gan and the central halakhic mentor of Tzohar. In the previous elections for chief rabbi of Israel, he was the candidate of the Kook camp.
  112. I thank my friend and colleague, Mr. Aryeh Arazi, for suggesting this parallel.
  113. Charles S. Liebman and Bernard Susser identified Orthodoxy's emphasis on learning as one of the keys to its survival, as well as one of the values that non-Orthodox Jews should emulate in order to stem assimilation. See Bernard Susser and Charles S. Liebman, *Choosing Survival: Strategies for a Jewish Future* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 133–144, 146–149.
  114. On the role of individual quest in contemporary American Jewish life, see, for example: Steven M. Cohen and Arnold Eisen, *The Jew Within* (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press: 2000), 13–42; Steven Sharot, “Assimilating, Coalescing and Spiritual-Seeking: Recent Trends among American Jews,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* XVIII (Jerusalem, 2002): 240–246; Chaim I. Waxman, *Jewish Baby Boomers: A Communal Perspective* (Albany SUNY Press, 2001), 135–143.
  115. Email correspondence from Rabbi Jack Bieler, April 23, 2007.
  116. During my site visit to Boca Raton in September 2003, I observed a variety of kollel activities and conducted interviews with the local rabbis, the kollel heads, the kollel members, communal activists and other local Jews. On the Boca Raton Orthodox community, see Jane Musgrave, “Boca Raton's Orthodox Revolution,” *Boca Magazine* (July 1, 2001), available at [www.bocamag.com/index.php?src=news&dprid=8&category=articles](http://www.bocamag.com/index.php?src=news&dprid=8&category=articles). On the Community Kollel, see [www.kollel.org](http://www.kollel.org).
  117. On Brander and the CJF, see for example, Ari Fridman, “Rabbi Kenny Brander to

Join Yeshiva Leadership: Administration Announces Center for the Jewish Future,” *The Commentator* (March 29, 2005), available at <http://www.yucommentator.com/media/paper652/news/2004/10/26/News/Rabbi.Kenny.Brande.To.Join.Yeshiva.Leadership-772211.shtml>.

118. See “TMZ Board Meeting Minutes.” (January 13, 2005), TMZ Boca Raton File, TMZ Jerusalem Office. Section six describes a meeting held in Jerusalem with Richard Joel, YU President.
119. See the photos and a description of the exhibit at [www.robbinsbecher.com](http://www.robbinsbecher.com).
120. [www.robbinsbecher.com](http://www.robbinsbecher.com).



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# 15

## If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem...:

### The Impact of Israel on American Orthodox Jewry

*Chaim I. Waxman*

Local custom, *minhag hamakom*, was once a very strong principle and source of authority in Judaism. As a result of dramatic social changes, especially during the past century, the authority of local custom has been significantly weakened. Haym Soloveitchik has forcefully argued that both local communal and family traditions have been widely replaced by the authority of texts.<sup>1</sup> In this article, I seek to show the impact and influence of Israel on American Orthodoxy. It will be argued that Israel's influence on American Orthodoxy manifests itself not only in the area of communal relations but in the realm of religious rituals as well. Some of this should



be no surprise because, as will be indicated, American Orthodox Jews have considerably closer ties with Israel, beginning at an earlier age, than do the non-Orthodox.

Surveys from the past several decades consistently showed that the extent of Orthodox Jews' attachments to Israel – however measured – greatly exceeded those among other denominations. Moreover, the differences between Orthodox and non-Orthodox were sharpest with respect to the most demanding measures of Israel involvement, be it receptivity to *aliya* rather than pro-Israel feelings, or having closer ties with individual Israelis, or fluency in Hebrew rather than just a rudimentary knowledge of Israel's language.<sup>2</sup>

As indicated in the table below, Orthodox Jews visit Israel at a much higher rate than do Conservative or Reform American Jews.

	Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstructionist	Reform
Yes	81.4	61.2	34.6	37.8
No	18.6	38.8	65.4	62.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In addition, among those who have visited Israel, there is a similar pattern of denominational variation with respect to the number of times the respondent visited. 25 percent of the Orthodox respondents who visited Israel did so more than 5 times, and that far exceeds the percentages of the other denominations who visited Israel more than 5 times.

	Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstructionist	Reform
1 time	27.5	52.3	51.8	71.2
2–4 times	38.7	29.7	38.2	19.4
5–9 times	14.1	8.0	--	4.8
10+ times	15.1	5.2	--	4.0
Resided in Israel	4.7	4.8	10.0	.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Moreover, as the following table indicates, emotional attachment to Israel also varies considerably with denominational affiliation and Orthodox have much stronger emotional ties to Israel than did the Conservative and Reform.

	Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstructionist	Reform
Very	72.1	45.1	27.4	22.5
Somewhat	22.7	37.3	50.8	45.1
Not very	2.1	15.1	11.1	22.8
Not at all	3.1	2.4	10.7	9.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The argument is frequently heard that the reason that the Orthodox have stronger connections with Israel is because of the Orthodox domination of establishment Judaism in Israel. Non-Orthodox, it is alleged, are less connected because they feel less comfortable in Israel, and they feel less comfortable there because of the Orthodox discrimination against them. However, the NJPS data do not appear to support this contention. As I have indicated elsewhere, the denominational variation manifests itself in a wide range of issues relating to both religious and communal identification, such as feelings of a common destiny with Jews elsewhere, and whether they attend an adult Jewish education class or any other kind of adult Jewish learning.<sup>3</sup>

