Shubert Spero is Irving I. Stone Professor of Jewish Thought at Bar-Ilan University.

Review Essay: Conflicting Visions

Conflicting Visions, (New York: Schocken, 1990) a recent book by David Hartman carries as its subtitle, "Spiritual Possibilities of Modern Israel." However, much of the work consists of separate essays some of which appeared elsewhere, which deal with themes and thinkers which fill a much broader canvas than the State of Israel: the nature of Halakha, how to deal with modernity, religious pluralism, the thought of Maimonides, Soloveitchick, Heschel, Kaplan and Leibowitz. Perhaps the subtitle should be construed as the author's primary focus in reconsidering these themes and these thinkers since, presumably, all impinge in one way or another upon his understanding of the religious significance of modern Israel.

In his introduction and elsewhere, Hartman adopts a rather personal autobiographical style, disclosing, for example, that his book, "reflects the concerns and changes in emphasis in my thinking over the past 20 years." (p. 3) He also speaks of his disappointment with Israel after the Six Day War when his "exaggerated anticipations" (p. 7) were not realized. Throughout this work Hartman makes explicit the influence of his great teacher, Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchick, his high regard for Maimonides and his friendship with Yeshayahu Leibowitz. These personal references seem to invite on the part of the reader, the use of judgmental criteria of an existential nature such as the popular but imprecise notions of "authenticity" and "good" and "bad faith." In other words, it is as if we are being asked to consider not only *what* is being said, but *who* is saying it; to consider the constraints that the author's personal experiences and personal relationships impose upon his thinking. If these factors be deemed relevant to understand Hartman then this reviewer is tempted to place at the outset, his own existential cards on the table so that the reader could judge where he (the reviewer) is "coming from".

Hartman describes himself as "a Halakhic Jew in the Orthodox tradition" (p. 231) whose *rebbe muvhack* is Rabbi Soloveitchick (Yeshiva University) and whose paradigmatic Jewish thinker is Moses Maimonides. I would like to sign-in as a Messianic Jew in the Orthodox tradition whose *rebbe muvhack* is Shraga Feivel Mendlevitz (Yeshiva Torah Vodaath) and whose paradigmatic Jewish thinker is Yehuda Halevi. This should make it clear to the cognoscenti that I am already on a collision course with David Hartman.

What we have in common is that both of us are Modern Orthodox in the double sense that we believe that 1) "the wisdom of the world may be brought into the house of study" (p. 119); 2) we both feel the need to develop a theory of religious pluralism that respects truth while preserving dignity; and 3) both of us left pulpits to make aliya with our families in response to events in Israel. So much by way of introduction.

TRADITION 26:4 / © 1992
Rabbinical Council of America

As indicated, Hartman speaks of his disappointment with Israel when his "exaggerated anticipations" did not materialize. This was evidently rather serious as Hartman wonders whether, knowing then what he knows now, he would have had the energy to uproot an entire family and begin a new life in Israel. (p. 6) I am intrigued by this autobiographical detail since it is so unlike my own. Why should a realistic, sophisticated man of the world like Hartman have had "exaggerated anticipations" about Israel after the Six Day War? Hartman also owns up to "changes in emphasis in his thinking" leaving us to guess what they were. Could it be that the changes in his thinking were in some way connected to his feelings of disappointment with Israel?

In defending himself against charges by Leibowitz that his celebration of the victory of the Six Day War reveals him (Hartman) to be a closet-Messianist and follower of Yehuda Halevi, Hartman insists that while for him the Six Day War was the catalyst that stimulated his aliya, his understanding had always been that "historical events sensitize people to dimensions of spirituality and that conditions in Israel may revitalize Jewish spiritual sensibilities." (p. 101) But if that was the case, why was Hartman so disappointed when the Israelis did not respond? If all that he ever saw in the Six Day War was a dramatic deliverance, why did he expect "a massive renewal and radical transformation of Jewish history?" Surely it is clear from the Bible itself that a sense of wonderment and gratitude soon pass and people quickly revert to their normal pursuits.

Something tells me that there was more to Hartman's "exaggerated anticipations" than he is willing to admit. Perhaps Leibowitz is correct that the "early Hartman" perceived in the Six Day War a Messianic fulfillment reflecting the presence of God, from which he erroneously inferred that it would have an immediate dramatic effect on the people of Israel as it had upon him, leading to a "massive renewal." Wishing to be part of this, Hartman made aliya only to be terribly disillusioned when before long it is back to business-as-usual for most of Israel. Feeling betrayed by his old beliefs and impressed by the anti-messianic thinking of Leibowitz, Hartman becomes a vehement critic of anything smacking of Messianism, and "event-based theology" dependent upon the ups and downs of history. I indulge in this amateurish exercise in psycho-history because I seriously believe that only some such scenario could account for Hartman's emotional and embittered antipathy to the religious response to Israel called "Religious Zionism" and explain his evident psychological need to discover at all cost, in the works of his heroes, Maimonides and Soloveitchick, support for his own changed stance, which is a turning away from the concept of God as Lord of history.

Our author begins with an analysis of the different responses to the State of Israel. The Haredi response to Israel takes the form of a powerful revival of East European religious passion, meticulous observance of religious laws and its repudiation of the Western humanistic tradition. Hartman correctly shows how its fundamental point of departure is deeply grounded in rabbinic teaching.

The second response is that of the "ultra-secularists" who celebrate the complete normalization of Jewish society in Israel and reject all religious significance to the State and reject any "Jewish convenantal consciousness."

