

JEWISH SOVEREIGNTY AND THE REDEMPTION OF THE SHEKHINA

Rabbi Ba of Serungiya expounded: “God will save (*vehoshiya*) the tents of Judah first” (Zechariah 12:7); this can be read as *vehosha* (will be saved). Rabbi Zikhi expounded: “For now you will leave the city and dwell (*veshakhant*) in the field” (Micah 4:10); [understand it as] *ve-Shekhinati ba-sadeh*, My *Shekhina*, the Divine Presence, will be in the field. Hanania, the son of the brother of Rabbi Yehoshua says, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out (*hotzeitikha*) from the land of Egypt” (Exodus 20:2); this can be read as *hutzeiti itkha*, I was taken out with you. [...] Rabbi Akiva says, “Whom You have redeemed from Egypt unto Himself (*lekha*) for a people” (II Samuel 7:23), means, so to speak, as if You Yourself were redeemed (*Yerushalmi Sukka* 4:3 [54c]).

The Sages of Israel developed the metaphysical-mystical idea of “the *Shekhina* in exile.” The *Ribbono shel Olam*, the Master of the Universe, suffers in exile together with *Knesset Yisrael*, the Congregation of Israel. And just as the Jews need redemption and salvation, so does the *Shekhina*. God Himself was helped along with those who dwell in the tents of Judah!

Anyone even slightly familiar with the Kabbalistic literature of the Middle Ages and more recent times knows of the mystic-cosmic dimension behind which was the development of the ancient idea [expressed in the *Hoshanot*] “*vehotzeiti etkhem nakuv ve-hutzeiti itkhem* “I shall bring you forth” may be interpreted as “I shall be brought forth with you.” *Shekhina* in exile was the main motif of all mystical meditations and soul-ascent prayers of the Kabbalists for many generations and ages. This was

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specifically pointed out by the Kabbalists of Tzfat—those who stormed the world and the heaven, who wanted to shatter the golden chains in which the Messiah was imprisoned, and with him also the *Shekhina* itself—freed from Her grief and exile. The Sabbath hymn “*Lekha Dod?*” is filled with exile-melancholy and messianic yearning which the Kabbalists, dressed in white, sang in ecstatic passion on the peaks of the Galilean mountains. It is a great cry of superhuman yearning and desire—not only for the Jews of *Knesset Yisrael* to be politically liberated, but mainly for the metaphysical-transcendental liberation of the *Shekhina*.

We must, however, be focused not upon this cosmic-mystical idea which the Kabbalists introduced into the Jewish world. We should instead limit ourselves to this idea’s logical-practical implications. What does “*Shekhina* in exile” mean?

The Talmud Yerushlami really developed two ideas. The first is a premise, the second a conclusion. Reading *ve-shakhant* as *ve-shekhinati* established a premise: Israel’s exile equals the exile of the *Shekhina*. As long as *Knesset Yisrael* is in exile in the political and economic sense, God Himself suffers. Hanania’s reading of *hotzeitikha* as *hutzeiti itkha* is the conclusion: When the redemption comes, it will be a two-fold redemption, Israel’s redemption and the redemption of the *Shekhina*.

Let us consider both these theses carefully. Within the equation of the exile of Israel with the exile of the *Ribbono shel Olam* lies the greatest merit of the Jews, and an unshakable faith in the eternity of Israel. The idea of the *Shekhina* in exile is associated with the Torah’s very interesting relationship to the sinner. The Torah opened the gates of repentance to the sinner caught completely in the net of sin—whether because of wealth, honor, or emancipation. “Even if one was wicked all his days and repented at the end, none of his wickedness is remembered” (*Hilkhot Teshuva* 1:3), as it says, “as long as the sun does not darken, and the light and the moon and the stars and the thick clouds return to the rain” (Ecclesiastes 12:2)—a person can always do *teshuvah* even when he is mired in the 49th level of impurity.

Unlike Spinoza and Nietzsche, Judaism has a passionate belief in the purity of the true human personality. Completely independent of his crimes, the central kernel of the subjective I-consciousness remains pure and holy. Only external man sins, the superficial “I,” who does not represent the inner essence of spiritual existence. The soul always remains pure. “The Divine soul you gave me is pure” (Morning Blessings) refers both to the righteous and the wicked. Through purification it becomes clean. A person’s true will always wants to do only good. The Satan in the personality that produces sin must never be identified with the true person.

The Gemara tells us, “Whoever says that David sinned [with Batsheva] is completely wrong” (*Shabbat* 56a). The Bible, after all, tells us that when the prophet Nathan came to David and gave him severe reproof, David admitted and confessed, “And David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against God’” (II Samuel 12:13). In the Psalms there is a whole chapter with David’s confession and his prayer for sin atonement: “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your kindness; according to Your great mercies, erase my transgressions... For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me” (51:3–5). The meaning of the Gemara is, however, a bit different: “Whoever says that David sinned is completely wrong.” The great David, King of Israel, eternalized in Jewish history, whose image is reflected in all Messianic hopes and redemptive longings—the David of *Shir ha-Ma’alot*, the David of *Hallel ha-Gadol* and *Barkhi Nafshi*, the David with whom Kingdom of Israel has been identified—that David has never sinned. The one who sinned is a banal person, kidnapping David’s great royal personality and temporarily misrepresenting a king of Israel. A momentary lapse in memory of this historical giant caused the sin. That mundane person, however, quickly disappeared when the prophet Nathan appeared and David made a heart-rending confession. And through this, the bright soul of Israel’s pleasant singer was revealed.

“Rebbe, who descended from David, expounded the verses beautifully in David’s merit” (*Shabbat* 56a). The David, forefather of Rebbe—the redactor of the Oral Torah, who built an eternal Israel through the chain of rabbinic tradition: Ravin, Tiberias and Zippori, through Rav Hai Gaon and Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon, through the Kabbalists in Tzfat and the Ba’al Shem-Tov—was the David whose Psalms accompanied our battles, suffering, and triumphs through our wars. That David has always been meritorious and innocent. This eternal merit of David must always be sought. The one who sinned was an imposter.

