

Sir Immanuel Jakobovits is Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth and a member of the Editorial Board of *TRADITION*.

## RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO JEWISH STATEHOOD

The centrality of Israel in contemporary Jewish life is bound to be reflected in a journal dedicated to "Orthodox Jewish Thought" especially since current events and policies in Israel are significantly affected by the pressures of religious groups inside and outside the Government, whether "hawks" like Gush Emunim, Lubavitch and Meir Kahane's Kach demanding greater militancy; or "doves" like the Agudat Israel holding the balance of power in the Coalition insisting on purely religious concessions. Thus *Tradition* has lately featured quite a few articles assessing the various religious attitudes toward Zionism and the Jewish State.<sup>1</sup>

Some of these contributions are scholarly and dispassionate; others polemical and plainly partisan. But virtually all of them examine, propagate, or rebut only one particular ideology or personal view. What has not been attempted so far is an overall survey of the different religious responses to the restoration of Jewish sovereignty as such and to Israeli policies generally, insofar as they are guided by, or impinge on, religious

---

This article is concerned solely with the religious attitudes to the Zionist idea and the Jewish State. It does not deal with religious issues arising from Jewish statehood (for example, state-religion relations, religious legislation, "Who is a Jew," and the like). Special attention is also given to controversies between the various religious groups, as reflected in their writings.

The sources are limited, with few exceptions, to *rabbinic* writings (not mere statements) supporting or opposing particular views in the light of Jewish religious teachings and to documentation on such writings.

Within these limitations, there is sizable material on the Neturei Karta, Satmer, Agudah, Lubavitch and of, course, Mizrahi. *Oz VeShalom* has published some rabbinic responses and opinions, claimed to favor its stand, in several pamphlets and over 30 newsletters *Ha-Chug Harayoni Medini le-Ziyonut Datit*, Jerusalem), but none of these rabbinic writings specifically support the movement. Nor could I find such material on Gush Emunim (again other than statements, notably by its principal mentor, the late Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook), though the extensive politico-halakhic writings of Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren mainly (but never expressly) support its cause. On Kach, too, I am not aware of any rabbinic documentation, apart from the (non-halakhic) statements of its founder, Rabbi Meir Kahane.

perceptions. This article will inquire into the reasons for these extraordinarily diverse views, ranging from super-nationalism to rabid anti-Zionism, at least in the light of some historical antecedents as well as some inter-group polemics.<sup>2</sup>

## I

Comparing the religious inspiration of the Zionist movement over the ages with the religious reaction to its realization, one is struck by a strange mixture of paradox and ambivalence: the paradox of the movement's religious nurture before its emergence and the indications of widespread religious opposition, or indifference, to it after its fulfillment, and the ambivalence of the still-unresolved, indeed intensifying, diversity of views on the religious significance of the restoration of Jewish statehood. Partly both the paradox and the ambivalence may be due to the discrepancy between the reborn State of Israel and its biblical blueprint. Perhaps we are unreasonably impatient when we expect in three decades that spiritual consummation which previously took nearly five hundred years to evolve—the period separating the Revelation at Sinai, with its constitutional provisions for national and spiritual sovereignty, followed by Joshua's entry into the Land, and the building of the First Temple by King Solomon.

The origins of the Zionist idea are, of course, entirely religious. Many secularists are no less insistent than religious believers on the slogan "the Bible is our mandate" as the principal basis of our legal and historical claims to the Land. This "mandate" is itself derived from the purely religious covenant between God and Abraham, a Covenant reaffirmed with our people at Sinai and constantly reasserted by our prophets in the context of Israel's religious purpose and destiny. Through the ages, all our dreams and prayers for the Return to Zion have been religiously inspired. And we prayed not so much simply for *our* return, or the restoration of *our* national sovereignty, as for God's return and the establishment of His sovereignty in Zion. Our Return was merely the means—in the words of our daily prayers—for "restoring His Divine Presence to Zion."

Up to well in the 19th century, therefore, all *aliyah* movements were religious movements—from the pioneering beginnings of Nachmanides in the 13th century and the much more significant following of Karo, Luria and others of the mystic school settling in considerable numbers in Safed in the 16th century, to the bulk of the immigrants who founded the "old yishuv" in the 19th century.

Modern political Zionism could never have struck root if it had not been planted in soil seeded and fertilized by the millennial conditioning

of religious memories, hopes, prayers and visions of our eventual Return to Zion. Nor could Hebrew have been revitalized as a modern language if religious Jews had not persevered in maintaining its vitality and the reverence for it through prayer and study. In the 19th century, religious visionaries like Rabbis Zvi Hirsch Kalischer and Judah Alkalai played as important a role as forerunners of modern Zionism as secular nationalists and humanists like Moses Hess and Leon Pinsker.

To this day, the primary dynamic of Zionism in its truest form remains religious. If we distinguish between positive and negative Zionism, or voluntary and involuntary *aliyah*—that is, those *drawn* to Zion simply by the love of the Land and those *driven* there by persecution or by rebellion against the ghettos and their traditions—then such positive Zionism is mainly religiously-motivated. Religious *aliyah* from the free countries is at least five times as high as the corresponding figure of nonreligious *olim*.

In light of these religious dimensions of Zionism—from its origin to the present day—it seems almost incomprehensible that the actual establishment of the Jewish State was greeted with, and still encounters, so much apathy and even downright opposition among large numbers of the religious community. Incredibly, the Arabs, the Vatican and an assortment of anti-Semitic countries are joined only by certain religious sections of our own people in the continued denial of formal recognition to the State of Israel. Since 1967, even the Reform movement has accorded a recognition to Israel which some very Orthodox segments still withhold.

## II

This nonrecognition assumes various forms; some more vehement, others more passive; a few more confined and quite a number more widespread. It includes the refusal to sing the *Hatikvah* or to teach modern Hebrew, to support appeals or other projects sponsored by the Israeli Government or the Jewish Agency, to read the Prayer for the State of Israel, to celebrate *Yom Ha'atsmaut*, or to concede that Zionism is an integral part of Judaism.