The third response is characterized as that of Messianic Religious Zionism based upon the "Messianic theology of Rabbi A.I. Kook." Hartman rejects all three of the above and proposes a fourth, his own: "The outlook I am proposing . . ." (p. 25)

In Hartman's words:

> This approach is rabbinic without the mystical or biblical organic (mythic) consciousness and without the eschatological dimension . . . to extend the notion of service of God into countless areas of social behavior ... Israel contains a public domain for which Jews qua Jews are responsible. In Israel, Jews have the opportunity to witness the sanctifying power of Torah in the mundane marketplaces of life. (p. 26)

But this is hardly new. The view that a sovereign Jewish State offers Jews the opportunity and challenge to extend the sanctity of Torah into all areas of communal and national life and that therein lies much of its religious significance was always part of the core teachings of Religious Zionism and no one articulated it more cogently than the arch Messianic theologian himself—Rabbi A.I. Kook.[1]

I wish to argue 1) that Hartman presents a distorted and ultimately false description of the position he calls "Messianic Religious Zionism," and 2) that his position seems to possess an identity of its own only by virtue of what it rejects. When the position of Messianic Religious Zionism is properly understood it will be seen to include Hartman's approach without contradiction. In short, Hartman is able to stake out a position of his own only by attributing to Messianic Religious Zionism exaggerated features which it, in fact, does not possess and by presenting certain strands in Judaism which are actually complementary, as sharp either/or alternatives.

This is how Hartman describes the origin of Messianic Religious Zionism: "When some (religious elements) sought to justify their participation in the Jewish march towards political independence (by the secular Zionist revolution) they found themselves obliged to claim that Zionism was in some sense a prelude to the "coming of the Messiah." (p. 42) Actually as early as the 1830's, long before the outbreak of the anti-semitism in Europe in the late 19th century, two Halakhic Jews—Rabbi Z.H. Kalischer and Rabbi Yehuda Alkalay, and a brilliant *ba'al teshuva,* Moses Hess, independently concluded that the historical conditions brought about by the Enlightenment and Emancipation were manifestations of the God of History signaling to the Jewish people that it is time for them to return to the land of Israel and to begin by practical settlement. These were not starry-eyed calculators of the end or themselves Messianic pretenders but sober men of the Halakha who reached their conclusions with one eye on the rabbinic and biblical tradition and the other on a realistic understanding of the historic events of their time. Already then, Kalischer called his times, *atchalta de-geula,* "the beginning of Redemption," without it generating any "exaggerated anticipations."[2] These rabbis did not advocate violence nor did they attach any claims of inevitability, necessity or determinism to their beliefs or policies.

So, rather than being an ad hoc rationalization of a political move, as Hartman claims, Messianic Religious Zionism was an authentic Jewish response to radical historical changes based upon classic Jewish historiography. In fact, the general relationship between the Jewish National Idea (Zionism) and Messianism is exactly the reverse of what Hartman implies. According to respectable scholarship of the subject: "The force of the Jewish National Idea derives its strength from the deeper sources of Messianism."[3]

For Hartman, Religious Zionism in Israel today is represented by Gush Emunim and the philosophy of Rabbi Kook. At times. Hartman tries to be evenhanded such as when he cautions the reader: "We must understand the passion of Gush Emunim

and not call them fascists or Nazis," and, "Gush Emunim echoes a definite strand in the Jewish tradition" (p. 239, 241). Most other references are studded with code words whose mere mention in certain circles triggers a Pavlovian revulsion: "triumphalist messianism" (p. 13) "messianic politics" (p. 117), "Human kind is simply a pawn in the Divine game-plan" (p. 25). Hartman wrongly attributes to Messianic Religious Zionism and Gush Emunim the following beliefs:

> *Only allegiance to the Biblical map guarantees God's involvement in the people of Israel's return to the ancient covenanted land.* (p. 11)

An Orthodox Jew accepting this would have great difficulty understanding the return of the Babylonian captivity in 538 B.C.E. to what was far from being the Biblical map and yet God was clearly and heavily involved! Furthermore, at least since Kalischer and Alkalay, Religious Zionists have been perceiving God's involvement in settlement opportunities long before there was a State or talk of any Biblical map!

> *Loyalty to the political authority of the government cannot be at the expense of the Messianic, redemptive destiny of Israel.* (p. 43)

This is in direct contradiction to the Kookian extension of sanctity and religious legitimacy to the secular government of Israel and therefore hardly a doctrine of Gush Emunim. The occasional violations of Army and governmental rules such as in Yamit or Kedumim were in the best traditions of the democratic principle of civil disobedience as practiced in the West—direct, responsible and non-violent.

> *What makes an act religious is not necessarily the motivation of the agent but the consequences that result from the act.* (p. 44)

Hartman wrongly infers this generalization from Rabbi Kook's teaching that secular Zionists who are settling the land are carrying out the will of God and possess a degree of sanctity, although they have no religious intentions. Hartman's mischievous use of the word "religious" in this sentence is what ensnares the cursory reader. We have no difficulty believing that both Pharaoh and Cyrus carried out the will of God and yet who would think that therefore their acts are "religious."