It is well-known that Rambam used this idea in regard to the halakha of “you coerce [a recalcitrant husband] until he says ‘I want to’ [grant a divorce].” How can he be forced to divorce his wife, even if it is done correctly? After all, we have ruled that “a man can only divorce of his own accord” (*Hilkhot Geirushin* 1:1)! Rambam answered that one who was influenced by his *yetzer ha-ra*, the evil inclination, to ignore a mitzva or commit an iniquity, and has been beaten until he did something that he was obligated to do, [his action] was not coerced, but rather because his temptation was weakened, it is considered as if he divorced willingly (see *Geirushin* 2:20). This means that one always wishes to do what is right, but what happens? The small, silly, banal *yetzer ha-ra* does not

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leave him alone. The evil desire must be driven out and man must be given the opportunity to regain his true personality.

If the Torah dealt with David's sin in such a manner when he could not resist the temptation, sinning in a context of wealth and prosperity, so much more so do these words apply in a context of slavery and madness, at a time when man cannot withstand the trial of poverty and sins in a state of suffering and terror. The sins and crimes of the Jewish masses are truly the results of a bitter exile, of concern for livelihood, of insecurity every morning, of fear of persecution, feeling of alienation, and so on.

In interpreting the verse, "And Aaron laid both hands on the head of the living goat (*se'ir*) and confessed upon it all the sins of the children of Israel" (Leviticus 16:21), the midrash (*Bereishit Rabba* 65:15) beautifully explains that the goat is Esau, upon which it said, "Behold, Esau is a hairy (*se'ir*) man" (Genesis 27:11). If Jacob, who is by nature a simple man, dwelling in tents, becomes a man of the field who knows hunting, participating in the battles of life, even once using the same methods as Esau, then it is only because Esau compelled him to do so. The exile causes this. "And now, observe Your nation Israel... who is like Israel, holy and pure, longing for your forgiveness... yet the vagaries of our times and the worries of livelihood befouled me, and I am a worm and not a man..." records the *Hayyei Adam* in his *Tefilla Zaka* prayer.

Sin is imposed on *Knesset Yisrael*. Sin never comes from the inner depths of its existence.

When Jews are in exile, the *Shekhina* must also suffer with them. "For now you shall go forth from the city and dwell in the field" (Micah 4:10)—My *Shekhina* shall dwell in the field. If the Jewish people were forced to be exiled from the city of the great King, from the tents of Judah, into the field, into a violent life in exile, fighting for every privilege, existing in a world of flattery and cruelty, the *Shekhina* would likewise weep in the field.

The exile of the *Shekhina* can be conceptualized in a twofold sense. First, we understand it simply in the sense of the defilement of the *Shekhina* due to modern exile, in daily contact between *Knesset Yisrael* and the nations of the world. When socio-economic life is integrated within general political structures, the fundamentals of religion are broken, and the most beautiful values desecrated. "And so he will do to the entire Tabernacle in the midst of their impurity" (Leviticus 16:16).

But we must also understand the exile of the *Shekhina* in a much deeper sense, in the sense of Her diminution, *tzimtzum*. In exile, even in the most religious and ideal circumstances, even when the *Shekhina* does not become impure, She contracts and is reduced. This contraction is due

to the fact that man lives not only within his own private domain, but is also part of a society and a community. The more life becomes modernized, the more constrained the domain of his intimate, private life, while conversely, public-social life expands.

Piety in countries where one is a minority means being pious only in his private personal life—Shabbat, family purity, kashrut, etc.—surrounded by the curtains of one’s home-sanctuary. It is completely impossible to represent such a life as an embodiment of a full and complete Torah. My social-economic existence is linked to the general political-economic structure, which is based on other principles. As such, it does not embody my social, political, or legal relationships with society. Whether I sin or not is an entirely different question—the entire complex of my external interactions with society is divorced from Judaism.

I want to give you a brief historical overview. *Tzimtzum ha-Shekhina* is a long and tragic historical process. It is the tragedy of “parchment burning and letters flying in air” (*Avoda Zara* 18a), the tragedy of wanting to hold on to the Torah letters in the air, while the physical parchment upon which they were concretized was annihilated.

Even before the Temple was destroyed, Jewish criminal law had already been abolished. “Forty years before the Temple was destroyed... the laws of capital punishment were annulled” (*Shabbat* 15a).

When the Temple was destroyed, the laws of sacrifices were annulled. When the Sages commented, “This is the Torah of the burnt offering” (Leviticus 7:37), one who is involved in the study of the burnt offerings is considered as if he offered a burnt offering (see *Menahot* 110a), they wanted to give the flying letters of the pure Jewish ideal semi-real parchment.

With great effort and self-sacrifice, the Sages tried to preserve the laws of ritual purity. Although *kodshim* no longer existed, they still clung to the idea of eating *hullin* in a state of purity. Through this attempt, they preserved the flying letters after the actual parchment was destroyed.

It did not last long, though, and the *Shekhina* kept shrinking. They wanted to unite the beautiful letters of the *mitzvot* of the Land of Israel—tithes for the poor, laws of separating *halla* from the dough, and so on—with their new reality, through expanding their realization outside the Land of Israel. Jews in exile obligated themselves in many of the rules regarding property, which are biblically only required in the Land of Israel, but gradually the letters flew away through the burning of the parchment; the population in *Eretz Yisrael* seemed to disappear into an infinite Rome.

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Levi sought to realize the magnificent ethical commandments of *leket*, *shikha*, and *pe'ah* when he planted his crops in the Babylonian exile, fighting against the satanic powers that wished to shrink the *Shekhina*. But “there were no poor people who came to partake.” The poor Jews were not present to gather the charitable offerings. Public life was not Jewish, hostile to the true principles of righteousness and goodness and mercy of the Jewish Torah. “Rav Sheshet said to him: [the Torah says] ‘to the poor and the stranger you shall leave them’ (Leviticus 19:10), not to the crows nor to the bats” (*Hullin* 134b). Levi! Do not fool yourself! Here in Babylon, you will never be able to live a full, unblemished Torah life. There are too many demonic bats here that will directly or indirectly thwart you.