Yet, one must hasten to add, accentuating the paradox, it is out of this element that the Western *aliyah* rate is by far the highest, as is the flow of diaspora students learning at Israeli institutions. Entire communities of various hasidic sects have transplanted themselves to Israel from America and elsewhere, notwithstanding their opposition to the Jewish national idea in its existing form.

How can we explain or understand this contradiction between the passionate fervor of yearning for the Return and the apparent indifference to its realization; between the hostility to the State and the love for the Land of Israel?<sup>3</sup>

The paradox is equally striking at the other end of the religious spectrum. The most militant form of Jewish nationalism is today also generated out of religious convictions. Indeed, without the fierce idealism of the Gush Emunim settlers in Judea and Samaria, often cheerfully enduring extreme privations, self-sacrifice and perils, the pristine spirit of the early Zionist pioneers would now hardly exist at all. Their intransigence is all the more uncompromising because it is dictated by religious rather than political or military considerations.<sup>4</sup> Their main argument in defying the Israel Government, not to mention world opinion, by asserting the claim to Jewish settlement in the entire Land of Israel is precisely that this is required by biblical precept and halakhic imperatives. Other religious groups sharing this radical stance, notably Lubavitch,<sup>5</sup> are likewise motivated by purely religious dictates, though their attitude to Zionism as such, and indeed to the religious significance of Jewish statehood, may vary greatly.

### III

It would be an over-simplification, though not without some substance, to define the various groups by their observance or non-observance of *Yom Ha'atsmaut*: Those who recite *Hallel* with *Berakhah* (Mizrachi); without *Berakhah* (probably most religious Zionists outside Israel); no *Hallel* and *Tahanun* (many Agudists); and *Tahanun* (Satmar and numerous other hasidic as well as yeshivah elements)—with stones thrown (literally or figuratively) at those who say *Hallel* (Neturei Karta) or *Tahanun* (Kahane's Kach).<sup>6</sup> There are inconsistencies and overlaps in this classification.

Some find saying *Hallel* with *Berakhah* quite compatible with being in the Peace Now camp (Oz veShalom). On the other hand, there are *Hallel*-opponents who regard Jews in Israel as being in *galut* no less than in the diaspora, and are yet on the extreme right of the religio-political spectrum (Lubavitch); whilst other non-Zionists refuse to join the Israeli cabinet, for religious reasons, though they keep it in power by supporting the coalition (Agudah). Again, in many intensive Jewish schools where *Hallel* is officially proscribed, the *aliyah* rate among graduates is high (for example, the Hasmonean in London), whilst there are enthusiastic *Hallel*-sayers to whom *aliyah* is an ideal for others. The pendulum, hung on the same allegiance to the *Shulhan Arukh*, swings all the way from those prepared to negotiate with the PLO for living under Arab rule (Neturei Karta) to those seeking to expel the Arabs by violence if necessary (Kach).

What unites all religious groups, popular misconceptions and propaganda notwithstanding, is their aversion to a theocratic state<sup>7</sup> as demonstrated by the fraction with the greatest leverage and the most

far-reaching religious demands declining to accept cabinet posts (Agudah).

Even more important, what all these groups also have in common (as indeed with most secular Israelis, too) is an indifference to the non-Jewish world often bordering on disdain. This attitude may be quite understandable in the shadow of Western civilization's betrayal of the Jewish people leading to the Holocaust and the growing isolation of Israel in the world community. Nevertheless, this Jewish religious response, now so widespread in the most diverse religious circles, whether Zionist or anti-Zionist, does represent an abrupt disengagement from the universal dimension of Judaism in the tradition of Israel's prophets and sages. Such a withdrawal from "the mission to the nations," or the concern to promote their moral advance through Israel's example and its good name in their eyes, may be natural for hasidic or yeshivah elements conditioned to self-containment by the "*galut*-mentality" nurtured in Eastern Europe. But it is surprising that this introspective vision is equally shared even by those whom the Zionist idea inspires with messianic fervor, since the whole concept of messianism is after all inseparable from universal salvation and Israel's serving as "a light unto the nations."

#### IV

These common denominators apart, we may discern three principal divisions, each of them of course further ramified by various subdivisions.

First, and historically perhaps most significant, there is the non-Zionist, or more often even anti-Zionist, camp. Its activist heartland is the hasidic sect of Satmar.<sup>8</sup> Politically, this camp is prodded by the extreme fringe element of the numerically-insignificant Neturei Karta,<sup>9</sup> probably counting no more than a few hundred adherents in Israel and a few isolated diaspora fastnesses.

The antics and fanaticism of these anti-Israel zealots, repugnant to so many Jews, may be limited to these groups. So is their implacable hostility to the "Zionist heresy" as the incarnation of evil. But their basic philosophy in rejecting the legitimacy of Zionism is shared by a very large and important section of the Orthodox community. Sympathising with this attitude are virtually all the hasidic movements,<sup>10</sup> the bulk of what is known as the "yeshivah-world"<sup>11</sup> (with the notable exception of the Bnei Akivah yeshivot) led by most of today's leading Torah sages, and a considerable segment of the so-called "Independent Orthodox congregations"—all now experiencing such an extraordinary growth-rate all over the world. For all these, the foundation of Israel was and remains, religiously, a non-event. Together, the members of these groups may well run into several hundred thousand souls, possibly by now in excess

of half-a-million. The difference between Satmar, and even most Agudists,<sup>12</sup> who grant a form of *de facto* recognition to Israel, is one of degree and emphasis rather than of fundamentals. They all oppose political Zionism and negate Jewish Statehood as a manifestation of religious significance or prophetic fulfillment.