Today, it is almost a norm for both male and female Orthodox high school graduates to spend a year or more of study in Israel, primarily in a yeshiva or seminary. In his pioneering study of the phenomenon, Shalom Berger found that, by the middle of the 1990s, up to 90 percent of the graduates of Modern Orthodox high schools were in such a program.<sup>4</sup> Although those figures may not be representative of all American Orthodox high school graduates, Jay Goldmintz indicates that “there are graduates who report that their parents are forcing them to go to Israel for the year against their will and there are high schools who use the number of their

graduates who go to Israel as part of their publicity campaigns for prospective students. There can be no doubt that the post-high school yeshiva experience has become a mass movement within the Orthodox community.”<sup>5</sup> Berger’s analysis suggests the Israeli experience probably intensified their ties with the country and its Jews. It probably has the same effect of creating Israel and Jewish People connectedness, on much more intense and more long-lasting levels, that the highly successful Project Birthright has.<sup>6</sup> Orthodoxy reinforces connections with Israel and Jewish peoplehood, and all studies indicate that, in addition to having stronger connections to Israel, the Orthodox have a stronger sense of Jewish peoplehood.<sup>7</sup> The Israel experience apparently does not, however, provide them with a knowledge of Israeli history, society, and politics which would enable them to respond to anti-Israel and anti-Semitic voices on the college campuses they will be when they return.<sup>8</sup> In addition, their intensive experiences in the Israeli yeshivot probably contributed to greater ritualistic punctiliousness for many and they, in turn, promoted such rigorousness when they returned to their American Orthodox communities.

Israel played a role in the renaissance of American Orthodoxy, not only via the “Year in Israel” for yeshiva high school graduates but in, albeit indirectly, helping to make Orthodoxy socially acceptable in American society.<sup>9</sup> The first signs of the shift in American society and culture from an ideology of the melting pot and anglo-conformity to cultural pluralism were visible early in the 1960s. Perhaps the very election of John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, was itself indication of the shift. In any case, by the end of the decade, ethnicity was “in” in American society, with people sporting buttons reading, “Kiss me; I’m Greek,” etc. Much of that was ethnic chauvinism and a reaction to the rise in black nationalism. Jewish ethnic pride had another source. The three weeks preceding the Six-Day War of June 1967, and Israel’s rapid and massive victory instilled a strong measure of pride in American Jews, including many Orthodox, who had long been used to maintaining a low public Jewish profile<sup>10</sup> and many Jews were now publicly showing their Judaism.<sup>11</sup>

Israel has also contributed to the process of the “humrazation”

of American Orthodoxy.<sup>12</sup> Much of Israel's impact here is a product of the "Year in Israel" post-high school year in an Israeli yeshiva program, during which time the students, most of whom are at a stage in the maturation process when they are very impressionable, are ideally separated from the world outside of the yeshiva, including both American society as well as the larger Israel society, and are in an environment which is largely a "total institution," which the late social anthropologist, Erving Goffman defined as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life."<sup>13</sup> This type of yeshiva experience which, for the vast majority of Modern Orthodox high school graduates is their first in such an environment, strives to be and often is one of resocialization, with the result that students return to their families and communities with not only more knowledge but also with different interests and values than they had previously, and the newer ones are often at odds with those of their families and communities. The phenomenon, widely recognized within the Orthodox community, has come to be labeled "flipping out," and its impact is especially observed and felt when the students return to their families and communities in the United States very differently from how they were before their Israel yeshiva experience. Sometimes, they decide to change their career plans, to change their plans for higher education, and even to change their mode of dress, for example, by donning a black hat. It is, thus, not unusual to find stress in the families of returnees from the Year-in-Israel experience.<sup>14</sup>

There is, however, nothing inherently Israeli in "flipping out." Many of the same patterns would probably be seen in students who left home to study at a dormitory yeshiva in the United States. The probabilities of that occurring within the modern Orthodox community are, however, low because the overwhelming majority of such American yeshivas are overtly antithetical to modern Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism.

Israel has contributed to a much more intensive and extensive knowledge of *Tanakh* in the American Orthodox community, if for

no other reason than spending time in Israel makes Tanakh more real and meaningful. In addition, of course, many of the yeshivot in Israel where many of the contemporary teachers in American day schools studied, teach Tanakh on much more sophisticated levels than had previously been typical in the United States.

There has been a dramatic increase of Jewish studies on campuses across the United States since the discipline first was established in the early 1970s. In just the ten years between 1993 and 2003, the Association for Jewish Studies, doubled its membership of professors who teach Judaic studies from approximately 800 to 1500. There has also been a proliferation of accredited classes in Jewish studies at colleges and universities across the United States.<sup>15</sup> In conjunction with this, Jewish centers and organizations such as Hillel became more intensively and extensively active, and they have provided a much more inviting institutional setting for religiously observant students. Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, Rutgers, and the University of Pennsylvania, to name just a few in the Northeast, now have energetic observant sub-communities of students and faculty, and the restrictions and limitations on those young college-age adults who wish to be both modern and religiously observant are much fewer than they were in past decades. Indeed, the Orthodox Union explored the idea of funding a *kollel* couple on the Rutgers campus, to further invigorate the campus and to be a source of inspiration and assistance to observant students and faculty already there. On many campuses, developments such as these have been spearheaded by students who spent a year or more studying in Israel.