With the demise of the institution of *semikha*, the “letters” of the rules of *kenasot* (fines) were eliminated. A large portion of well-formulated, common-sense, and thorough laws regarding monetary issues, thievery, and robbery suddenly disappeared. The *dayanim* of Bavel were given the title “*bedyot*” (commoner), not—God forbid—because of their ignorance, but because of their inability to fully implement the Torah civil and financial laws.

And yet, in the Middle Ages, a large part of *Hoshen Mishpat* still found its true expression. The letters still had proper parchment, and they did not have to float in the air. The marvelous regulations of the *Ge'onim* and Rabbeinu Tam concerning *Ketuba*, dowry, and husband’s inheritance, the collection of a debtor, and so on, testify to a living Torah that grew organically with the people. Yet the process of *Tzimtzum ha-Shekhina* continued apace. Gradually, parts of *Hoshen Mishpat* and *Even ha-Ezer* were eliminated.

I still remember how my father *z”l*, applied Torah laws to various aspects of business—rules of bailment, transactions, and so on. Today, however, many of *Hoshen Mishpat* and *Even ha-Ezer* issues are *halakhot* only applicable to Messianic times. Judaism has been reduced to a few chapters in *Yoreh De’ah* and *Orah Hayyim*.

You may respond: “This is the Torah regarding the burnt offering...”—we can still learn all of Torah and teach intricate *shiurim*. But Torah is not just a literary trove of documents and books. Torah is not an abstract philosophy. Torah means learning and realizing an organic Torah society—concrete Torah actualization. The Torah is characterized by *hid-dush*. The thirteen methods in which Torah is interpreted means that the Torah needed to develop thirteen different methods that convert the Torah into action. “Great is learning, for it leads to action” (*Kiddushin* 40b). If the actualization is lacking, the pure Torah also withers away, as does the

Ru'ah ha-Kodesh and the love of creation, which have permeated ancient generations. The old definition of *Tzelem Elokim* according to Ramban (Genesis 1:26) states: "The objective before him [man] is wisdom, knowledge, and skill of deed" and signifies Torah parchment. Torah is not only wisdom and knowledge, a purely theoretical and lifeless discipline; it is a titanic, dynamic power, allowing self-knowledge and proper direction, which embodies ideas and concretizes *mitzvot*.

Unfortunately, one of the cardinal misunderstandings in modern Jewish history was the identification of the Jewish working class of rabbis with the organized European clergy in general. As the workers generally fought for economic and political equality, the Church supported the rulers and the powerful. Jewish revolutionaries condemned the Jewish Torah for the sins of the Orthodox Church. The hatred for Torah Judaism still reverberates today in the large workers' movement in *Eretz Yisrael*. Its negative relationship with many religious institutions is a direct result of such ridiculous misidentification.

The mistake, which cost us a great deal, is a result of the shrinking of the *Shekhina* in exile. The Jewish *Hoshen Mishpat* has never been on the side of the employer and the powerful. The Torah of "you shall not oppress a widow and orphan" (Exodus 22:26), "you will not oppress him" (Exodus 22:26), "you shall pay him his wages on that day" (Deuteronomy 24:10), and "for to Me the children of Israel are servants" (Leviticus 25:55) has never been opportunistic. It has always defended the helpless and the desolate, and in this sense these rules are more advanced than in many modern labor societies. But the curse of *tzimtzum* has burdened Her, the curse of parchment being burned and letters flying away has blocked the path to realization. The ignorant masses, in order to shrink the *Shekhina*, classify the Torah as organized religion, which has no right to exist in a society of social justice. Today, the contemporary motto of division of church and state that is applied to the Jewish Torah and Jewish State is also the result of the shrinking the *Shekhina*.

The masses cannot learn the *Ketzot* and the *Netivot*. They cannot understand the Torah in abstract; they must see it, physically sense it. In exile they only see a small part of Judaism, and therefore they despise it. "Balak said to him, 'Come with me to another place from where you will see them; however, you will see only a part of them, not all of them, and curse them for me from there'" (Numbers 23: 13). If you observe only a fraction and not the totality, you will curse, you will misunderstand. (This is also the cause of a specific kind of hatred of Israel. The non-Jew sees only a half-Jew, not the whole. This idea also explains scientific atheism. Man only sees a tiny fragment of the cosmos.) When one sees only a little,

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he will draw incorrect conclusions. Only when the vision is total—not only of laws of kosher meat and the prayer-book, but also of the *Hilkhot Melakhim*, *Sanhedrin*, financial law concerning corporations and the employment of workers, the individual and public Torah, at home, the street, and the factory—does the whole Torah reveal itself. And then in the totality, one will be enabled to utter a blessing. “Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel dwelling according to its tribes, and the spirit of God rested upon him” (Numbers 24:2). At one time, the *Ru’ah ha-Kodesh* rested upon the Jewish masses.

To briefly summarize: In exile, the *Shekhina* is both defiled and diminished.

Religious Zionist ideology is based upon the equation of the exile of Israel with the exile of the *Shekhina*. The motto of Mizrachi must be Rabbi Ba of Serungiya’s axiomatic simple reading of *vehoshiya* as *vehosha*, God saves and is Himself redeemed from exile.

Hanania’s reading of *hotzeitikha* as *hutzeiti itkha* is somewhat more complicated, not in regard to objective truth but in regard to self-understanding. The assumption that political-social exile is also exile of the *Shekhina* is a concept that is well accepted. However, the conclusion that the political redemption of Israel also means the redemption of the *Shekhina* is an idea that many do not understand. “I am the Lord your God who brought you out (*hotzeitikha*) of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 20:2) is said loud and clear for all to hear. But the reading “*hutzeiti itkha* (I was taken out with you)” has often been silenced.

The entire emancipation movement in Western Europe in the last century, the so-called rationalist liberation campaign, as well as the social revolutionary movements of Jewish youth in Poland, Lithuania, and Russia in the beginning of the century, as well as the assimilatory ideology today, all wanted, and still want, to separate *hotzeitikha* from *hutzeiti itkha*. They wish to attain redemption and freedom precisely through forgetting the exile of the *Shekhina*, forgetting the sanctity of Israel, weakening our values, desecrating our ideals, abandoning the Sabbath, eliminating the Torah, and so on. In a word: It seeks to remove the specifically Jewish gestalt and thereby gain rights of equality.