Their views are, to be sure, well-founded on Jewish literary sources and historical precedents. For instance, they refer to the famous oaths taken by the exiles of Jerusalem at the time of its destruction, and recorded in the Talmud (*Ketubot* 111a), never to reconquer the Land by force, or they point to Rashi's commentary (on Exodus 15:14) attributing the massacre of the tribe of Ephraim mentioned in the Book of Chronicles to Ephraim's attempt to anticipate the deliverance from Egypt by a premature and violent escape.<sup>13</sup>

Historical analogies, too, are not hard to find. There is the attitude of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai in coming to terms with the conquering Romans and in opposing the Zealots' resolve to continue the struggle. And there is the scorn with which Rabbi Akiba's colleagues ridiculed his claims for Bar Kochba's messianic mission in regaining Jewish independence from the Romans. These episodes certainly show that the anti-nationalist line is not altogether alien to the authentic Jewish tradition.

Nor are the numerous anti-nationalist rabbinical leaders and scholars today without predecessors of high eminence at other critical periods in our history. Leanings in this direction may well be found, for example, with a ranking thinker and statesman of the stature of Don Isaac Abarbanel, the principal Jewish leader and scholar at the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and his reliance on a Messiah unaided by human effort. How different the course of Jewish history might have been, as has been suggested,<sup>14</sup> had he directed his fellow-exiles to reconquer or resettle their own land rather than to exchange the exile of Spain for that of Italy, Greece or Turkey in anticipation of the Messianic Redeemer. Even the resettlement of Jews in England some three hundred years ago was not unrelated to this line of thinking. Menasseh ben Israel pressed Oliver Cromwell to readmit the Jews on the ground that the coming of the Messiah would be imminent if only the Jewish dispersion were to be completed by its extension to England—*Angleterre*, "the end of the earth."

Again, in the 19th century, the founder of modern Orthodoxy, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, strongly affirmed the *galut* as an indispensable means to fulfil the Jewish mission to the nations, and he warned against any idea of a pre-messianic effort to restore Jewish national sovereignty in the face of Gentile opposition. Indeed, Hirsch may well be regarded as the spiritual father of modern religious anti-Zionism, as a reading of

his voluminous works will confirm.<sup>15</sup> Incidentally, distinct overtones of this philosophy can be detected even in the writings and policies of Martin Buber<sup>16</sup> and, for very different reasons, of Isaiah Leibowitz.<sup>17</sup>

Added to the support for their stand which these religious opponents of Zionism draw from Jewish literature and history, is their abhorrence of the secularization of Jewish life. They regard as utterly inconsistent the lofty visions of the Return to Zion by our prophets and sages with the realities of Jewish statehood today. They simply cannot believe that a secular state can be the fulfillment of biblical promises and millennial prayers. But it is only fair to stress again that their hostility to Zionism in no way compromises the love of the Land of Israel and often the intense encouragement they give their followers to settle there.

## V

The second important religious response to the national idea takes the exactly opposite line. It is represented by those who believe, with equal conviction, that the cataclysmic events culminating in the establishment of the Jewish State, followed by the reunification of Jerusalem and the Jewish reconquest of the bulk of the historic Land of Israel in the Six-Day War, are indeed happenings of the most momentous religious significance in fulfillment of biblical promises. Consequently, they hail these events as an essential and irreversible part of the final messianic process—"the beginning of the Redemption."<sup>18</sup>

This school of thought finds its main exponents in the Mizrachi movement,<sup>19</sup> though its supporters include many beyond the confines of party lines. Its principal protagonists were spiritual and scholarly giants of the calibre of Rabbi A. I. Kook and Rabbi J. L. Maimon, succeeded by Rabbi I. H. Herzog and other rabbinic immortals of our age. Rejecting the literary and historic evidence produced by their opponents as misleading or irrelevant, they regard the experiences of our times as being without precedent, and they point to the miracle of Israel's rise from the catastrophe of the Holocaust, accompanied by the Ingathering of Exiles, as unmistakable signs that the first acts in the drama of the Final Redemption are at hand.

Naturally, the devotees of this philosophy, too, do not lack literary and historical material to sustain their religious Zionism. Statements in the Talmud and rabbinic literature extolling life in the Land of Israel, and its unity with the Jewish people and faith, are legion. The line of leading Sages advocating a mass return to Zion stretches all the way, certainly from Nachmanides to the present time. They also find ample halakhic support for the claim that it is a religious duty to engage in war to liberate the Land,<sup>20</sup> to bring it under Jewish control and to promote

the corporate expression of full Jewish life through the exercise of Jewish sovereignty. Since the highest aspirations of the Jewish people cannot be achieved without national independence, they regard life in the Jewish State even under nonreligious rule as preferable to Jewish exilic existence,<sup>21</sup> however intensive its Jewish vibrancy may be.

All religious nationalists would subscribe to these fundamental tenets. Yet there is today a major difference among them on the extent to which these beliefs must govern or override political considerations. Part of the argument also concerns the applicability of patently messianic calculations to the contemporary situation and its dilemmas. A considerable and still influential section of the Mizrahi movement, while not questioning the supreme religious significance of Jewish Statehood as a forerunner to the promised Redemption, nevertheless acknowledges the reality of factors beyond Israel's control—such as external political pressures, the impact of an ever-increasing Arab minority on the Jewish character of the State, and the claims of Palestinians to some territorial concessions for the sake of peace provided they do not constitute a security risk.<sup>22</sup> Ranking religious leaders inclining to this stance are Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik<sup>23</sup> and Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.<sup>24</sup>

Leading the fierce opposition to these moderates is the Gush Emunim movement,<sup>25</sup> which has gathered formidable strength since the Yom Kippur War, and which, despite its purely religious motivation, now enjoys widespread support among other ultra-nationalists as well. The late Rabbi A. I. Kook's passionate commitment to Jewish self-redemption in the Land of Israel is frequently cited as a vindication of the Gush Emunim platform today. But careful students of his prolific and inspired writings are inclined to challenge this posthumous invocation of support for a contrived eschatology of confrontation and militancy as alien to his pacific teachings and mellow character.<sup>26</sup>

For others, the battlecry "not an inch," with its "all-or-nothing" overtones, evokes ominous echoes of the Masada experience—an episode quite unique in Jewish history. Unique not because of its heroic martyrdom (for which there are ample parallels), but because of the declared preference by an extreme religious sect for a national euthanasia or death with dignity over life under foreign subjection, for which Jewish history has no parallel<sup>27</sup>.