But what Hartman really disapproves of in the philosophy of the Messianic Religious Zionist is their alleged belief in the "inevitability of the Messianic redemptive process." (pp. 6, 44, 75) Indeed, it is this that Hartman and other contemporary critics have identified as the most pernicious of Gush Emunim's doctrines. In their view it encourages the believers to ignore reality and undertake costly risks since they believe they are going to triumph anyway.[4] For Hartman, however, the great danger that such a belief in "necessary redemption" constitutes for Israel as a whole is that this turns Religious Zionists into irrational people who will spurn all opportunities to come to an accommodation with the Arabs living in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Let us examine this bogey called "inevitability." In one sense, every Orthodox Jew believes that ultimately history will lead to a Redemption that will include all of the restorative and utopian elements in the tradition. No principle can be more clear in biblical and rabbinic literature. While man in his freedom can delay the

process, it must come sooner or later because it has been guaranteed by God. As Kant has pointed out, a moral God requires the ultimate triumph of the good. Hartman must alternatively, therefore, be attributing to Messianic Religious Zionists the view that the *present reality, this* State of Israel, this "beginning" must inevitably and necessarily be completed and lead to a full Messianic redemption. But what can this possibly mean if no time-frame is given? How can such a concept be "dangerous?" What concrete policies does it mandate, if no living individual is designated as Messiah, if no date is given, and the possibility of all sorts of digressions, detours, delays and interim defeats (such as the Yom Kippur War) are countenanced and not ruled out.

I wish to argue that this concept of "inevitability" attributed to Religious Zionists is either a truism, or is incoherent. "Inevitability" does not appear in Gush Emunim ideology nor did it even appear in the thought of a genuine calculator of the End, such as Isaac Abarbanel who after a review of all of the biblical and rabbinic sources came up with the date of 1508 and then added, "But if he (the Messiah) does not come at that time, we will continue to hope." I passionately believe that the events of the last 150 years regarding the land of Israel, constitute the "Beginning of the Redemption." and I have acted upon this belief in many significant ways. Yet if prodded by the cold blade of rational skepticism, I would have to acknowledge that I may be wrong or even if I am right, human weakness may cause some delay, some detour, some upset.

A recent sociological study of Gush Emunim concludes that this movement shows none of the signs of acute or radical messianism and that its "Messianic rhetoric remains on the general utopian level and has no immediate impact on religious doctrines or behavior nor does it threaten social structures."[5] In the view of the author, "the retrospective Messianic interpretation of history that emerged was perfectly consistent with normative Jewish theology throughout the generations." Here is a citation from the Rabbi of Ofra:

> Anyone who tries to put God in his pocket, who says that we are already at this point, that the Third Commonwealth has been established, that the footsteps of the Messiah can be heard in the hills and that he knows the workings of the world—I am not on the same wavelength with him. I see the whole thing as a true mixture of practice and vision. Everything we do and everything done is the Diaspora in part of the messianic process. What we do in Samaria and the prayers of the Jew in the Diaspora for the coming of the Messiah—I believe as he does. I don't believe that we dictate events. I don't say that here he [the Messiah] comes. I do believe that everything we do furthers the process, the messianic process, but we don't know the exact end.

Here is a statement from another Ofra resident:

> No one can say with certainty that he knows what to do from the point of view of realpolitik. Modern philosophy does not accept the notion that man knows with certainty what must be done now. We *think* that there are certain goals. The question is only, how does one realize them? Thus, I believe with complete faith that the land possessed by the Jewish people will be the entire land of Israel. I believe this. But when exactly and how exactly, I do not know.[21]

The people who participated in the "underground" were indeed radical Messianists, but their views and program have been discredited and disavowed by the vast majority of settlers and by the official settler institutions.

I wish to suggest that Hartman's confusion has its source in his fuzzy conception of God's relationship to history. One of his central strategies is to sharpen the difference and exaggerate the importance of the conception of God as it emerges from the Bible and that which emerges from rabbinic literature. The unembellished view is simply this: In the Bible, history, nature and morality appear to cooperate in the sense that they mirror Israel's covenantal relationship with God, i.e., obedience to God results in immediate blessing while disobedience ends in disaster. In the Bible, history is the primary area for the manifestation of God: the Exodus, splitting of the sea, revelation at Sinai, conquest of the land etc. In the rabbinic period after prophecy ceased and national sovereignty was lost, religious needs finds expression in the practice of the Mitzvot, in an enhanced appreciation of prayer, and in a fully developed Halakhic way of life which, through the Festivals and Fast days, keep alive the historical memories of the biblical period.

But according to Hartman, what the rabbis did with the Halakha was to create a religious regimen which is almost sacramental in its ability to invoke the Presence of God and replaces not only the *need* for Jews to interest themselves in history but that they become "immune" to history." In his words, "Events then become somewhat unimportant for the spiritual life of Halakhic Jews because they do not seek God in historical events. Halakha shifts away from an event-based theology". (pp. 156-57)

Hartman's strategy is then to apply this approach to the current situation in Israel and proclaim "immunity from history" for all Halakhic Jews, so that the Balfour Declaration, the establishment of the State, the Six Day War, and the Yom Kippur War, have been "neutralized" and emptied of all Messianic significance. Hartman then goes on to enlist the support of his favorite men of the Halakha, Maimonides and Soloveitchick, suggesting that "neither thinker offers a fully developed theology of history; neither offers a necessitarian model of redemption, both neutralize the religious significance of historical events and miracles." (p. 117)

Let us consider these claims. The bare fact from which all interpretation must start is that for the period covered by the prophetic writers of the Bible, our history is selectively presented and its religious significance described. During the period covered by rabbinic literature we have no such prophetic history. This could be either because no events of significance occurred or because while events of significance may have occurred there were no prophets to record them. As the Psalmist laments: "We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." (Psalms 74:9) It was generally agreed that theirs (the Rabbis) was a period of "God's Hiddenness" or "eclipse" which phenomenon had been predicted.[6]

True, the rabbis did not see themselves as prophets. Nevertheless such events that occurred in their time which in their view revealed the Presence of God was recorded albeit cautiously, by being institutionalized on the calendar. These include the events of Chanukah, the destruction of the Temple and the defeat of Bar Kochba. Therefore, if in the rabbinic period we do not find the same interest in contemporary events as we do in the Bible, the reasons have nothing to do with the so called "immunity to history" conferred upon Halakhic Jews by an all embracing Halakha.