We can justify ourselves for committing sins whose source is exile, as I mentioned before. But for the sin of a false liberation, of separating *hotzeitikha* from *hutzeiti itkha*, there can no longer be any mitigating circumstance. Such a sin is one of idolatry, and for this we must say “*al bet.*”

When we look in the Bible for hints about the end of days, when the exile will become bitter and dark, and redemption will draw near, or must draw near, when Jews will be given the choice of life or eternal disgrace,

we find that the Torah accuses the Jews of a remarkable sin: The sin of idolatry.

Let us listen carefully to the mysterious prophetic words of Moses:

And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will remain few in number among the nations to where the Lord will lead you. And there you will worship gods, man's handiwork, wood and stone, which neither see, hear, eat, nor smell. When you are distressed, and all these things happen upon you in the end of days, then you will return to the Lord your God and obey Him. For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not let you loose or destroy you; neither will He forget the covenant of your fathers, which He swore to them (Deuteronomy 4:27–31).

The Torah here notes a complete program for the pre-redemption period of the eschatological era: 1) Dispersion in all countries; 2) Reduction in population to a remnant; 3) Worship of idols, man-made wood and stone; 4) *Teshuva*, repentance, due to the tribulation from the abyss of sin and absurdity; 5) Return to Zion and redemption.

Let us consider the paradoxical sin of *Avoda Zara*. That age-old sin that all the prophets of Israel maintained was the source of national punishment—and was the cause of our defilement in exile. And only through the great act of repentance, national renaissance will this sin be washed away. Even Moses in his last enactment of a covenant, before he ascended Mount Nebo to gaze upon the Promised Land, prophetically said: “And the Lord will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you will serve other deities unknown to you or your forefathers, [deities of] wood and stone” (Deuteronomy 28:64). In the wilderness, Moses yearned for the great, pre-redemption *teshuva* and the tidings of salvation: “And it will be, when all these things come upon you the blessing and the curse... and you will return to the Lord, your God” (Deuteronomy 30:1–2). And again he promised the tidings of redemption: “Then the Lord your God will bring back your exiles” (Deuteronomy 30:3). The sin of the Jew in exile will not consist of murder, robbery, theft, or falsehood, but of idolatry; and for this sin the Jew must do *teshuva* if he really wants to yearn for redemption. What does this mean?

Indeed, when we page through the entire Bible and see the emphasis of the Torah regarding the sin of *Avoda Zara*, repeated so many times with warnings and covenants enacted, we get the strong impression that it is not a sin of the past, which is merely documented historically, but a living, actual sin. It is so far-reaching that the second paragraph of *Shema*,

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concerned with accepting the yoke of *mitzvot*, is conflated with the prohibition of *Avoda Zara*.

In truth, idolatry denotes not only a religious cult serving specific physical items through prescribed ceremonies and rituals, but a certain mental attitude of people regarding phenomena in general and their fellow human beings in particular. In other words, when one substitutes a relationship with God to one with his fellow man, he is called one who serves *Avoda Zara*. Thus, "One who rejects idolatry is like one who has accepted the entire Torah" (*Sifrei, Re'eh* 54:28).

What is the fundamental relationship between Creator and creation, between man and God? What is the main emotion in which all the religious evocations of the personality are expressed? It is the feeling of complete, absolute dependency that the masters of the *Musar* movement called *bitabon*. This sense of confidence can be divided into two different components: First, having absolute faith in the *Ribbono shel Olam* that He will help. "They all look to You with hope, to give their food in its time" (Psalms 104:27). If He is on my side, I do not need any other help: "You give them that they may gather; You open Your hand that they may be satiated with goodness" (Psalms 104:28). Second, feeling absolute helplessness; if God will not come to my aid, no one else can save me. Then I am lost. "You hide Your countenance and they are frightened" (Psalms 104:29).

When the same feeling of absolute dependence and trust, on one side, and helplessness, on the other, is imputed to man, even to the best and the greatest, it can be characterized as a form of *Avoda Zara*.

True, the Torah does not forbid us to ask a favor of our neighbor or friend. All the laws of lovingkindness and charity have been formulated so that others must be helped as they come to us. On the other hand, the Torah also imposed the obligation of gratitude on the one who is being helped. The obligation of expressing gratitude is the foundation of the whole Jewish faith. However, this does not mean that a person should have absolute trust in his fellow man and look upon himself as lost if the help is not offered.

When I am in a bad situation, I may ask someone for a favor; but at the same time, I must understand that it is possible that he will not help me, and that if he does dismiss me, my hope must not be extinguished. This attitude came to the fore when Mordecai asked Esther to "come to the king... and ask of him on behalf of her people" (Esther 4:8). Could there be a better, more glorious, more trustworthy person than Esther? Yet, he added the familiar line: "If you will be silent at this moment, relief and salvation will come to the Jews from elsewhere" (Esther 4:14). In other words: I beg you, we need you to do this favor; you can save the

congregation of Israel from ruin; you are chosen by the *Shekhina* to bring salvation and rescue. But first, I have doubts if you will carry out the mission. It is possible that you will remain silent. However, even in such a circumstance, help will come from elsewhere.

Feeling complete dependence on someone, whether in a positive or the negative sense, is idolatry. Such a false relationship is not only a sin of the individual, but can also become a sin of the collective. A people's deification of a public figure through having absolute confidence in him, or despair on account of him, at a moment when the people's very destiny is determined, can be transformed into the tremendously negative force which is *Avoda Zara*.

We Jews have truly committed this sin in exile. When I say exile, I do not mean medieval exile, but the exile of modern times, with the beginning of the emancipation movement and the resulting spiritual-cultural proximity between the congregation Israel and the nations of the world. What is the basis of this social-cultural idolatry that we have worshipped? It resides in giving away our entire trust, our entire naïve, childish faith, to the goodness, the fairness, and to the truth of our fellow human beings in our host societies.