Even more disturbing to the religious and historical sensitivities of many are the messianic undercurrents of this religious radicalism. The pages of Jewish history are littered with the debris, sometimes the lethal shrapnel, left behind by the explosion of pseudo-messianic movements, as grim reality dashed with shattering force the high expectations of imminent deliverance they had raised. The bitter wounds inflicted by devastating disillusionment stretch from the collapse of the Bar Kochba



rebellion<sup>28</sup> to the fearful aftermath of the Shabbetai Zvi debacle.

As will be explained in the next part, there is all the difference between messianic *hopes*, which constitute the very stuff of faith serving our people to prevail over our tribulations, and messianic *expectations* of impending salvation. Basing national policies or religious guidance on such *assumptions* can lead to catastrophic consequences against which we are forewarned by ample danger signals flashed from the shipwrecks of messianic disasters spread along the course of our annals for the past two thousand years.

## VI

Finally, between the two poles of intense religious nationalism and anti-nationalism, is a third grouping. Though less vociferous and politically less clearly defined or organized, it may still be most significant numerically. In contrast to the first group, its adherents strongly and unequivocally affirm their commitment to the State of Israel, supporting its institutions and recognizing its religious significance as a wondrous manifestation of Divine favor. They regard themselves as religious Zionists without reservation. Yet they differ from the second group in one crucial respect.

Perhaps this difference can best be illustrated by a critical distinction between the two versions of the Prayer for the State of Israel. The text attributed to the late Chief Rabbi Herzog, which is widely used in Israel and in some diaspora communities, specifically refers to the State of Israel as "the beginning of the sprouting forth of our Redemption." In other words, it authentically declares the Jewish State to be not only the fulfillment of our hopes and prayers, but the incipient phase in the process of the promised "Redemption," a term used only for the realization of our messianic aspirations. On the other hand, this phrase is omitted in the text authorized by the late Chief Rabbi Brodie, as it appears in the Singer's Prayer Book and is commonly used in Britain and the Commonwealth communities. This version passes no authentic opinion, or reserves final judgment, on whether or not the present State of Israel is in fact the embryonic nucleus out of which the ultimate Redemption is *bound* to develop, with all its universal ramifications of the Messianic era which form an essential part of Prophetic teaching and Jewish belief.

The difference between these two versions is of course not only of semantic, theoretical or even purely philosophical significance. It marks a fundamental divergence of views on the religious interpretation of present-day events as well as the place of the State of Israel in the perspective of biblical visions. From this divergence naturally flow some important practical consequences.

If the premessianic character of the State is taken for granted as a *certainty*, whether as an act of faith or of rational conviction, then obviously conscious and deliberate efforts must be made to ensure that all related biblical prophecies fall into place, and that our national strategy must be based on this assumption. This might, for instance, include the planned liquidation of the diaspora, or an unconcerned resistance to the pressures of world opinion, safe in the knowledge that the advances towards full Redemption are irreversible. Faith can thus govern pragmatic policies, and risks can be disregarded.

On the other hand, if the premessianic stage of our current experience lies in the realm of *hope*, rather than certainty, then such conclusions may not yet be warranted, and a more "realistic" approach may be indicated. This more cautious attitude, while it in no way affects the intensity of the commitment to Israel, would of course also cushion our people against the impact of reverses such as we suffered in the Yom Kippur War, and as may yet be encountered before Israel is finally at peace and the promise of Redemption shared by the entire human family.

For the protagonists of this view, the halakhic demand "not to rely on miracles" remains paramount and in contradiction to the widely-accepted dictum, first ascribed to Ben Gurion: "He who does not believe in miracles is not a realist" as a norm for Israeli policymaking. For them, neither the uncompromising determination with which we assert our national claims, nor the self-reliance on military strength, nor even the simple faith that in the end "all will be in order," can guarantee ultimate salvation. In their religious perspective, based on faith in the conditional character of the covenant between God and Israel, only religious and moral worthiness can provide such a guarantee, as spelled out in the second paragraph of the *Shema*, by all the prophets and reaffirmed by the Psalmist: "If only My people would hearken unto Me, and Israel walk in My ways, I would soon subdue their enemies and turn My hand against their adversaries" (81:15).<sup>29</sup>

## VII

This survey is confined to examining the different strands of the main religious responses evoked by the rebirth of Israel. It would not be complete, however, without at least cursorily projecting these responses, or their effect, onto the wider Jewish scene in the post-War world.

Even secularists will no longer deny that all these groups within the Orthodox community, whatever their differences, have made enormous contributions to the reconstruction of Jewish life after the devastation of the Holocaust. In fact, they now represent the only true growth element within the Jewish people. Enjoying a disproportionately high birthrate

and having achieved, for the first time in modern history, virtual immunity to erosion by assimilation, intermarriage and *yeridah*, they alone need no longer feature the question of Jewish survival as the first item on the global Jewish agenda.

This achievement is all the more remarkable when one remembers that, whilst we lost one-third of our people at large in the European catastrophe, Orthodoxy suffered the destruction of perhaps as much as 90 percent of its strongholds, its citadels of learning, its rabbis and scholars and its vast communities which had been concentrated in Eastern and Central Europe. In the light of this near-annihilation, the regeneration of Torah living and learning in Israel and the Western World, on a scale and of an intensity never previously known in these communities, is nothing short of one of the great wonders of our time and of all time. These colossal advances are beginning to reclaim for Orthodoxy the primacy and influence which had gradually declined ever since the Emancipation.

The contributions of the diverse groups towards this momentous achievement, while perhaps equal in value, are altogether different in substance and size. For the astounding Orthodox resurgence itself, it must be conceded, the non-Zionist element is primarily responsible. Perhaps because they could afford to be more single minded and were less distracted by other national aspirations, they succeeded in pioneering the creation of networks of schools, yeshivot and seminaries, and in rebuilding the shattered remnants of the hasidic fraternities (Satmar now have the largest Jewish day school in the world!). Through their efforts, there are now hundreds of thousands of intensely committed and knowledgeable young people, and entire communities have been rescued from spiritual oblivion.