What does it mean to say that God is the "Lord of History," that "God's Presence can be found in historical events?" An examination of the sources reveals the following.

1) There are what the Bible calls "the mighty acts of God," i.e. historical events which more than being "wondrous" serve to stamp out evil and punish evil-doers, such as the plagues in Egypt, and the destruction of the Temple.

2) Historical events which are great acts of salvation that are designed to rescue the deserving and redeem the righteous. These may be of a "wondrous" nature to the point of seeming miraculous, such as the splitting of the Red Sea, or they may be Providential in the sense that the salvation results from a curious combination of natural events and human agency in which God's input can only be inferred. The Purim story exemplifies this type of event. Some aspects of the Six Day War seem to as well.

In these two classes of events, "God's Presence" translates into a) Signs of God's agency b) Manifestation of a particular Divine moral attribute such as stern justice or as compassionate salvation.

3) There is a third type of historical event which may in its basic character be of type 1 or 2 yet possesses in addition a content; an aspect of revealing a message or indicating a direction. That is to say, it is revelatory without being verbal. Thus, the destruction of the two Temples and the events immediately following, in addition to being punishment for Israel's sins, were quickly seen by the rabbis as a disclosure that the "leading" God of Israel, the Lord of History, was changing the format of their teaching role from one within a fixed national frame to that of a wandering people.[7] This did not mean a breach in the covenant but a drastic change in tactics. The goals remained the same: to the light unto the nations and a blessing to all the families of the earth. However, Israel had failed to achieve these goals as a sovereign landed nation. It was, therefore, being sent abroad for an unspecified length of time to wander in the "wilderness of the nations" (Ez. 20:35) to see and be seen, to learn and to teach, to suffer and to shed light. The Exodus itself was seen not merely as the liberation of a group of slaves but as the adoption by the Lord of History of this entire people unto Himself and their transformation from a "mixed multitude" into a "Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation."

What is common to all three categories of events is that they reflect the agency of God and manifest a moral attribute. Only the third type of event will imply a particular content.

When we say that for centuries we have experienced an "eclipse of God," it does not preclude the possibility that there may been individuals and communities who have experienced providential events of categories 1 and 2. Chanukah and Purim for example were deemed by the rabbis to have more than local time-bound significance and were retained as holidays even after the destruction of the Temple. Down through the ages, local communities marked events of a salvific nature.

Beginning with the Emancipation, however and continuing through the Balfour Declaration, and two World Wars leading to the establishment of Israel, a pattern became increasingly discernable which suggested to many on the basis of Jewish historiography that we were witnessing the "beginning of the redemption," i.e., historical events of type 3, manifesting the presence of God with a recognizable content. God was not primarily punishing or saving. He was creating conditions

making it possible for the Jewish people to take the initiative and begin a non-violent return to the Land with the approval of the international community. The religious response invited by the events was to follow the "leading God," to strengthen in all ways resettlement of the land. Obviously there were many religious Jews who did not "read the pattern" in this way. There were all sorts of questions as to whether the unfolding historic events fit in crucial respects, the traditional expectations. But for many, the Six Day War and its aftermath clinched the matter! For the Presence of God was seen not only in the lightning victory which averted the very real threat to Israel's survival but also as a divine confirmation of our Messianic reading of the last 150 years of our history. Up to 1967, it was possible to argue that Jews had merely achieved a national home in part of Palestine. After the Six Day War, with Jewish sovereignty extended to the Temple Mount, Hebron, Judea and Samaria and the attainment of defensible borders, it was difficult to ignore the similarity between the new reality and that which had been predicted by the Hebrew prophets. Even if this was still only in the political realm, we remembered that Jewish historiography spoke of gradualism and the replacing the "heart of stone" with a "heart of flesh" would be the hardest part of the struggle.

Hartman refers repeatedly to rabbinic skepticism about "significant events changing Jewish history" and he even states that "the Exodus from Egypt did not by itself change Jewish history" (p. 159, 7). To be sure, neither the Exodus nor the histrionics of Elijah on Mt. Carmel, nor perhaps the Six Day War, had an immediate and discernible effect on the behavior of those who experienced it. From Moses be Amram to David Hartman, leaders have been terribly aggravated by this. However, the lack of discernable effect on the people does not contradict the proposition that these events reflect the Presence of God. The way it stands, Hartman's statement about the Exodus is simply false. The Exodus, itself, by changing the objective conditions of the Jewish people, radically changed Jewish history. As an immediate physical consequence of the Exodus, the descendants of the Patriarchs left a condition of servitude and were free to pursue their destiny. As we say in that well known counter-factual statement on the Seder night: "And if the Holy One Blessed be He had not brought our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and our children's children would have remained enslaved . . ." Inner changes, of course, came about gradually as the Halakhic observances impressed the Passover message upon later generations. Similarly, who can doubt the hard, tangible, momentous changes in Jewish history wrought by the Six Day War. Most important, however, is its message. Providence seems serious about the Zionist enterprise. The Jewish people's return to their land is for real! You don't have to be a refugee in order to seek your future in Israel.