Israel has had major impact on the Jewish educational levels of females. Orthodox American female high school graduates also frequently participate in the "Year in Israel" program at institutions at which they are exposed to degrees and levels of Jewish education which are rare in the United States. At the same time, it is too early to gauge how much that education has fostered change in other areas. There does not appear to be a significant movement in the American Orthodox community for the development of a movement comparable to Israel's Kolekh, the organization of women committed

to Halakhah, Jewish tradition, and gender equality. Ironically, many of the innovations in Israeli Orthodoxy, including Kolekh, were pioneered by American Israelis, and they seem to have had more impact in Israel than in American Orthodoxy.<sup>16</sup>

Almost every Orthodox neighborhood in the United States has at least one Israeli eatery, be it a pizza, falafel, shwarma, or other eatery. Much of this comes as a result of young people having spent a year or more studying in Israel, where they frequented those types of eateries at regular intervals and which were gathering places where they met friends from “back home.” Such eateries in the United States help sustain a sense of connectedness with Israel and Israeli culture. It creates a sense of living in Israel without actually being there. Similarly, and perhaps even more so, there is now a new cooperative organization that allows those in the Diaspora to fulfill *mitzvot* of *terumot*, *ma'aserot* (various types of tithes), and all other *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz* (that are specific to Eretz Israel).<sup>17</sup> Despite the acclaims allegedly bestowed upon this venture by Rav Elyashiv and others, I have misgivings about it, for several reasons. I find it ironic that, whereas one of the justifications given by one of the *Ba'alei Hatosafot*, Rabeinu Chaim, for not making aliya is that it is too difficult to observe the *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz*,<sup>18</sup> this project has people observing those *mitzvot* without having the *mitzvah* and advantage of making aliya. Moreover, it sends an implicit message that one can remain physically in the Diaspora and still observe all the *mitzvot*; in other words, there is no need to make aliya.<sup>19</sup>

As indicated previously, American Orthodox Jews have a significantly higher rate of aliya than do the non-Orthodox. This creates further ties between American Orthodox and Israel because those olim continue to maintain ties with their families and friends in the United States. It also contributes to further aliya. The American aliya rate, which is predominantly Orthodox, has increased in recent years, in part because some are now receptive to aliya precisely owing to the fact that they already have siblings and/or other close family members in Israel. Moreover, the relatively recent pattern of American olim who continue to work in the United States<sup>20</sup> further expands connections between American Orthodoxy and Israel,

with the commuters serving as agents of that expansion, even as it may inhibit the absorption and acculturation process of those commuters.

As a result of the patterns in Israeli Religious Nationalism since the Six-Day War, Israel has also contributed to the shift in American Religious Nationalism and its almost single-minded focus on “*Yeshu*,” the administered territories of Judea, Samaria and, until the summer of 2005, Gaza.<sup>21</sup> However, American Modern Orthodoxy did not become “messianized” as did much of Israeli religious nationalism, probably for many of the same reasons that American Zionism, in general, including Religious Zionism, has placed less emphasis on aliya than has Israeli Zionism. As Eliezer Don-Yehiya made clear in a previous Orthodox Forum,<sup>22</sup> place does make a difference. Just as it would be extremely difficult for American Orthodox Jews to live with the cognitive dissonance<sup>23</sup> resulting from a commitment to aliya while remaining in the United States, it would be extremely difficult for American Orthodox to actually believe that the settlement of Judea and Samaria are unquestionably messianic in nature and cannot in any way be stopped. If they did so believe, they would be very hard-pressed to legitimate their remaining in the United States.

In fact, the American Religious Zionist movement, at least as represented by its leadership, has long been generally less politically nationalistic than its counterpart in Israel. Whereas in Israel, no formidable leader of the National Religious Party (NRP) spoke out in support of a government investigation of the massacres in Sabra and Shatilla, “The Rav,” Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, is reported to have threatened to resign from the Mizrahi organization if the leaders of the NRP did not vote for the commission to investigate the massacres.<sup>24</sup>

Nor did American Modern Orthodoxy rally behind anti-disengagement movement as did the Religious Nationalists in Israel and certainly did not become actively involved in anti-Israeli government activity, as did many of the residents of the West Bank and Gush Katif. As Tabory and Sasson point out, even in Israel, there are definite differences vis-à-vis a number of basic issues between

Religious Nationalists who live in Israel's center and those who live in the West Bank.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps this is a function of distance from the arena. Within that context, those in the arena are "insiders," whereas those who are outside of it are "outsiders," and it is well-established that "insiders" and "outsiders" frequently have differing perspectives.<sup>26</sup> One suggestion, following the distinction by Kalman Neuman,<sup>27</sup> is that perhaps American modern Orthodoxy is characterized by religious Zionism – with a small "r" – by religiously-observant Jews who are also Zionists, whereas in Israel it is characterized by Religious Zionism – with a capital "R" – by those who view their Zionism as a part of their religious commitment. Another suggestion is that they are both Religious Zionists but, following Gadi Taub's analysis, most American Religious Zionists subscribe "state Zionism" (*zionut medinit*) whereas many Israeli Religious Zionists subscribe to "redemptive Zionism" (*zionut ge-ulatit*).<sup>28</sup>

American Orthodox Jews are intertwined with Israel in a myriad of ways and, as a result, Israel has impact upon that community in many ways. Israel has affected the religious habits of American Orthodox Jews – many kosher food products available in the United States are produced in Israel; most American Jews who purchase *etrogim* (citrons) buy Israeli *etrogim*; many Orthodox Jews buy religious books from Israel, adopt Israeli religious music as their own and, as was indicated, travel to Israel frequently. For many, Israel is probably the only country outside the United States which they have visited.