Religious Zionists may have been junior or later partners in these pioneering enterprises. Their unique contribution is of another order. From their ranks, and more particularly the Bnei Akivah high schools and the Yeshivot-Hesder under Mizrachi sponsorship combining intensive Torah studies with positive nationalism and army service, have emerged a growing breed of young idealists, distinguished by their total dedication, self-discipline and spiritual stature, who have salvaged the honor of religious Jewry and regained widespread respect for their convictions. Their influence on the direction of Jewish affairs, already appreciable, is bound to gather increasing momentum, even—perhaps especially—if this is not expressed simply in political party votes.

Jointly these two segments, though otherwise at opposite poles, have ensured the continuity of Jewish life and strengthened our people's resilience in the face of mounting hostility and international isolation. This feat is all the more noteworthy when set against the collapse of the

philosophy of secularist nationalism which for many decades promoted the illusion that the restoration of Jewish Statehood would put an end to the abnormality of the Jewish condition, securing the equality of the Jewish people among the nations and the elimination of anti-Semitism.

## VIII

No effort has been made here to minimize the radical divisions which beset the religious community today in its response to what is certainly one of the most momentous turning points in our long and checkered history.

Of course, internal dissension, when driven to the point of internecine strife and hatred, and especially when fanned by religious passions, can lead to the most disastrous consequences, as a greater threat to our security than any external enemy. Unless controversy, however bitter, is bridled by mutual tolerance and understanding, the perils of an internal conflagration are real and sinister, as we remember only too well from the "causeless hatred" which devastated the Second Jewish Commonwealth.

But as long as we maintain a disciplined respect for each other's views and convictions, we have nothing to fear from controversy and disagreement. On the contrary, the dynamics of Jewish thought and life are such as to make diversity, and even constructive conflict, an indispensable ingredient of progress, creativity and vitality. Certainly since biblical times, we have never responded to the promptings of revolutionary thinking or convulsive experiences with monolithic uniformity. In the tensions generated by debate lies the mystique of Jewish indestructibility and the road to the preacher's prescription: "Salvation is in the multitude of counsellors" (Prov. 11:14).

## NOTES

1. Isaiah Leibowitz, "The Spiritual and Religious Meaning of Victory and Might," and "The Mitzvot, the Messiah and the Territories," (Spring 1969); Norman Lamm, "The Ideology of the Neturei Karta," (Fall 1971); Emanuel Feldman, "Israel, Torah and I," (Fall 1975); Hayim Donin, "Israel, Torah and I: Musings of a Permanent Resident," (Fall 1976); Sol Roth, "The Right to the Land," (Fall 1977); Uriel Simon and Leon Stitskin, "The Biblical Destinies—Conditional Promises," (Spring 1978); Shimon M. Glick, "The Tragedy of Gush Emunim," (Summer 1981); Binyamin Walfish, "Gush Emunim—Faith and Hope," (Winter 1981). For some other relevant articles in *Tradition*, see notes 15, 20, 22 and 27.
2. There is of course a vast literature of religious polemics on political Zionism. Among the earliest is a collection of anti-Zionist statements and letters by leading rabbis (including Hermann Adler) published under the title *Or Layesharim* (Warsaw, 1900), followed a year later by a book of pro-Zionist rebuttals by similarly eminent rabbis entitled *Beyn Or Le-hoshékh* (Vilna, 1901). For a list of other early rabbinical writings against Zionism, see *Bibliographia le-Toldot Am Yisrael*, Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem, 5736. The polemical

works cited in this essay are confined to current rabbinical arguments between the various religious factions. In a more recent religious attack on Zionism under the mounting pressure of the Holocaust, see Isachar Reichthal, *Em Haban'im Semechah*, Budapest, 1943.

3. There is a striking precedent for this apparent contradiction. The beginnings of formal anti-Zionism will always be associated with the "Protestrabbiner"—a term coined by Herzl for the five German rabbis (two Orthodox and three Reform) who signed and published a protest letter against Herzl and the First Zionist Congress in 1897. Seventy years later, a survey discovered that almost all the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the "Protest Rabbis" had settled in Israel! (*Ma'ariv*, 16 July 1968, cited in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 13:1255.) By contrast, few descendants of the secular founders and leaders of Zionism now live in Israel, if they remained Jews at all. There is surely a profound lesson in this irony!
4. On visiting Elon Moreh early in 1981 with a group of European chief rabbis, I asked a leader of that exposed new settlement overlooking Shechem what motivated these idealists to live there, having defied the Israeli Government and experiencing much hardship and danger; was it Israel's security or the determination to assert Jewish claims to all parts of *Eretz Yisrael*? "Security?" he answered, "I know nothing about security; I am not a general. We are here solely to carry out our religious duty to occupy the whole Land."
5. Lubavitch activism on the extreme right of the Israeli politico-religious scene is relatively new. Thus, Israel is not mentioned at all in J. Immanuel Schochet's "The Philosophy of Lubavitch Activism", in *Tradition*, (Summer 1972). For details on the present Lubavitch stand, see *Da'at Torah B'Inyanei Hamatsav b'Eretz Hakodesh*, by R. Shalom Dov Wolpo, Kiryat Gat, 1981, based on Talks by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson of Lubavitch. For more recent statements, especially on the conflict with the Agudah's Rabbi Eliezer Shach, see also the journal *K'far Chabad*, 1982, nos. 35-37.

The Rebbe's implacable opposition to the Camp David Accord, the surrender of Sinai, and yielding "an inch or less" of the Land of Israel is based entirely on the halakhah permitting the violation of the Sabbath to protect a Jewish border town even if non-Jews "come merely to take straw and stubble, lest they capture the city and find it easy to make further conquests" (*Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim*, 329:6). Later he added the inviolability of the Land's sanctity as a second factor.