Even if the people of Israel have not been spiritually transformed by the Six Day War, the changes in historic reality it has brought about are still with us—25 years later, 44 years after statehood. Even according to Maimonides, the ultimate test of any Messianic claim is its successful materialization: "If he does and he succeeds, he is certainly the Messiah." And if some Halakhic Jews in the diaspora who have been "immunized to historic events," do not hear the call of history to come home, then the Lord of history brings about changes in other parts of the world which bring some 400,000 Russian Jews to Israel in a hurry.

Hartman's attempts to find support for his odd views on Jewish historiography in the cautious response of Rabbi Soloveitchick to his suggestion that the victory

of the Six Day War be celebrated by declaring it a festival is rather far-fetched. How the Halakha should respond to a historic event (whether to proclaim a festival the first year or the second year or to recite the Hallel with or without a blessing) is one sort of question. How a Jew should respond to an historic event is quite another. Hartman's mistake is to consider an answer to the former as identical with an answer to the latter. As a matter of fact, Rabbi Soloveitchick is not at all "immune" to historical events. In a well-known essay, Soloveitchick details six different providential aspects of the events surrounding the establishment of the State of Israel and characterizes them as "... the knocking of the beloved on the door of the loved one."[8] Written long before the Six Day War, Rabbi Soloveitchick had no difficulty perceiving the presence of God in the events leading up to the State. Moreover, the Rav scathingly criticizes Orthodox Jews (including the Halakhic community) for not responding religiously to the possibility of returning to the Holy land and for not encouraging mass settlement of the Negev and the Galilee. Writing in 1956, Rabbi Soloveitchick pointed out that "the beloved has been knocking now for eight years and although we have as yet not responded properly, the 'knocking' fortunately goes on." This certainly seems contrary to Hartman's contention that Soloveitchick, like Maimonides, "neutralizes the religious significance of historical events." Hartman also claims that Rabbi Soloveitchick "does not offer a fully developed theology of history." But why should he? There is enough in the Rav's writing to indicate that he was comfortable with the classic Jewish historiography obviating the need "to offer a fully developed theology of history."

Hartman works himself into a deep confusion by building grand castles on Rabbi Soloveitchick's typologies. There is of course heuristic value in isolating different aspects of the human personality and speaking of "Halakhic man," "Religious man," "Lonely man of faith," "Adam I and Adam II." These are presented as "ideal types" and do not have a reality of their own. For all of its importance, the Halakha is only one aspect of Judaism. There is in addition, philosophy, mysticism, morality, history, and prayer, all of which are separate from and not covered by the term Halakha. In Rabbinic literature the term Halakha is not identical with Torah. Halacha is always juxtaposed to other aspects of Judaism called Aggadah. Hartman speaks of "Halakhic sensibility" and "Halakhic spirituality," Halakhic Judaism" and "Halakhists meeting with God." (p. 157, 158) To understand how misleading and unbalanced this is, try speaking of "Aggadic man," "Aggadic sensibility," "Aggadic Judaism," Much of what Hartman attributes to "Halakhic man" can be said of any knowledgeable Orthodox Jew. The only one perhaps to whom application of the term "Halakhic man" does make any sense is, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, since for him, Judaism is Halakha only, *sans* ethics, *sans* philosophy, *sans* history, *sans* everything.

But even if we grant Hartman the power he assigns to "Halakhic spirituality," namely, "the ability to feel God's presence through the mitzvahs, the ability to bring God through the Mitzvahs into the entire orbit of human existence," (p. 157) it still implies nothing regarding the Halakhist's attitude towards history. Hartman maintains that once God's presence has been institutionalized in *mitzva* observance, it replaces all need to find Him in historical events. This is a grievous "category mistake." The Halakhic system of *mitzva* observance presides over the life of the individual. The obligation to observe *mitzvot* devolves upon the individual (although he qualifies for the obligation because he is a Jew, a member of a particular collective). If observing the Halakha does succeed in generating a sense of the presence of

God, it is *by* the individual, *for* the individual and *in* the individual. History, however, is a different realm altogether. History records the careers of nations. It is the stage upon which nations and civilizations rise and fall. If the Bible emphasizes accounts of God's presence in historical events, it is because the Bible is essentially the story of the Jewish *nation.* The rewards and punishments promised in the Bible apply to the nation, to the people as a whole. Questions of Exile and Redemption refer to the nation. Thus, one can be "Halakhic man" in the full sense used by Hartman and feel the presence of God in the performance of every *mitzva* on the personal level, and yet in no way replace or obviate the need for sensitivity to the presence of God in historical events which essentially speak to the nation. For further evidence of Hartman's "category" confusion consider his following sentence: "For the Halakhic Jew, the mitzah mediates God's active presence in history." (p. 156) In one's personal life, perhaps, but in *history*?