One area in which it appears more likely that it was the Year in Israel program, in particular, that influenced American Orthodox patterns is in a number of synagogue-related customs. For example, until the 1960s, it was rare to find an Orthodox synagogue in which the Friday evening service, *Kabbalat Shabbat*, was begun with the singing of *Yedid Nefesh*. That was an Israeli custom which has now been incorporated into American Orthodox culture. Likewise, until the 1960s, the *minhag* (custom) in most Ashkenazi synagogues was that the two chapters of Psalms said after *Kabbalat Shabbat*, *Tehillim* (Psalms) 92 – *Mizmor shir leyom hashabat* and *Tehillim* 93 – *Hashem malakh* were said together, and the Reader, *ba'al tefila*,



repeated only the last verse of Hashem malakh. Since then, however, it is customary for the congregation to stop after Mizmor shir and for the Reader to repeat the last two verses of it before everyone continues with Hashem malakh.<sup>29</sup> This, too, is the adoption into American Orthodox culture of an Israeli custom. One other to be noted here is the reciting of *Birkhat kohanim* (the Priestly blessing) on the Shabbat of the Intermediate Days of a holiday, *Shabbat hol hamo'ed*. For whatever reason, the custom in Ashkenazi synagogues until, approximately, the 1960s, was not to recite it on *Shabbat hol hamo'ed*. Since then, it is increasingly the custom to recite Birkhat kohanim on a *Shabbat hol hamo'ed*, as is the custom in Israel. In all of these cases, the changes were typically introduced by young men who returned from learning in an Israeli yeshiva where they had seen the Israeli custom both in the yeshiva and in shuls there. And just as these influences were subtle and, individually, almost unnoticeable, so has American Orthodox culture been influenced by Israeli culture in many other ways. Indeed, American Orthodoxy and Israel are so intertwined that one can visualize an "Orthodox global village" with Israel as its center.<sup>30</sup>

Having referred to prayer, *nusah hatefila*, mention should also be made of a somewhat related influence of Israel on the American Orthodox community, namely, the renaissance of cantorial concerts as a significant form of legitimate entertainment. Popular in the few large Jewish communities in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, *hazanut* (cantorial) concerts declined in popularity until relatively recently, when, in part as a result of the availability of quality Israeli cantors and their promoters, such concerts, which typically feature top cantors from both the United States and Israel, have become very popular in Orthodox circles in both countries.

Another Israeli influence on entertainment patterns in the American Orthodox community is that of cinema. Israeli films have long been a mainstay of Jewish film festivals in Jewish communities throughout the United States. With respect to the Modern Orthodox community, in particular, the pioneering films of graduates of the Ma'ale School and others, frequently supported by the Gesher

Foundation, which typically focus on issues of religious interest, have found good reception in American Orthodox communities. The most prominent example is that of the film, *Ushpizin*, but there have been others as well. These, in turn, seem to have sparked the development of home-grown American Orthodox cinema production in recent years. The receptivity to the very notion of Orthodox films is novel and is, at least in part, a product of the phenomenon in Israel, where it is much more developed. There is, for example, nothing in the American Orthodox community comparable to Jerusalem's Ma'ale School of Television, Film and the Arts, which trains people in cinematography and to use film as a medium of expression of their identity and Jewish culture. One of Ma'ale's institutes, the Institute of Torah and Creative Endeavor, fosters collaborative projects by rabbis, senior educators and television professionals for creative Jewish expression. Not only is there no such institution in the American Orthodox community, but *at the present time* such an idea hardly seems conceivable in that community. It simply does not blend with the American conception of Orthodoxy.

In fiction as well, the development of haredi spy and adventure fiction originated in Israel, and it subsequently sparked similar development in the United States. As with cinema, there is now a heretofore unknown genre of acknowledged literature in the haredi world, fiction.<sup>31</sup>

Whatever the distinctions between the "ultra-Orthodox," or *haredim*, and "Modern Orthodox," deep connections to Israel characterize both. Whether or not the State of Israel is "the first flowering of redemption," Israel is of great religious significance for both haredim and the Modern Orthodox, as *Eretz Israel*, the Holy Land, as well as the home of the largest or second largest Jewish community and certainly the home of the largest number of Orthodox Jews. Contrary to popular mythology, the so-called haredim are overwhelmingly not anti-Zionist and certainly not anti-Israel. On the contrary, as the 2001 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) reconfirms, Orthodox Jews in the United States, including the "Ultra-Orthodox" or "Hasidic" or "Haredi,"<sup>32</sup> have much stronger ties with Israel than do other American Jews. For many, perhaps

the only newspapers that they read, at least in public, are *Hamodia* and *Yated Ne-eman*. In Monsey, New York, there are today private homes with newspaper boxes out front specifically for the delivered *Hamodia*, an English-language edition of the Israeli newspaper of Agudath Israel. *Yated Ne-eman* is similarly the English-language edition of the newspaper of the more Lithuanian-oriented haredim of the Degel Hatorah party. Both of these newspapers, as well as most of the domestic weeklies which cater to the Orthodox community, such as the *Jewish Press*, focus on Israeli news and events, and they cater to and foster deep and perhaps penultimate ties between American Orthodoxy and Israel.

These patterns, although quite a contrast from the stereotypical image of haredim as anti-Zionist and isolationist, are not all that surprising, especially for those in Western societies. Even in Israel, research indicates a growing “Israelization” of haredim, politically, linguistically, and in many other cultural patterns.<sup>33</sup>

Until mid-2005, the emotional ties of American Orthodox Jews to Israel expressed themselves in a variety of ways. The Orthodox openly rejoiced and/or cried with Israel, and they had no questions or hesitation in expressing their deepest concerns for Israel’s welfare. They were ever-ready to recite Tehillim and other prayers, as well as to undertake fasts for the variety of dangers facing Israel. Isolated deviant cases aside, their concerns were not exclusively for their fellow Orthodox Jews in Israel but for Israel in its entirety.