Nevertheless, the Rebbe firmly denies that present events indicate the *geulah*, and he considers Jews living inside Israel as being no less in *galut* than those outside (see Talk, published in *She'arim*, 23 April 1980). The Jewish State, he declares, is a haven for Jews and Torah, but "it has nothing to do with the Redemption or the Beginnings of the Redemption" (*Da'at Torah*, p.24). Nor does the return of millions of Jews represent the Ingathering of the Exiles which will be realized only after the rebuilding of the Temple in messianic times (p.29). Even the Government of Israel embodies no Jewish sovereignty other than Jewish leadership exercised over any large community of Jews (p.30). The author of *Da'at Torah*, now in its third edition, has lately compiled a further even bulkier volume *Shalom Shalom V'eyn Shalom* (1982), in which he reproduces numerous press cuttings and the like to support the Lubavitch stand and virulently attacks a letter counselling moderation by Rabbi E. Shach.

The anomaly of the anti-Zionism of Lubavitch contrasted with the intransigence on any territorial concessions (only the latter being widely publicized) has generally escaped public attention, though it has occasionally been exposed and challenged. See, for example, Amnon Schapiro, "Where is the Galut, in Brooklyn or Jerusalem?" in *Amudim*, Adar 5740 (no. 413). *Editor's Note*: See further response to Schapiro's article in *Amudim* 5740, (S.C.)

6. The halakhic literature justifying or opposing the various practices is very considerable. For an interesting exchange between Rabbi Mosheh Zvi Neriah (opposing *Berakhah*) and Rabbi Meshulam Roth (favoring *Berakhah*), see *Shanah b'Shanah*, Hechal Shlomo, Jerusalem, 5727. For a fuller discussion of the *Hallel* controversy, see Menachem Kasher, *Hatekufah Hagedolah*, pp. 227 ff., and p. 9f. (note). Even the Chief Rabbinate of Israel have issued conflicting instructions: whilst Chief Rabbis Herzog and Unterman ruled against reciting the *Berakhah* (Kasher, p.10), Chief Rabbi Goren insists on it (see his *Torat Ha-Mo'adim*, Tel Aviv, 5724 pp. 576-597.). On Meir Kahane's "Manifesto," see his *They Must Go*, New York, 1981.
7. For a fuller rebuttal of this canard against religious Jews, see my "The Two Faces of Orthodoxy," in *The Jewish Chronicle*, 25 September 1981.

8. Satmar's anti-Zionism (and the opposition to it) commands some impressive literature. The doctrine is propagated with intense zeal in two scholarly works by the late Rebbe of Satmar, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, *Vayoel Mosheh*, Brooklyn, 5721; and *Al Hage'eulah ve'al Hatemurah*, Brooklyn, 5727. The arguments and conclusions of Rabbi Teitelbaum were refuted with great erudition by the encyclopedic scholar Rabbi Menachem Kasher in *Hatekufah Hagedolah*, Jerusalem, 1968. Kasher's work was in turn vehemently challenged in an anonymous volume of considerable bulk and scholarship, *Kuntres Veba'emet Ed Le'atmo*, Brooklyn, undated.
9. For two authentic works in English, see I. Domb, *The Transformation: The Case of Neturei Karta*, London, 1958; and Emile Marmorstein, *Heaven at Bay: The Jewish Kulturkampf in the Holy Land*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969. See also Norman Lamm's article cited in Note 1.
10. The opposition of hasidic leaders to Zionism goes back to the days of Herzl who failed in several efforts to win their support. See Harry Rabinowicz, "Herzl and Hasidism," in *Niv Hamidrashia*, Tel Aviv 1974. However, some renowned Rebbes strongly supported the Return to the Land throughout the Zionist era; see Menachem Kasher, *Hatekufah Hagedolah*.
11. On the association of this ideology with the "yeshivah-world", see S. Zalman Abramov, *Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State*, Rutherford, 1976, p. 232.  
A rare (because of the usual indifference) but typical presentation of the "yeshivah-view" on contemporary issues is the 180-page anonymous book *Beyn Sheshet Le'asor*, 3rd enlarged edition, Jerusalem, 5739. While it advocates the intense love of the Land as unique on account of its holiness, it completely rejects Zionism or any religious recognition of the State, arguing (against the view of the Agudist *Hamodia's* editor) that today's leading Torah sages have in no way modified the uncompromising opposition of the Hazon Ish and the Brisker Rav at the time of the establishment of the State.
12. "Agudath Israel, from its inception, approached Zionism in a most negative manner, but the upbuilding of the Land in a most positive manner" (Joseph Friedenson, *A History of Agudath Israel*, New York, 1970, p.26.) At the Third "Knessia Gedola" (Marienbad, 1937), the "Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah" declared: "A Jewish state not based on the laws of the Torah is a denial of our peoplehood . . . and threatens our existence as a people." Yet the Assembly, following a debate raging for three days, finally rejected the Peel Commission Partition plan, since "the Jewish people cannot possibly compromise . . . the boundaries of the Holy Land established by the Creator," but partly also for "fears about a secular Jewish state" being set up (*ib.* p.36).

Forty-three years later, at the Sixth "Knessia Gedola" (Jerusalem, 1980), the views on Zionism and Jewish statehood had hardly changed, though the prevailing opinion on territorial concessions was more conciliatory, as expressed in the keynote address by Rabbi Eliezer Shach of Ponevez, the senior Yeshiva dean (reproduced, together with other writings, in his *Michtavim Uma'amarim*, Bnei Brak, 1980). The stance taken at that vast assembly again provoked bitter opposition, particularly by the Mizrahi, as documented in the pamphlet *Lemahutah shel Medinat Yisrael* (following the accusations at the "Knessia Gedola"), Mizrahi World Center, Jerusalem, 1980.

Recently the official Agudah stand was most unambiguously proclaimed when its Knesset delegates were instructed by the Council of Torah Sages to abstain from voting for the Golan Annexation Law, despite its coalition commitments. As widely reported in the world Jewish press, Rabbi Eliezer Shach added to the furor this edict created by invoking the commandment "not to provoke the nations" (Deut. 2:5), arguing that Jews had always survived by submissiveness in the face of gentile provocation and that the Jewish people had lived without the Golan for 2000 years and would continue to do so. Instead of godless nationalism only a return to the Torah could assure Jewish existence. The bitter attacks on this defiant statement, especially by Lubavitch, aroused thousands of yeshivah students and their leaders to demonstrate in New York and elsewhere against this challenge to "authentic Torah opinion" and the "honor of its sages."