At one time, our eyes were open to human-created and relativist culture. We believed that the *Haskala* would solve all the problems of the eternal Jew. Once upon a time, we believed passionately in social-revolutionary movements and in economic-political revolutions. We built based on that decision. We once believed in autonomous political work. Precisely in whom our confidence in people has been expressed is immaterial. Berlin Jews deified Goethe and Kant; Parisian Jews deified Voltaire, Rousseau, and the French Revolution. At the beginning of the century, children of Warsaw and Vilna pledged allegiance to Marx, Engels, and Kautsky. In sum, we have planted and built our entire lives on one rule: Absolute confidence in people and the deification of their cultural values. This axiom is idolatry.

True, the Torah was the first to proclaim the idea of *Tzelem Elokim* in man "You have made him slightly less than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and majesty.... You have placed everything beneath his feet" (Psalms 8:6-7). But we did not deny the demonic powers which are hidden in men, and the Torah never tired of teaching us about the dreadful discrepancies and contradictions that prevail in men, between the *Tzelem Elokim* and the devil, and about which the book of Genesis reports: "This is the narrative of the generations of man... in the likeness of God He created him" (Genesis 5:1); "And though man began to rule over the earth" (Genesis 6:1); "The Nephilim were on the earth in those

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days” (Genesis 6:4). In Jewish history of the last 150 years, man was worshipped, usurping something that belonged to the *Ribbono shel Olam*—“They all look to You with hope, to give their food in its time” (Psalms 145:15).

Now the two theses of the *Shekhina* in exile become clear. The exile of Israel signifies the exile of the *Shekhina* in three ways: 1) The defilement of the *Shekhina*; 2) The *tzimtzum* of the *Shekhina*; and 3) *Avoda Zara*. Conversely, the redemption of Israel must be understood through: 1) The purification of the *Shekhina*; 2) The spread of the *Shekhina*; and 3) The redemption of the *Shekhina*, i.e., the defeat of idolatry. Interpersonal relationships must be placed in their proper perspective. Value and honor must be given to man. “Beloved is man who was created in His image” (*Avot* 3:14). One must be just and helpful. You can and sometimes must seek help from others and be grateful to them. People must cooperate and live peacefully with fellow men, with no distinction between Jew and Gentile. But what is due to the *Ribbono shel Olam*, the sense of absolute confidence and absolute dependence, must not be applied to people, neither to an individual nor to the public, not to a civilization nor to a political group. As long as Jews wish to worship this type of idol, they cannot be redeemed.

At this juncture, we come to the task of the Mizrachi movement in this world-shattering period in Jewish history. In the cycle of time, historic events move at such a rapid head-spinning rate. Let us consider this calmly and gently, without following the path of mass psychosis and mass hysteria.

There will, God willing, be a State of Israel. I have no doubt about that. Despite all the difficulties and struggles which we still have to endure, we will be victorious. The old interpretation of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch must be loudly proclaimed tonight: “It is a holiday for God tomorrow” (Exodus 32:5). The cynical, false, defiled present is to be rejected. The morning is ours; tomorrow belongs to God.

I am not a statesman and I am barely in contact with either non-Jewish or Jewish diplomats or politicians. I am a simple teacher and preacher, and what I say is not based on high-minded ideas, but simply on an intuitive feel.

I cannot explain it myself, but I feel that the historical phase that has lasted for the last eight or nine years—you can call this phase *hester panim*, in which God’s presence is hidden from our sight—has passed. Rambam (*Guide* 3:51) understands *hester panim* as a period when historical events become chaotic, wild, absurd, arbitrary, and cruel; when all rationality and reasoning is shed. When I remember the entire Nazi era with its

animal-like insanity and the indifference of the Christian world, I can only describe it using the words in the verse that Rambam cited: “And My fury will rage against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will befall them, and they will say on that day, ‘Is it not because our God is no longer in my midst, that these evils have befallen me?’” (Deuteronomy 31:17). “That day,” the dreadful day of concealment, lawlessness, of all-consuming anarchy, has passed. Never again will this happen in Jewish history, despite all the efforts of an Ernest Bevin or a Loy Henderson.

True, today we are dealing with a great deal of blood in the Land of Israel, the precious blood of the dear *Benei Tzion*. But the sacrifices are not sacrifices of *hester panim*, which are not accepted, towards which God does not turn—“to Cain and to his offering he did not turn” (Genesis 4:5). Rather, it is a fragrant offering, and through which we build a glorious future, one which honors and gives praise to the Jewish name.

Perhaps even today the attribute of judgment (*middat ha-din*) still prevails, and *Knesset Yisrael* suffers and bleeds. But one cannot consider this the *hester panim* of Treblinka and Dachau. One must always distinguish between *hester panim* and *middat ha-din*. *Hester panim* means aimless sacrifice; *middat ha-din* means purposeful sacrifice. The progression of Jewish history used to be chaotic, insane, and absurd. It now has a sense of purpose and significance. It has a direction and an objective.

We need to stop and examine this assertion of purpose, of direction, of an ideal. What is it? The answer is simple. The State of Israel will liberate a segment of the Jewish people from exile in the political-social sense. Naturally, not everyone will be redeemed through it. Even the Exodus from Egypt itself did not free *all* the Jews from Egypt; the Sages suggest that not all enslaved Israelites were redeemed, perhaps only one fifth, and some say only one fiftieth or even one out of every five hundred Jews in Egypt were actually liberated (*Mekhilta Beshalah* 13:18). Exile is a subjective concept. Through the new Jewish state, we Jews have at least been given the opportunity to liberate ourselves from exile. But will the *Ribbono shel Olam* Himself also be freed from exile by the State of Israel, or will He remain in captivity in a Jewish state? This is the main question we religious Jews have been asking ourselves for the past several months.

A strange question: Will the leaders of the State of Israel make the same error as the leaders of the Emancipation Movement, wanting only to bring the Jews to Israel, leaving the *Ribbono shel Olam* in exile? This question must be asked. We must not, with eyes shut, wander aimlessly on the road of Jewish history. Obviously, the exile of the *Ribbono shel Olam* in Israel would be a hundred times worse and more dreadful than His exile

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abroad. First of all, we would not have any mitigating excuses. We would not be able to argue: On account of slavery and the resulting madness did we worship false gods as the *Ribbono shel Olam* Himself once defended the Jews (see *Yalkut Shimoni* 234 on Exodus 14:29). And secondly, the Land of Israel itself does not tolerate transgression. Ramban and the *Kuzari* along with Ibn Ezra have formulated an entire philosophical theory regarding this concept.