Another prominent Halakhist that Hartman wishes to recruit for his crusade against history is Moses Maimonides. This is a misconception that has been current since the appearance of an article by Salo Baron in which he characterized the thought of Maimonides as "consciously unhistorical."[9] In a recent article, I pointed out the limited sense in which this might be true.[10] However Hartman's statement that Maimonides "neutralized the religious significance of historical events and miracles and never offered a fully developed theology of history," goes much too far. Limitations of space permit only a passing reference to a number of aspects of the thought of Maimonides which point to a rather nicely developed (if not "fully developed") theology of history:

1) Like all Halakhists, Moses Maimonides was most conscious of his dependence upon a chain of tradition and Torah commentary that reached back to the first Moses. Thus he prefaced his Halakhic code with an historical chronology of the transmission of the Torah tradition in which he enumerates forty generations of teachers from Moses to the redaction of the Talmud by R. Ashi and from that point to his own time. Maimonides speaks of all the *Geonei Israel* doing "the work of God" in their codifications and compilations of responsa. Here is an area of historical development in which the Halakhist, above all others, is sensitive to the Presence of God in preserving and guiding the uninterruped transmission of the Oral Law. Maimonides makes specific reference to the dispersal of Israel, decentralization of rabbinic authority and harsh living conditions necessitating changes in the forms of the Halakhic literature. So that the very development of the Halakha itself was hardly "immune of history"!

2) Maimonides actually has a sweeping view of history and the Providential pattern it discloses. It is one in which the first period consists of a slow decline by mankind into idolatrous paganism. Then, beginning with Abraham, we have the gradual development and education of an entire community of believers in monotheism, in which they succeed in internalizing this belief in the One God and its moral implications. Through this training period, Providence makes allowances for the reality of historical conditions fitting the methods and program to the limitations of the people. This last period of history involves the struggle to enthrone monotheism universally. Maimonides makes the remarkable observation that whereas in the past, the forces of idolatry were supported by empires and kingdoms representing self centered and aggressive powers, in his own day the world was divided between great religions hostile to Israel. Maimonides understood this as

another case of the "cunning" of Providence. The forces of violence and evil had decided to disguise themselves as "religious" in order to gain the allegience of the people. In the meantime, however, they are doing God's work by familiarizing much of the planet with Biblical categories such as Messiah, Torah, *Mitzvot*. Says the Rambam: "All those words of Jesus and of this Ishmaelite . . . are only to make straight the paths for the Messianic King and to prepare the whole world to serve the Lord together." As theologies of history go, this is not bad for the Middle Ages!

3) Contemporary Messianists who believe that the events of our time reflect "the beginning of the redemption" should have no difficulty fitting their specifics into Maimonides' Messianic framework. This had been correctly characterized as naturalistic, allowing for human initiative and activism and taking place "within history." Following Maimonides we need not get bogged down in sterile bickering over which eschatological stage comes first inasmuch as "the order and detail of these events are not religious principles and no one knows how they will come about until they actually happen." Furthermore, Maimonides provides us with useful terminology so that we can speak of our "presumptions" that the State of Israel is the "beginning of Redemption" until it shall be confirmed by full factual realization in history. Given the following neat summary of Maimonides view, we have every reason to believe that, contrary to Hartman, Maimonides would have been delighted to join us in calling our times, "the beginning of Redemption."

"Negatively, the Messianic Age brings about freedom from the enslavement of Israel and positively, freedom for the knowledge of God. But to this end it is necessary to abrogate neither the law of moral order (Torah) nor the law of natural order. Neither creation nor revelation need undergo any kind of change. The binding force of the law does not cease and the lawful order of nature does not give way to any miracles."[11]

Hartman is quite correct in observing that the question of religious pluralism has much more urgency in Israel than in the Diaspora. For only in a Jewish State do we have the problem of who controls the public space (p. 11) Thus, his call for civility and respectful debate in Israeli society is to be welcomed. However, Hartman is not at all clear as to whether he is addressing the problem of 1) pluralism within Orthodoxy, 2) pluralism within Judaism or 3) pluralism within religion. This is unfortunate because solutions to one may not be appropriate solutions to the other. It is therefore misleading for Hartman to speak of the classic approach of "both these and those are the words of the living God," when he hasn't shown that it has any application beyond the issue of pluralism *within* Orthodoxy. (p. 263)

His chapter "Pluralism and Biblical Theology" (pp. 243-54) conveys the impression that he is addressing an inter-faith meeting and telling his fellow Biblical theologians that if they would all understand Election and Revelation as Judaism does, they would be more comfortable with the notion of religious pluralism. Since we believe that the truths of Sinai obligate Jews only, we can look with tolerance upon other religions as long as they respond to the "image of God" within themselves. For we believe that "the righteous ones among the nations of the world will have a share in the world to come." Hartman, however, wants more than "civility and respectful debate" between differing groups. He claims it would be "bad faith" to advocate tolerance and pluralism in unredeemed history and yet maintain a triumphant monotheistic universalism with regard to the "end of days." But why is it "bad faith" to believe that in the "end of days" the God of us all will make

clear the truth and for me to have faith that it will turn out to be closest to my version? When Hartman finally gets down to the meaning of religious pluralism in Judaism, he makes the weak claim that "acknowledging the existence of other faiths in their own right need not be a violation of our covenantal faith commitment." (p. 254) First of all, says Hartman, it's good for you. Being confronted with different opinions on religions will shake up your self confidence and make you humble and therefore a more religious person. (p. 263) Hartman gives this the august title, "The Principle of Uncertainty," But how am I to relate (in all humility) to the other person's views on God, Torah, morality, history? Hartman's answer never really appears with any clarity.

If all he wishes us to believe is that, 1) "... an alternative way is religiously viable and authentic" (p. 264) or 2) "... that no one person or community exhausts all spiritual possibilities," I see no problem with these formulations. But the real issue was always: can I, as an Orthodox Jews, look upon a Christian or Reform Jew and say that his religion is true in the same sense as my own? Logic would seem to necessitate the following answer: Since the Sinai revelation includes cognitive propositions (a cognitive proposition is one which allows a judgment of true or false) and my faith commits me to a belief in their truth, I cannot affirm at the same time propositions which contradict them. Thus, if my beliefs concerning the Torah from Sinai are true, then the Reform rabbis' beliefs are false. If my beliefs concerning the coming of the Messiah are true, then those of the Christian are false.