The summer of 2005 marked a major turning point for American Orthodoxy with respect to its relationship with Zionism and Israel, especially the government of Israel. After Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip/Gush Katif, in the summer of 2005, American Orthodoxy, following their counterparts in Israel, became increasingly critical of the Israeli government and of secular Zionism as a whole. Facing the impending disengagement, the official positions of the major organizations of centrist and modern American Orthodoxy, the Orthodox Union and the Rabbinical Council of America, issued calls which urged restraint, civility, and sensitivity but were not in the least critical of the Israeli government.<sup>34</sup> It is likely that these public positions did not reflect the personal positions of their

members; the latter were almost assuredly much more critical of the disengagement.

After the violent dismantling of Amona, in early 2006, even the organizations became more overtly critical of the Israeli government. The Orthodox Union wrote a strong letter to Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert:

to express our deep dismay regarding the violent scene that was broadcast around the world from Amona last week. We cringed as we viewed the images of members of the elite Yassam unit, tasked with carrying out the rule of law, enter a house and proceed to mercilessly beat fellow citizens who were merely sitting on the floor exercising their right to civil disobedience. We never thought we would see such a dark day in the State of Israel where Israeli citizens are trampled by the horses of their own police force.<sup>35</sup>

The letter continued with more harsh criticism of the police, with only part of one sentence directed at the actions of the protesters: “While we reject the actions of those protesters who resorted to violent tactics such as throwing stones, bricks, glass and paint at soldiers...” The contrast between the positions of the Orthodox Union vis-à-vis the disengagement from Gush Katif and that of the dismantling of Amona appeared to be reflective of a broad shift in the relationship of American Orthodoxy toward both the Israeli government and the broader, non-Orthodox, Zionist movement. Indeed, by the end of the year, at its annual convention, which was held in Jerusalem, the Orthodox Union adopted a resolution referring to Yehuda and Shomron which explicitly states that, “The Orthodox Union may, in exceptional circumstances, take public positions contrary to those of the Government of Israel.” Although the right to dissent has, for many years, been claimed by non-Orthodox American Jewish organizations, this was a first for the Orthodox Union.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, whereas those American Jewish organizations which have dissented from Israeli positions have usually taken positions to the

left of those of the Israeli government, the implied dissent of the Orthodox Union is to the right of the government.<sup>37</sup>

It seems reasonable to suggest that the shift in the Orthodox Union's position was not a product of a deliberate fundamental shift in Religious Nationalist ideology. Rather, it was probably a consequence of socio-political developments during this past year. There was a significant diminution in the status of the Israeli government after the second Lebanon war in the summer of 2006. An even decline in status and confidence resulted from the allegations of widespread corruption of unprecedented proportions in the government which led to the Israeli public's loss of faith in its government<sup>38</sup> and Israel's tarnished image among Diaspora Jewish communities. Under such conditions, it is increasingly implausible even for Israel's most ardent supporters to foreswear public dissent under a principle based on a notion of loyalty. Even if one adheres to the notion that the government has religious significance, it is nevertheless increasingly difficult to view the specific actions of the more or less unified individuals who comprise that government at the present time as having inherent religious significance.

Studies by Adam Ferziger<sup>39</sup> suggest that Samuel Freedman's portrayal of a major struggle and growing rift between American Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews<sup>40</sup> may have slowed, and there are major efforts in the "yeshiva world" to reach out to the non-observant community. Be that as it may, when it comes to the subject of Israel, there does appear to be a growing rift between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox, with the Orthodox manifesting a deepening alienation from non-religious Zionism. It is much too early to predict how this will develop. Indeed, the rift first manifest itself and to a much greater degree in Israel itself. Nevertheless, the Religious Nationalists participated disproportionately in the IDF during the war with Hezbollah in the summer of 2006 and, in the main, they appear to continue to be active, involved and committed citizens of Israel. Nevertheless, it is clear to many in the leadership of the Religious Zionist communities in both Israel and the United States that the alienation and rift will, at least, pose a formidable challenge to the educational system in its ability to inculcate an appreciation

of and loyalty to Religious Zionist values as well as those of Modern Orthodoxy, in general.

### NOTES

1. Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 28 4 (Summer, 1994): 64–130; reprinted in eds., Roberta Rosenberg Farber and Chaim I. Waxman, *Jews in America: A Contemporary Reader* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1999), 320–376.
2. Chaim I. Waxman, "All In the Family: American Jewish Attachments to Israel," in Peter Y. Medding, ed., *A New Jewry?: America Since the Second World War, Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 8 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1992): 136.
3. Chaim I. Waxman, "Congregation, Community, and Continuity: Denominational Affiliation as an Indicator of Jewish Identity," in eds., Sergio DellaPergola and Judith Even, *Studies in Jewish Demography, 1997* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 2001): 281–293; "The Enduring Significance of Denomination" [Hebrew], *Gesher: Journal of Jewish Affairs* 50 (Winter, 2004): 24–31.
4. Shalom Z. Berger, *A Year of Study in an Israeli Yeshiva Program: Before and After* (Ph.D. Diss., Yeshiva University, Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education, 1996); Shalom Z. Berger, in Shalom Z. Berger, Dan Jacobson, Chaim I. Waxman, *Flipping Out? Myth or Fact?: The Impact of the "Year in Israel"* (New York: Yashar Books, 2007).
5. Jay Goldmintz, "The Post-High School Yeshiva Experience in Israel," *Ten Da'at* 2 (Iyar 5751/Spring 1991): 32.
6. On the impact of Project Birthright, see Leonard Saxe, Ted Sasson, and Shahar Hecht, "Taglit-birthright Israel: Impact on Jewish Identity, Peoplehood, and Connection to Israel" (Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, June 2006).
7. For example, data from the 2001 NJPS indicate that Orthodox respondents are much more likely than others to agree with the statement, "Jews in United States and Jews elsewhere share a common destiny." Likewise, dati Jews in Israel express stronger connections to Diaspora Jewry and "Jewish peoplehood" than do their non-dati counterparts. For the Israeli findings, see Simon N. Herman, *Israelis and Jews: The Continuity of an Identity* (New York: Random House, 1970); Ezra Kopelowitz and Lior Rosenberg, "'Israeli-Jews' vs. 'Jewish-Israelis' and the Ritual Connection to Diaspora Jewry," Paper given at the conference, "Dynamic Belonging: Shifting Jewish Identities and Collective Involvements in Comparative Perspective" (Institute for Advanced Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem June 17, 2004).
8. Irving J. Mansdorf, "Knowledge and Attitudes of Post High School Jewish-American Orthodox Students in Israel," <http://www.lookstein.org/resources/>