With regard to this latter point, the importance and responsibility of Mizrachi grows. It is foolish to talk about abandoning Mizrachi now. On the contrary, it must be reborn and rise to awesome historical heights. The Mizrachi will have to protect the reading of *hotzeitikha* as *hutzeiti itkha*. The Mizrachi must become the heir of Rabbi Ba, Rabbi Hanania, Rabbi Akiva, the Arizal, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, Rabbi Moshe Alshikh, and the *Beit Yosef*, who suffered along with the *Shekhina* in her sorrow of uncleanness, *tzimtzum*, and *Avoda Zara*.

The redemption of the *Shekhina* from her defilement is the most popular slogan among our Orthodox Jews, and the average Mizrachi member knows this very well. It is impossible to imagine the Land of Israel deprived of all elements of religion. But I want to be honest here. I am by nature an outspoken individualist and cannot be influenced by mass hysteria, even when the hysterical outcry comes from pious Jews.

With regard to redemption of the *Shekhina* from defilement, I am definitely optimistic. Whoever ultimately stands at the helm, life in Israel will to a certain extent be completely Jewish. I read in the press that the kitchens of the Israeli army are strictly kosher. When, on that fateful Friday, the establishment of the State of Israel was proclaimed, the ceremony was held eight hours early so as not to desecrate the Sabbath, despite various logistical difficulties associated with doing this. The act alone sanctified the Sabbath more than fifty rallies dedicated towards Sabbath observance. Naturally, religious Jewry must stand watch and fight for it, but I can assure everyone that Shabbat in *Eretz Yisrael* will be holier than it was in the Jewish neighborhood in Berlin, in the Frankfurt Ghetto, or even on Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn.

I also believe that in Israel, Santa Claus will not have as white a beard, and the radio will not play "Silent Night, Holy Night." As a Jew who follows *Hazal*, in this I can assure all zealots in the exile.

However, the redemption of the *Shekhina* from *tzimtzum* is a much more complicated and important task, and a great deal of time, dedication, energy, and work must be devoted to the realization of this hope. The religious Zionist parties Mizrachi and HaPoel HaMizrachi must contribute substantially to the realization of the vision.

With regard to the redemption of the *Shekhina* from *tzimtzum*, I understand this idea simply to mean the revival of many parts of the Torah, the rewriting of abstract letters upon the concrete parchment of historical reality. I specifically mean the public Torah laws. Indeed, there is Shabbat, the laws of forbidden foods, other commandments applying to individuals. But even in regard to public Sabbath observance, there is no *tzibbur*, no collective aspect. When an individual is multiplied by hundreds of thousands, their acts are not public *per se*. Their individual character remains. However, the social-political economic life of Israel, needs to be expressed via the seal of Judaism, of Jewish law and morality. The various phases of state life must be permeated with the Jewish spirit, understood and interpreted by Torah and spiritual giants. I exclude two groups here: ignoramuses and the idle. Our treasure of halakha regarding laws between man and his fellow man, from the laws of damages to the laws of kings, must be built and transformed into action and facts. True, I have not put much thought into it, but I am convinced that when the Israeli social-political institutions embody the Torah's ideal civil code, we will be the most advanced state in regard to social justice and truth. To summarize, the expansion of the *Shekhina* is the realization of a total Torah worldview with regard to external social justice and universality.

By reviving the flying letters, we will develop state-parchment that will be glorious and praiseworthy. True, we are still far from complete redemption, but we do stand at the threshold of redemption.

And I would not want Jews to only have mere sovereignty. So many have waited, so many have dreamed, so many have yearned, so many prayed. And at the end, will the *Athalta de-Ge'ula*, the beginning of the redemption, be so mundane, so gray and trivial, another tiny country like Costa Rica or Haiti?

Our dream is not like the old sociological axiom regarding the discrepancy between the ideal and its realization, that the more a dream is realized, the greater the distance between reality and the original vision. We do not believe in this rule. "A Song of Ascents. When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like dreamers!" (Psalms 126:1). The dream of *Shivat Tzion* will be fulfilled, because there must not be any contradiction between the dream and the realization.

Even when God will bring back the Jewish exiles, we will still be dreamers. The reality itself will be shrouded in a golden fantasy. And when I say "as dreamers," I do not dream of wealth and military power, luxury and gold. The Land of Israel will be poor and small for years. We must not become snobbish. I mean a dream about a Torah life, about "And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous

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judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?” (Deuteronomy 4:8)!

The task is a huge one. It is huge because it will not go as fast or as easily as I speak. First, a great deal of research is needed to consider modern problems in light of Torah Judaism. For example, take such an area as workers' rights. We have the material, but it needs to be processed and brought into practical life, in the relationship between employer and employee. Modern institutions such as strikes, unionism, closed shops, social security, and so on, must take on a Jewish complexion.

But the Torah will not find its actualization in Israel through rabbinical assemblies, and not through advice given by privileged New Yorkers to the fighters on the barricades in Jerusalem, and not by writing flowery articles. Rather, it will be achieved only through participating in building the Land, by hewing stones and draining swamps, defending cities and colonies, by working devotedly. It is not Zionist political leaders nor intellectuals who will impart their seal up upon Israel.

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘*Pesol lekha*, carve two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke” (Exodus 34:1). Moses, do you want eternal tablets, tablets that will last through history? Do not bring them down from heaven! If they come from there they will not be eternalized. Hew the stone tablets yourself, and on the stones which you will carve with effort and sweat and sacrifice, I will write the Ten Commandments. Otherwise you will not receive a second set of tablets. My colleagues: If Orthodoxy wants a Jewish Land of Israel, it must fulfill the commandment of carving the Tablets with our own hands.

Out of this, a new political philosophy, a new worldview can emerge, a philosophical world-view that will be built in the street, in the park, in public life, and not in academies.

But Mizrachi's main task must be concentrated, and this will ring very paradoxical, on the redemption of the *Shekhina* from her bondage to *Avoda Zara*. I see that many Jews here are stunned into silence. What idolatry can there be in a Zionist movement?