13. Both these quotations were cited as long ago as 1885 to warn against any violent conquest of the Land by even so pro-Zionist a rabbinical leader as Dr. Israel Hildesheimer, the friend and supporter of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer: "Of course, in all these ventures, I considered only the principle of colonization, but never of a seizure of Palestine. No one can sympathize less than I with those 30,000 Ephraimites who wanted to hasten their freedom by storm twenty-three years before the Exodus from Egypt; it must never be forgotten that, according

to our sages one of the warnings given by God to those dragged into captivity was not to press for the end of the exile by force. To pave the way towards the messianic future in a quiet manner according to human ability is a Jewish duty; beyond this line begins rashness bordering on crime" (Israel Hildesheimer, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Meir Hildesheimer, Frankfurt am Main, 1923, p.216).

14. See, Benzion Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, JPSA, 1953, p. 255f. Cf. also Isaiah Leibowitz, *Emunah, Historia ve-Erachim*, Jerusalem, 5742, p. 102f.
15. Striking illustration is to be found in his commentary on the Fourth Blessing of the Grace after Meals: "When, during the reign of Hadrian, the uprising led by Bar Kochba proved a disastrous error, it became essential that the Jewish people be reminded for all time . . . that Israel must never again attempt to restore its national independence by its own power: it was to entrust its future as a nation solely to Divine Providence. Therefore when the nation, crushed by this new blow, had recovered its breath and hailed even the permission to give a decent burial to the hundreds of thousands who had fallen about Betar as the dawn of a better day, the sages who met at Yavneh added yet another blessing to the prayer for the restoration of Yerushalayim." (*The Hirsch Siddur*, The Samson Raphael Hirsch Publication Society, Feldheim, Jerusalem-New York, 1972, p. 703).

Hirsch refused Kalischer's plea publicly to endorse the society for the resettlement of Jews in the Land, probably for "Germano-nationalistic" reasons; see Sam N. Lehman-Wilzig, "Proto-Zionism and its Proto-Herzl: The Philosophy and Efforts of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer," in *Tradition*, (Summer 1976) p.65.

For further relevant sources in Hirsch's writings, see "Samson Raphael Hirsch," in my *The Timely and the Timeless*, London, 1977, p.254.

16. "Zion must be born in the soul before it can be created in visible reality". Protesting against the power of the sword in determining the fate of the Land, he declared: "The weapons of war may defeat the land; they cannot conquer it; conquest must come from within, as a deed of love." And again, "Only he will conquer it who, as did Israel long ago, will turn this land into the habitation of the Invisible One". These views were in some respects even more anti-Jewish Statehood than Satmar's, for they led Buber to advocate his peculiar belief in creating "a peaceful symbiosis of Jews and Arabs in Palestine as peoples having equal rights in a binational commonwealth"; he saw "the authenticity of Zion as being tested by Israel's attitude to Ishmael". See Martin Buber, *On Zion—the History of an Idea*, East and West Library, 1973, pp. viii-ix.
17. See his *Amunah, Historia ve-Arachim*, Akademon, Jerusalem, 5742. While declaring himself "a Zionist and a patriot of the State of Israel" (p. 70), he sees the purpose of the State neither in serving as "a light unto the nations" (which was an assignment given to the prophets, not to Israel [p. 122]), nor as a salvation from Jewish alienation and insecurity (Jews are safer today in other lands [p. 128]), but simply because "we are fed up with being ruled by goyim" (p.129). In fact, he regards the attribution of *value* to the state itself as "a fascist idea" (pp. 130 and 138), the choice of Israel in the teachings of Yehudah Halevi, the Maharal of Prague and Rabbi Kook as "a national-racist chauvinism" (p. 132), and any messianic significance ascribed to present events as misguided and highly dangerous (pp. 102 and 120). Hence, he advocates the complete separation of religion from the State (pp. 127 and 187), and regards *Yom Ha'atmaut* as purely secular, marking the victory of the modern "Hellenists" and not the "Hasmoneans" (p. 70). He also strongly opposes the "Greater Israel" devotees, as a peril to Israel's security and Jewish character (p. 214).
18. The most comprehensive work presenting the sources and rabbinical authorities supporting the Return to Zion and the Jewish State as part of the process of Redemption is Menachem Kasher's massive *Hatekufah Hagedolah*, Torah Shlemah Institute, Jerusalem, 5769. It includes *Kol Hator* (with an introduction and commentary) containing the views of the Gaon of Vilna on the Beginning of the Redemption.
19. The literature on this mainstream of religious Zionism is too vast and well-known to be listed here. See especially the quarterly *Or Hamizrach*, published jointly by the American Mizrahi and the Torah Education Department of the WZO, New York; and the extensive writings of S. Z. Shragai.
20. They base themselves in particular on the inclusion by Nachmanides of the duty to conquer the Land among the 613 commandments (*Se'fer Hamitsvot*, Additional Commandment no. 4), derived from the verse "And you shall take possession of the land and dwell in it" (Nu.

33:53, see also Nachmanides, *a.l.*). But Maimonides does not list this commandment, since "it applied only in the days of Moses, Joshua and David and at a time when [the people of Israel] were not exiled from the land" (*Megillat Esther* on *Sefer Hamitsvot*, *loc. cit.*) Rashi likewise interprets the verse (*ib.*) differently. A similar argument concerns the borders of the Land. While Rashi explains that these are detailed in the Torah to indicate the area within which the special laws dependent on the Land's holiness are applicable (on Nu. 34:2), Nachmanides takes these borders to show the extent to which the Jewish conquest of the Land is obligatory, whilst the special laws apply to any territory under Jewish occupation even beyond these borders (on Deut. 11:24). Once again, Rashi as well as Maimonides clearly dissent from the opinion of Nachmanides. See also A. Newman, "The Centrality of *Erets Yisrael* in Nachmanides," in *Tradition*, Summer 1968.