- israel\_students.pdf, April 2004, and his Follow-Up in October 2004, [http://www.lookstein.org/articles/followup\\_survey.pdf](http://www.lookstein.org/articles/followup_survey.pdf).
9. Yosef Gorny, *The State of Israel in Jewish Public Thought: The Quest for Collective Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); Yosef Gorny, *Between Auschwitz and Jerusalem* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2003).
  10. Even highly Orthodox Jews were taught to act and dress like “a mensch” in public. It was common to see very observant storekeepers on St. Nicholas Avenue without a yarmulke, *kippah* – with bare heads – in their stores; or observant and very learned professors at secular universities with bare heads on campus; etc. I recall, in the mid-1950s, at a talk before the entire student body, the rosh hayeshiva of the Telzer yeshiva, in Cleveland, berated students for going outside, even across the street to the drug store, with their yarmulkes on. He did not, of course, urge them to go bareheaded but, even the notion that one should wear a hat rather than a yarmulke in public implies, at least in part, that one shouldn’t “flaunt” one’s Jewishness.
  11. Chaim I. Waxman, *America’s Jews in Transition* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1983), 104–134. In contrast to the situation described in the previous footnote, in one of the courses I taught at Brooklyn College, on the Sociology of American Jews, I had a few non-observant male students who wore kippot, not for religious but for ethnic reasons.
  12. Although I previously wrote of the “haredization of American Orthodoxy” (*Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints* 376, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 15 February 1998), I have since concluded that the term “haredi” is very largely inappropriate for American Orthodoxy. The reasons for that, briefly, are that American Orthodox, overwhelmingly, have strong ties to Israel and are pro-Israel; go to colleges and universities; and are very much part of the larger society. My analysis of the “humrazation” of American Orthodoxy are discussed in Chaim I. Waxman, “Needed – New Typologies: The Complexity of American Orthodoxy in the 21st Century,” in eds., Stuart Cohen and Bernard Susser, *The Ambivalent Jew: Essays in Memory of Charles Liebman* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 2007): 135–153. For a most astute and penetrating analysis of the nature of haredism, see Binyamin Brown, “*Ve-ein Shiyur Rak Hatora Hazot*” [Hebrew], *Eretz Acheret*, No. 41 (August–October, 2007): 56–65.
  13. Erving Goffman. *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental patients and Other Inmates* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), xiii.
  14. Shalom Z. Berger, Dan Jacobson and Chaim I. Waxman, *Flipping Out*. For a fictional portrayal of this phenomenon, see Tova Mirvis, *The Outside World* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 26–50.
  15. Nacha Cattan, “Jewish Studies Classes See Enrollment Boom,” *The Forward* (January 23, 2004).
  16. Cf., Yair Sheleg, “The North American Impact on Israel Orthodoxy,” Institute on American Jewish-Israel Relations, American Jewish Committee, and the Argov Center of Bar-Ilan University (October, 1999); and Yair Sheleg, *The New Religious Jews: Recent Developments Among Observant Jews in Israel* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keter, 2000).



17. "Now You Can Observe The Mitzvos of Eretz Yisrael," *Five Towns Jewish Times* (December 28, 2006).
18. Tosafot, Tractate *Ketubot* 110b, "Hu omer la'alot..."
19. It is, in some ways, reminiscent of the role of the Yiddish press in the communities of Eastern-European Jewish immigrants to the United States during the years of peak immigration, 1881–1926. The Yiddish press clearly served to preserve the ethnic identity of the immigrants, but also served as an Americanizing agent teaching the immigrants how to adapt to American society. See Mordecai Soltes, *The Yiddish Press, An Americanizing Agency* (New York, Arno Press, 1969). Although operating differently, the Israeli eateries and others allow individuals to feel good about being in the Diaspora because they suggest to them that they are still part of Israel or, in other words, they can "have their cake and eat it too."
20. Dodi Tobin and Chaim I. Waxman, "The Transatlantic Commuter – Living in Israel, Working in the States," *Jewish Action* 66 (Winter, 2005): 44–48; Daphna Berman. "Immigrants Snub Local Employers, Preferring Well-Paid Jobs Abroad," *Haaretz* (Dec. 29, 2006).
21. On this development in Israeli Religious Nationalism, see Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Religion, Ethnicity and Electoral Reform," *Israel Affairs* 4:1 (Autumn, 1997): 73–102; Chaim I. Waxman. "Religion in the Public Square," in eds., Uzi Rebhun and Chaim I. Waxman, *Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press, 2004): 221–239.
22. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Does The Place Make a Difference?: Jewish Orthodoxy in Israel and the Diaspora," in ed., Chaim I. Waxman, *Israel as a Religious Reality* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1994): 43–74.
23. Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962).
24. Rabbi Louis Bernstein in ed., Michael A. Bierman, *Memories of a Giant: Eulogies in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l* (Jerusalem and New York: Urim, 2003): 109–110.
25. Ephraim Tabory and Ted Sasson, "A House Divided?: Grassroots National Religious Perspectives on the Gaza Disengagement and the Future of the West Bank," *Journal of Church and State* 49 (Summer, 2007): 423–443.
26. Robert K. Merton, "The Perspectives of Insiders and Outsiders," *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (1972): 9–47.
27. In this volume.
28. Gadi Taub, *The Settlers: and the Struggle over the Meaning of Zionism* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronoth Books and Chemed Books, 2007): 14–15.
29. This observation was confirmed to me by Cantor Sherwood Goffin, who teaches Cantorial Training, including Nusach of Tefila, at Yeshiva University's Belz School, and has been the Cantor of the Lincoln Square Synagogue, in Manhattan, for more than four decades. I also conducted an informal poll among a dozen Orthodox scholars above age sixty, all of whom recalled these same patterns.
30. Some years ago, Prof. Menachem Friedman, of Bar-Ilan University's Sociology