As I have previously defined, *Avoda Zara* characterizes the sense of absolute trust and reliance on what the *Knesset Yisrael* gives to civilized society on one side, and the bitter feeling of helplessness when it is ridiculed and disappointed. Let us see: Did political Zionism sin in this regard? The honest answer must be: Yes, it sinned severely. I must add something more. If we had not engaged in the sin of political *Avoda Zara*, the Zionist movement would have accomplished far more. We would have made much more progress. Who knows how far we could have gone?

Let us analyze it historically. The non-political *Shivat Tzion* movement of the pre-Zionist epoch did not suffer from the temptation of *Avoda Zara*. Its followers did actual work, built colonies, sent Jews to *Eretz Yisrael* without fanfare and without noise. It did not depend on anyone and did not give absolute trust to anyone (except of course the *Ribbono shel Olam*). It accomplished much: Petah Tikva, Rishon LeZion, Zikhron Yaakov, Hadera. Anyone who visits Israel and sees these old colonies can appreciate the importance of the work of the Hovevei Zion, of the Jews in small settlements with their old-fashioned rabbis. They can understand that without the quiet, modest work of Rabbi Mordecai Eliasberg, Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, Rabbi Hirsch Leib of Volozhin, and others, perhaps the modern *Shivat Tzion* movement would not have experienced its victories. When Herzl arrived, he observed that there was no vacuum in *Eretz Yisrael*. Jews already had a foothold there.

Herzl's thesis on its own is correct. A country cannot be built economically unless it has political power. Politics and business are too closely linked and connected in modern life. Therefore, if we want to rebuild Israel and settle in it, we must also develop a Jewish state there.

Herzl was, however, a child of the culture of sophisticated Vienna, the city of the Danube with her Strauss waltzes and her aesthetic literature of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Peter Altenberg, Jakob Wasserman, and Stefan Zweig. Together with his fellow citizens, he believed in people and their continual progress, not only in the scientific-cultural sense, but also in ethical-moral terms. An absolute humanistic world-view dominated European culture in general and Vienna in particular towards the end of the last century. It led a broken and disappointed Stefan Zweig to suicide in a foreign country.

As a result, this humanistic confidence in man was expressed in Herzl's conception of *Shivat Tzion* as well. He understood the emergence of Jewish sovereignty as an act of grace bestowed by the nations, and he wanted to see in it a model of a secular cultural state. Naturally, later, when he had accomplished so much and felt disappointed by the "righteousness" of the German emperor, as well as with the Sultan, he revised many of his original views. However, he died too young to be able to become a full-fledged "*ba'al teshuva*." As a result, his humanistic faith had become implanted in the Zionist movement.

Later, after World War I, in the Balfour period, we made fatal errors through our naïve belief and child-like trust. The absolute idols that we made of England and the League of Nations, which we worshipped, had paralyzed our energies and delayed the realization of *Shivat Tzion* for many generations. The Zionists were so politicized that they considered

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a resolution by a Lithuanian parliament or the flattery of a cheap French politician as a great victory. *Avoda Zara* was expressed, firstly, in trust in international justice and truth as represented by public organs; and, secondly, in a sense of despair and helplessness if the English colonial office or the doomed People's Bund were to remove its mercies from the Jews. Wasted, unfruitful years were lost through dealing with the English Colonial office. But Jews still worshipped idols, believing in Zionist legalism, meaning the return of Zion with the approval of the Gentiles. The period came to an end in Treblinka and in the Lublin Ghetto, and I would also say, through the false, hypocritical policies regarding Zionism of President Roosevelt and Churchill, whom a great Zionist leader once called Moses and Aaron!

But even now, we still serve slavery. We have a weakness for politics. For us, a political victory is more important than a victory on the battlefield. While the United Nations decided in favor of partition, Jews danced in the streets and other fools said that we can now forgive the nations for the six million martyrs. And then, one fine morning, the State Department regretted the partition plan; Jews were in despair and mourning. Precisely then, the Haganah and the Irgun began their victorious offensive. I once had an exchange with a specific Zionist activist: "Fool, why are you so depressed? We are now clearly experiencing the true victories which the *Al Hanissim* prayer and the Hanukka candles impart to us!" He looked at me with astonishment and said: "But the State Department still doesn't want a Jewish kingdom." Is this not the curse of "You will worship man-made gods of wood and stone" (Deuteronomy 4:28)?

What did Rabbi Akiva understand regarding the *Shekhina* in exile? Did he want us to be grieved? No! He revealed to us a new vision of redemption. Jews must never despair, because their exile is also the exile of the *Ribbono shel Olam*. And if the *Shekhina* is in exile, redemption must come. If Jews fight, the *Ribbono shel Olam* fights with them. Their war is His war, their victory is His victory. Our strength is unmatched. It cannot be measured in general historical terms and by sociological rules. We sometimes rise to completely different levels. The last couple of months have made this quite obvious.

I want to be clear. I am not against political effort, but we must not have too much faith in it. We will take Israel through faith in the *Ribbono shel Olam*, which at the same time constitutes a powerful belief in our own power through which He is revealed. It is very important that the interpretation of Jacob's "sword and bow" (Genesis 48:22) as literal military strength (according to Rashi's reading) must be combined with Onkelos' interpretation as the power of Jacob's "prayer and request."

The Mizrahi must stand watch. True, it is a political party, but there is a huge distance between healthy politics and *Avoda Zara*.

But this sin of idolatry must be viewed from a completely different perspective. A Jewish state was created. A state does not exhaust itself in Jewish ministries, a Jewish post office, a Jewish army, or a Jewish representative in the United Nations. They are necessary instruments of a state, but they do not represent its essence. The State of Israel is expressed primarily in the form of a political nation. The nation is politically merged into an organic unity that expresses itself in a formal legal sense civically, but in social-philosophical terms in regard to the ideology of a nation in a political sense. In a Jewish state, a political nation must emerge. We already say that we, the Jews of exile, do not dare to mix ourselves into the affairs of the Land of Israel. This is simply because, in a formal legal sense, we are citizens of another country! In addition, on a social-philosophical level, the Jew in exile will have no relevance to the political state that in a period of time will appear in *Eretz Yisrael*. Does this mean that there will be a split in *Knesset Yisrael*, and we will be classified into two groups? God forbid! *Knesset Yisrael* must remain united. "And what one nation in the earth is like Your people Israel?" (II Samuel 7:23). If, God forbid, the concept of a political nation should be singularly dominant, then Jews in exile will become completely assimilated. And then the Jews of *Eretz Yisrael* will not be able to maintain the ancient chain of Israel's eternity. It will develop a visage that will not reflect the age-old gestalt of *Yisrael Saba*.