Leibowitz (*Emunah*, etc. p. 119) regards Nachmanides as the *only* authority to declare settlement in the Land to be a positive commandment, and he dismisses this view as "belonging to religious folklore." But numerous scholars hold that the view of Nachmanides is widely shared, with slight variations, probably even by Maimonides. See Israel Schepansky, *Erets Yisrael be-Safrut Hateshuvot*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 1978, vol. 3, p. 2 (note). The first 111 pages are devoted to rabbinic responsa of the subject, many based on the opinion of Nachmanides.

21. So expressly Rabbi Eliezer Yehudah Waldenberg, *Tsits Eliezer*, Jerusalem, 5723, vol. 7, no. 48:12, cited in Schepansky, *op. cit.* p. 95.
22. For a comprehensive halakhic study on the return of the Occupied Territories (generally favoring moderation), see J. David Bleich, "Judea and Samaria: Settlement and Return", in *Tradition*, (Summer 1979), pp. 44. The hard line arguments against the Egyptian peace accord and any territorial concessions are presented by Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren, "Beyn 'Heskem Shalom' le-Shalom Emet", in *Or Hamizrach*, New York, Tevet 5740.
23. On his philosophy of religious Zionism in general, see his *Kol Dodi Dofek* in *Hadat Vehamedinah*. Tel Aviv, 5724; and *Hamesh Derashot*, Jerusalem, 5734. Although on record as stating that he would surrender even the Western Wall to save a single Jewish life, he has lately taken no public stand on peace and the territories. Remarkably, the known moderate attitudes of this acknowledged leader of modern Orthodoxy in America are not shared by most of his disciples, now comprising the principal personalities of the modern Orthodox rabbinate in America.
24. See his *Hahzarat Sh'tahim me-Erets Yisrael bimkom Pikuah Nefesh*, in *Torah Shebe'al Peh*, no. 21, Jerusalem, 5740.
25. For a summary of rabbinic as well as other views for and against this movement, see Moshe Kohn's 36-page pamphlet *Who's afraid of Gush Emunim*, *The Jerusalem Post*. See also Introductory note, above. Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook's statement is featured in *Shanah b'Shanah*, 5728. See also Note 1.
26. Altogether, Rabbi Kook's vision of the Jewish State far transcended the political or even cultural aspirations of the Zionist Organization which he strongly criticized for its hankering after European culture and nationalism. While constantly emphasizing the unique character of Israel, he could conceive of the restoration of Jewish sovereignty only as conterminous with universal redemption, to be achieved through the impact of Israel's spiritual regeneration on the whole of mankind. He firmly believed—with a faith which some of his latter-day disciples might dismiss as naive—that Jewish independence would be regained by an enlightenment campaign to convince the world that its salvation would flow from Israel's national resanctification (in fact, he founded a movement, "Degel Yerushalayim," to promote this objective), rather than by reliance on political action and propaganda. See Benjamin Ephrah, "Israel's Politics in his Teachings," in *Harayah: Kovetz Ma'amarim Bemishnat Maran Harav Avraham Yitzchak Kook*, ed. Yitzchak Raphael, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 5726.
27. This judgment clearly conflicts with the conclusion reached by Shubert Spero ("In Defense of the Defenders of Masada," *Tradition*, (Spring 1970), who argued "that the action of the defenders of Masada was not at variance with the teachings of the Talmud." Dismissing the views of other scholars (cited in the article) who held the mass-suicide to be "contrary to the Jewish tradition", and finding nothing "baffling" in the silence of the Talmud on Masada, since it is "not a systematic chronicle of historical events," Spero supports his claims by referring to the Talmud's approval of the mass suicide of 400 children "who feared torture



and immoral usage they faced in captivity” and to the self-inflicted martyrdom of entire Jewish communities in the Middle Ages. But halakhically and historically one can hardly compare martyrdom to avoid torture, immorality or apostasy with suicide to escape from foreign domination. I would rather agree with “the brilliant Orthodox historian,” Y. I. Halevy, whom Spero quotes strangely with approval: “The opinion of the rabbis was to wage war against Rome so long as the matter remained within the realm of the possible. Only after they realized that . . . all hope of victory was lost, did they decide *to salvage what could be salvaged*,” (my italics). For further contributions to this debate in *Tradition*, see Bernard Hiller, “Masada and the Talmud,” (Winter 1968), Louis I. Rabinowitz, “The Masada Martyrs According to the Halakhah,” (Fall, 1970); Zvi Kolitz, “Masada - in the Light of Halakhah,” (Summer 1971); and Sidney B. Hoenig “Historic Masada and the Halakhah,” (Fall 1972).

28. The relevance of the Bar Kochba revolt to the contemporary situation has lately been re-examined in a little book which provoked a stir and much heated debate in Israel and beyond. Prof. Yehoshafat Harkabi (*Betokef Hametziut*, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, 1981) argues that Bar Kochba, far from being hailed as a national hero, should be seen as having inflicted one of the greatest disasters in Jewish history. The challenge of the Romans in an uprising which never had a chance of permanent success led to the oppression of Jews and Judaism, and to the destruction of Jerusalem, on a scale far more devastating than the defeat under Titus 65 years earlier when a measure of Jewish self-government and religious freedom were still tolerated under Roman domination. The gravamen of Harkabi's charge lies not in Bar Kochba's messianic pretensions, nor the catastrophe in the post-messianic disillusionment, but in the futility and lack of realism of engaging the Romans in a conflict which could not be won and instead was bound to wreak unprecedented havoc on the Jewish people.
29. For a fuller exposition of this view, see “Israel—Sanctuary or Asylum”, in my *The Timely and the Timeless*, 1977. See also my “Israel, Religion and Politics,” in *L'Eylah*, Office of the Chief Rabbi, London, Autumn 5741.; and “The Jewish Purpose—A Reassessment,” in *L'Eylah*, Spring 5741.