Department, suggested to me that the connections between the Orthodox in the United States and Israel could appropriately be analyzed within the context of such concepts as the “*haredi* global village” and “Modern Orthodox global village.” The notion I suggest here is built on Friedman’s suggestion but extends it beyond the confines of a particular Orthodox subcommunity.

31. Yoel Finkelman, “Medium and Message in Contemporary Haredi Adventure Fiction,” *Torah Umadda Journal* 13 (2005): 50–87.
32. These were descriptives listed in the survey.
33. See, for example, Kimmy Caplan and Emmanuel Sivan, eds., *Israeli Haredim: Integration Without Assimilation?* [Hebrew], (Tel Aviv: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute/Hakibbutz Hame-uhad Publishing House, 2003).
34. For a critique of as well as a rationale of the official position, see the debate between Emanuel Feldman and Yosef Blau, *Jewish Action* 66:2 (Winter 5766/2005): 38–42.
35. <http://www.ou.org/oupr/2006/amona66.htm>
36. Stewart Ain, “Israel Criticism Gets an O-U,” *Jewish Week* (December 1, 2006): 1.
37. In recent years, there have also been changes for some major non-denominational American Jewish Organizations. At times, they were caught off-guard by their strong positions which were to the right of the Israeli government. But they rarely voice dissent or criticism of such Israeli positions.
38. Etgar Lefkowitz. “85% of Israelis Think Their Leaders are Corrupt, Survey Finds.” *Jerusalem Post* (Jan. 11, 2007): 2.
39. Adam S. Ferziger, “Training American Orthodox Rabbis to Play a Role in Confronting Assimilation: Programs, Methodologies and Directions,” Bar-Ilan University, Faculty of Jewish Studies, Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality, Research and Position Papers, Bar-Ilan University (2003); Adam S. Ferziger, “Between Outreach and ‘Inreach’: Redrawing the Lines of the American Orthodox Rabbinate,” *Modern Judaism*, 25:3 (October, 2005): 237–263; Adam S. Ferziger. “The Emergence of the Community Kollel: A New Model for Addressing Assimilation,” *Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research* (Bar-Ilan University, 2006).
40. Samuel G. Freedman, *Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

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# 16

## Israel's Impact on American Orthodoxy: A Response

*Leonard A. Matanky*

This past Chanukah, one of my congregants called with a halakhic *sh'aila* (question). He wondered what the procedure was when lighting the *hanukiah* (menorah) outside, since this year, he and his entire “block” had decided to light their *hanukiot* outside, just as they did in Israel.

I told him that the procedure is really no different than when lighting candles inside, but I added that maybe the *sh'aila* he should ask is: *should* he light candles on the outside? After all, if for hundreds of years we Jews in the Diaspora have lit our candles inside –

whether because of anti-Semitism or fear of theft – why change now?

But of course, that question was not asked, and I believe that the reason may offer a context for my response to the two preceding papers.

For while it is without question true, as Dr. Waxman has documented, that the State of Israel, the post-high school year in Israel and the *shelihim* (emissaries) from Israel have all impacted and changed Orthodox Jewish life in America; at the very same time, I believe that we are also witnessing the emergence of a dialectic that effects the quality of that relationship.

For on the one hand, there exists the thesis, supported throughout *Hazal*, that the Land of Israel possesses a mystique and sanctity which distinguishes it from all other lands. Yet, as “globalization” effects not only world economies but also the easy access that we enjoy to the Land of Israel, an anti-thesis has emerged as this sacred place becomes familiar, approachable, and even mundane – no different than other lands – creating a sense of sameness between Israel and the Diaspora, or in the terminology of *shelihut*, used by Dr. Ferziger, a near absolute absence of the *shelilat ha-galut* (negation of the exile).

There are many examples of this dialectic, not the least of which is a desire to light Chanukah candles outside, as if the customs of Israel should automatically be transported to the Diaspora.

Yet, I would suggest that it is this dialectic, which stands behind the success and challenges of *Kollelei Torah MiTzion*.

On the one hand, there are those who seek these *kollelim*, not necessarily for the Torah study they present, but more for a sense of near “extraterritoriality” they offer – of the wonder of stepping into a *beit midrash*, whether in Capetown, Cleveland, Chicago, or Moscow, and hearing *ivrit*, seeing the flag of Israel and imagining that we *are* in Israel – that we have recaptured a bit of that sacred, mystical Land in our own backyards.