What does Hartman mean when he says: "Revelation, as I understand it, was not meant to be a source of absolute, eternal and transcendant truth." (p. 248) Yet he does imply that the Revelation contains "cognitive content." If so, then Hartman hasn't treated at all the philosophic problem of religious pluralism for Orthodox Jews.

Hartman's expositions of the important Jewish thinkers, Maimonides, Heschel, Soloveitchick, Leibowitz and Kaplan are incisive and valuable in their own right. His attempt to rehabilitate Maimonides by finding the "internal religious concepts emanating from the Jewish tradition" which led him to emphasize the doctrines which scholars have judged to be "foreign," is only partially successful. For in the last analysis, according to Maimonides it is not that intellectual knowledge "*leads* us to the love of God," (p. 132) as Hartman puts it, but that intellectual knowledge *is* the love of God. He also leaves untouched Guttman's damaging claim that Maimonides ignored the possibility of "moral communion" with God. (p. 125)

Hartman's treatment of Rabbi Soloveitchick is properly respectful. His understanding of Soloveitchick's "Religious Hero" is sensitive and illuminating. The analysis of Heschel is balanced and sympathetic. However, the hard questions he asks of Heschel seem a bit unfair. For example: "Does Heschel adequately prepare his readers for the rigorous demands of actually living according to the Halacha? (p. 181) Hartman's answer is in the negative. But does Hartman apply this same criterion to his own writing? Does Hartman ask this question of Y. Leibowitz, where it is most crucial?

Mordechai Kaplan's naturalistic reconstruction of Judaism comes in for an aggravatingly polite and drawn out analysis which goes so far as to make inane comparisons between aspects of Kaplan's and Maimonides' philosophy. (p. 193) Says Hartman with great diffidence: "If, however, Kaplan claims to be writing a philosophy

of Judaism ... he must ask himself whether his functional interpretation adequately expresses Judaism's emphasis on the otherness of God." (p. 193) It is doubtful that Kaplan would ask himself that quesions inasmuch as he had from the outset rejected the entire concept of the supernatural God of the Bible.

It is extremely difficult to make sense of Hartman's fascination for Y. Leibowitz, to whom he devotes considerable attention. A critique of Hartman's earlier book by Leibowitz and a reply by Hartman are included in the present work. The elements in Leibowitz's approach that Hartman obviously approves of are his criticism of secular Zionism and his exaggerated notion of the importance of the Halakha. It seems absurd to take Leibowitz seriously and to compare him with Maimonides, Heschel and Soloveitchick in philosophical terms, when Leibowitz himself believes that Judaism has no theology, no morality and consists simply of divine commandments which one accepts on faith. Leibowitz is a radical positivist who, by rigorous consistency and an ascerbic style, has carved out a place for himself on the Israeli intellectual scene. In essence, however, he is the very negation of everything that makes Judaism a "live option" for anyone who has ever thought philosophically about Judaism. Leibowitz cannot tell me why I should observe the Halakha, why I should worship God or even agree to discuss the matter. The sharp distinction he makes between facts and values ignores completely the many interesting attempts made to develop canons of rationality other than those employed in the physical sciences. His philosophical presuppositions went out of style with the demise of logical positivism, particularly in the area of philosophy of religion.

The final item is Hartman's views on the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly the aspect involving the Arabs in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Here the level of discourse descends from serious theology to glib journalism. To understand Hartman's approach one must first understand his perception of the conflict. Quite appropriately, Hartman asks: "The first question ... is ... whom do we see facing us?" (p. 238) Hartman's vision is uncluttered: "a Palestinian nation with a national will," "a national consciousness," "Palestinian nationalism," people "who seek political freedom and political sovereignty." Hartman feels no need to justify his perception that the Arabs of Judea, Samaria and Gaza are a "nation" or to explain what that means or what that implies. Nor is he concerned to explore the nature of their "national consciousess" and its contents. After what we are seeing in the Balkans and in the former republics of the USSR, perhaps we should distinguish between benign nationalisms and destructive nationalism. Perhaps "Palestinian nationalism" is of the destructive type, generated and manipulated by violent men and religious crazies. Is it right for Halakhic Jews, "committed to the principle of reality," to encourage such neighbors? According to Hartman, "who we are as a people—all will be decided by how we deal with the Palestinians." But why *davka* with the Palestinians? Surely relevant to the question of the sincerity and humanity of the Jews in Israel is also how we have dealt with the Egyptians, the Lebanese and the Israeli Arabs? Our record in these relationships should suggest to objective observers that our special problems with the Palestinians are possibly, at least to a certain extent, of their own making.

Hartman tries to be objective and evinces deep understanding for both sides. He points out that each side feels threatened by the other and that each side has severe identity problems. The Arabs are "homeless victims" facing humiliation, degradation and loss of national dignity under Israeli control. Israelis, have their

own "trauma," are working through the horrors of the Holocaust, have their passion about redeeming the land from its desolation. But the underlying cause of the conflict, according to Hartman, is that both Arabs and Jews were nurtured on the Bible which gives them this exclusivistic intolerant attitude towards other religions and peoples (p. 232).