However, once established, we measure these *kollelim* no differently than any other. We expect *shelihim*, unfamiliar with American culture, language and tradition, and who, by definition are only pres-

ent for a brief time, to have the same immediate and lasting impact on communities as “right-wing kollelim” whose American-born members permanently settle into our communities; we seek in-reach, while these Israeli *avreikhim* (kollel students) seek outreach; and we pray that *aliya* won't be mentioned too often, so as not to disturb our sense of equilibrium living in the Diaspora.

Therefore, while I have personally proposed creating a hybrid kollel, as suggested by Dr. Ferziger, I do wonder if it can truly succeed; because of this dialectic.

For even if the members of Kollel Torah MiTzion came from non-Kookian yeshivot and therefore are able to cope with the reality of a Diaspora that is not yearning to make *aliya*, their *shelihut* is not a *shelihut* exclusively of *limud Torah* (learning Torah). Rather, it is a *shelihut* of Israel experience, of the experiences in which they were raised and hope to share. Combine this zeal with a group of *avreikhim* from American yeshivot, where *Tanakh* and the annual volume published by Tzomet, *Tehumin*, may be valued, but not studied with the same rigor as Talmud and Codes; where university is a given and army service unheard of, and the resulting clash of sameness vs. uniqueness, may be more than one kollel can bear.

Of course, as individuals, we may have the ability to compartmentalize our lives, to keep competing and even conflicting values at play and at bay, but an organization typically cannot.

Therefore, I believe that while Kollel Torah MiTzion has and will continue to have great value to the American Jewish scene, I believe we will see some additional kollelim close, as did Cleveland's or at least, reorganize. Instead we will see Yeshiva University Kollelim open in places which once hosted Kollelei Torah MiTzion, offering continuity, and American style Torah study, struggling to preserve a semblance of Israeli culture through a kollel member or two, or via special visiting scholars or other such program. In this case the sense of sameness will have won-out.

Of course, this does not suggest that we should not try to preserve the *shelihut* of Israeli *avreikhim*, to a hybrid model. For if successful, these Israeli scholars can add to American Modern Orthodox kollelim in a manner that *morim-shelihim* (Israeli teachers)

have added to our schools. However, the challenge will be great to find just the right combination of Israeli and American men.

An additional challenge that the Kollel Torah MiTzion movement has faced is that many who should appreciate the uniqueness of these kollelim are those who studied in Israel themselves. However, that year is no longer the same defining Zionist experience that some of us recall.

I am a product of a pioneering yeshiva for Diaspora students called Beit Midrash LaTorah or BMT. It was not a *yeshivat hesder* (a yeshiva that combines Torah learning with military service), but all of my *shiurim* (classes), save one, were taught in Hebrew, most of my teachers were Israeli, every week there was a outing somewhere in Israel, each of us were expected to volunteer for the *mishmar ezrahi* (civilian service), formal discussions of aliya were frequently held, and current events in Israel were part of our curriculum.

Compare that to the schools where most of our children and especially our daughters attend, “American schools” where the curriculum celebrates, not the uniqueness of Israel, but its sameness, offering programs which could, for the most part, take place in New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago; where Israeli teachers are in the minority, Hebrew language classes are few and far between, and the interaction with Israelis and Israeli society is infrequent. Even in some of our sacred hesder yeshivot, shiurim may be in English, and integration minimal.

Is it any wonder then that Shalom Berger in his landmark study in the 1990s found that while the year in Israel had a significant impact on the religious observance of the students, it did not have a significant impact on the Religious Zionism of our children? Or, in the terms of the dialectic I have suggested, is it surprising that the sense of sameness, of not appreciating the difference between Diaspora and Israel, is growing?

Which may also explain the challenges confronting American Religious Zionism, its apparent lack of activism, growth, and zealotness. For if there is no perceived difference between Israel and the Diaspora, if the sense of sameness trumps the mystique of a Holy Land, then what purpose is there to Religious Zionism?

Perhaps what is needed for American Religious Zionism to re-emerge as a premier force in America and Israel is to reemphasize that a dialectic must exist; that while Israel is accessible, it is unique and unlike all other lands, and that these differences must be cherished and fostered in America and in Israel.

One final thought:

Dr. Ferziger noted that it is actually more likely that, other than a relationship to State of Israel, the worldview put forth in many of the Religious Zionist yeshivas has more in common with American haredism than with Modern Orthodoxy; an observation that Rav Drukman seems to strengthen with his own comments to Ferziger that for American Modern Orthodoxy the most common alternative is haredization.

Part of the reason for that is that year in Israel has become, as Dr. Finkelman noted more than six years ago, a place of *Virtual Volozhin*, where “*lomdus*” (Talmudic scholarship) and “*yeshivish* behavior” are more important than textual skills or independent growth – or what may be considered an ArtScroll versus an authentic yeshiva experience.

If only the Israel experience were at least a “Virtual Jerusalem,” a uniquely Israeli Jewish experience, perhaps then the mystique of Israel, the Sacred Land, would be preserved.

Unquestionably, Israel has impacted, effected and affected all of our lives. But that is the way it should be, because Orthodoxy reinforces these connections, through our prayer, our sacred texts, and our rituals. Yet, if that impact is to be more meaningful than a *hora* danced at a haredi wedding, a falafel stand in a Jewish neighborhood, or even a yearly family trip to the new Jewish Disneyland – called Israel, we must strive to transform our search for sameness to an understanding that Israel is unique, offering us not only another opportunity for spiritual growth, but the prime opportunity for such growth.



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