Hartman's application of some ethical analysis to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not too successful. He first announces that he is going to distinguish between "two forms of moral conflict." (pp. 233-34) One is "between good and evil" and the other "between good and good". Now there cannot really be a moral *conflict* "between good and good" in the sense that one "good" is struggling with another "good," like *tov* and *ra*. From Hartman's examples it is clear that he means a moral *choice* between two prima facie moral obligations where observing one (saving a life) will mean the violation of the other (keeping the Sabbath) or where it is a question of priority (whom do you help first?) But here too, after due deliberation, the choice will be between the morally right and morally wrong.

Hartman had been hoping to use this imprecise distinction to somehow show that "our conflict with the Palestinians is not an issue of good versus evil but a conflict that involves two goods, two legitimate claims." (p. 234) But that is to beg the question. Before we know it, Hartman has neatly reduced the dilemma of Israel to the following meaningless abstraction: "How much can I risk survival (of Israel) for the sake of justice (for the Palestinians)?"

"Our conflict with the Palestinians" is a real one of blood and gore, of daily killing and dismembering of human beings. In that conflict, I unequivocally hold Israel to be the "good" and the Palestinians to be the "evil". On the theoretical level of "claims," Hartman has ruled that both are "legitimate." But what precisely is the Palestinian claim and by what criterion does Hartman confer upon it legitimacy? But, even if both claims are "legitimate" in Hartman's vacuous sense, since they are in conflict, my moral judgment nevertheless distinguishes between the right (Israel) and the wrong (Palestinians) and chooses the right. For even assuming, that relinquishing parts of Eretz Israel to the Palestinians will give them "a sense of dignity" and a "positive identity," if the "reality principle" determines that such a decision will lead to untold misery and destruction to countless human beings, Arab and Jew, then surely the choice before us is not "between the good and the good" as Hartman would have us believe. On the fundamental question of the morality of the behavior and the claims of Palestinians and Israelis, Hartman offers little of substance.

As a good philosopher, however, he is able to dredge up some good advice from the past. After a dazzling analysis of medieval metaphysics, Hartman counsels Israelis to reject the path of Yehuda Halevi with its emphasis on "miracle" and "self-will" and to follow instead the way of Maimonides which is a "commitment to the principle of reality." (p. 238-39) This is cute homiletics but bad philosophy, and hardly does justice to these great thinkers. This is supposed to put Maimonides solidy behind Hartman's policy "to embrace the Palestinians" and "show the power of love." (p. 240)

Hartman has one condition if Israel is to give the Palestinians a State of their own and that is its demilitarization: "We must hear a clear and strong Palestinian voice willing to give up military power for political dignity." (p. 241) Right on! But what happens if, after waiting for another 44 years, we still do not hear such a

voice? Hartman's response is typical: "If it does not then I fear greatly what will be in this society" In short, Hartman believes that if the Arabs persist in their nasty ways and refuse to return our love, there is no hope for Israel." Strange that a "Halakhic Jew" such as Hartman, whose "Halakhic spirituality" made him "immune" to the harshest of history in Exile has no confidence in our people and in our Torah to find a moral and humane way to deal with hostile neighbors precisely when we have come home and have the freedom and power to act.

As a single unitary work the book suffers from a certain uneveness both in terms of material and style. Most jarring is the sharp contrast in style between Hartman the scholar when he is seriously analyzing the thought of Maimonides or Soloveitchick, and Hartman the sloganeering journalist whose specialty is philosophical homiletics. I prefer Hartman the scholar to Hartman of the popular lecture circuit, master of the quick put-down and entertaining turn of phrase.

Despite these strictures, it is a matter of considerable pride that Orthodox Judaism continues to field a clutch of critical and independent thinkers, both in Israel and in the diaspora, who operate creatively in the interface between Judaism and philosophic thought. Not least among them is David Hartman.

NOTES

1. See Zvi Yaron, *The Philosphy of Rabbi Kook.* (Jerusalem: Torah Education Dept., World Zionist Organization, 1990), pp. 102-103.
2. Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, *Drishat Zion* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1964), p. 117.
3. Jacob Katz, "The Jewish National Movement" in *Jewish Society Through The Ages,.* edited by H.H. Ben Sasson and S. Ettinger (New York: Schocken: 1971) p. 283.
4. See my article, Shubert Spero, "Does Traditional Jewish Messianism Imply Inevitability?" in *Modern Judaism,* Vol. 8, no. 3, Oct. 1988.
5. Janet Aviad, "The Messianism of Gush Emunim" in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* Vol. VII, 1991 (Oxford University Press) pp. 206-207.
6. Deut. 31:17, 18; I Sam. 3:1
7. The uniqueness of the Biblical concept of a "leading God" was seen by Martin Buber in his *The Prophetic Faith* (New York: Macmillian, 1949) p. 35.
8. Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik, *Ish Haemuna,* "Kol Dodi Dofek" (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1968). Rabbi Soloveitchick clearly enunciates the concept that once historic conditions make it possible for Jews to return to their land, they have the religious obligation to make Aliyah and resume their national existence. (p. 84)

   It is interesting to note that the metaphor of "the voice of my beloved knocketh . . ." was already used by Rav Kook in reference to the events of his day. (See Zvi Yaron, op. cit. p. 226) Hartman is obviously aware of this article and refers to it on p. 233, yet doesn't see that this clearly shows that the Rav was quite responsive to history.
9. Salo W. Baron, "The Historical Outlook of Maimonides," in *Proceedings, American Academy for Jewish Research,* Vol. VI, 1934-1935 (1935), p. 11
10. Shubert Spero, "Maimonides and the Sense of History:, *Tradition,* Vol 24, No. 2 Winter 1989.
11. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 30.*