But as vital and as historically important as the state may be, it should not become an *Avoda Zara*. By this I caution against an axiology which values the state as the highest, most precious, and greatest value in Jewish life, for which everything must be dedicated and sacrificed. Such a political philosophy is generally universally dangerous, but especially so for eternal Israel. The state can be a blessing, through which *Knesset Yisrael* can revive itself. She can also become a curse. It just depends on how we think about and value it.

I want to formulate my idea clearly and briefly. Statehood is important not as a goal, but as a means. The goal transcends statehood, time, and history. I do not want you to misunderstand me. I do not underestimate the value of political sovereignty. I am just opposed to a cult of sovereignty; no idol must be made of the Land of Israel itself. She must serve a higher objective.

What is this objective? A *Knesset Yisrael* which represents not just any political nation, but a Torah nation, a kingdom-of-Heaven nation which is not limited to territorial borders. If the concept is properly understood, deepened and enhanced by the Jewish state, then, I am sure, we will end

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up welcoming the Messiah. But if it will become a cult of absolutism, and all Judaism in the state is diminished—then, God forbid, we will have lost everything: both the state and *Knesset Yisrael!*

In Jewish history we find a remarkable phenomenon. We have had two destructions (the First and Second Temples), and two exiles: the Assyrian-Babylonian Exile and the Roman Exile. In the First Temple period, Jews had been in *Eretz Yisrael* for a long time, deeply rooted in the land, which they conquered with their own power (and with the help of the *Ribbono shel Olam*), spoke pure Hebrew, lived freely and independently, with their own kings and priests, with authentic lifestyles and customs. However, the moment they were expelled from their land, they quickly became assimilated, and 80 percent of the people disappeared. What happened to the Assyrian exiles, the Ten Tribes? And what, for that matter, even happened to the Babylonian exiles? A small percentage returned to *Eretz Yisrael* with Ezra and Nehemiah. And even those who returned to Zion were mired in assimilation.

During the Second Temple period, and even considering the time after the destruction, Jews settled in *Eretz Yisrael* for a much shorter time than they did in the First Temple period. In addition, they were practically never truly politically free, whether under Persia, Hellenistic Syria, or Rome. There was no common language. Most Jews spoke Aramaic, while the intelligentsia was Greek-assimilated, speaking and thinking in Greek. In *Eretz Yisrael* itself there was a bitter fight between the Pharisees, on one side, and the Sadducees and Hellenists, on the other. And yet, despite the destruction of the Temple and the destruction of Jerusalem, and despite the plunder of everything the people owned, the Jewish people could not be destroyed. There grew a Yavneh, Usha, Shefaram, Zippori, Tiberias, Sura, Pumpedita; Cordova, Lunel, Worms, Mainz, Speyer; Vilna, Volozhin, and so on. Whose accomplishment was this? What happened during the Second Temple that united the *Knesset Yisrael!* The answer is simple, the *Anshei Knesset ha-Gedola* did this!

R. Yehoshua ben Levi said: Why are the Sages of those generations called the Men of the Great Assembly, the *Anshei Knesset ha-Gedola*? It is because they returned the crown of the Holy One, Blessed be He, to its former glory. How so? Moses came and said in his prayer: “God is *gadol, gibbor ve-nora*, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God” (Deuteronomy 10:17). Jeremiah the prophet came and said: Gentiles, i.e., the minions of Nebuchadnezzar, are carousing in His sanctuary; where is His awesomeness? Therefore, he did not say “awesome” in his prayer: “The great God, the mighty Lord of Hosts, is His name” (Jeremiah 32:18). Daniel

came and said: Gentiles are enslaving His children; where is His might? Therefore he did not say “mighty” in his prayer: “The great and awesome God” (Daniel 9:4). The members of the Great Assembly came and said: On the contrary, this is the might of His might, i.e., this is the fullest expression of it, that He conquers His inclination in that He exercises patience toward the wicked. And these acts also express His awesomeness: Were it not for the awesomeness of the Holy One, Blessed be He, how could one people survive among the nations? (*Yoma* 69b).

At the time that Moses said: “God is great, mighty, and awesome,” as well as later, during the First Temple period, one could translate the attributes of mighty and awesomeness in a national-political and in a physical-heroic sense. The Israelite nation was powerful, young, dynamic, aggressive, and contentious. She displayed exceptional heroism against all adversity. The war with Amalek, Sihon, Og, Midian, and later the war with the seven nations fell to Israel’s conquest as a political nation. The Jews, and with them the *Shekhina*, were strong and powerful. And everyone feared them. “The people shall hear, [and] be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Philistia” (Exodus 15:14). Their heroism was personified in Gideon, Samson, Abner ben Ner, Joab ben Zeruiah, Benaiah ben Jehoiada—field marshals, heroes of war, who fought with strength and courage.

In Jeremiah and Daniel’s time, however, Jewish political power was wiped out and the *Knesset Yisrael* was condemned, suppressed, and decimated. With so many battles, political defeats, and military losses, it would have been self-deception to attribute heroism to Jewish existence in exile. In the simple sense of the terms, we in fact had displayed the antithesis of “great, mighty, and awesome.” And despair and shame accompanied *Knesset Yisrael* in the Babylonian Exile. “We sat on the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and cried” (Psalms 137:1), where we sat and wept with deep insult and profound submission. “Gentiles are enslaving His children; where is His awesomeness?... Gentiles are enslaving His children; where is His might?” (*Yoma* 69b). The Men of the Great Assembly responded: On the contrary! They came and created a new concept of nationality, as well as a new idea of heroism, one of reverence and sacrifice. *Knesset Yisrael* is a nation not only through political-social community, not only through political sovereignty, not only through a large army, not only by “So all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua took and struck with the edge of the sword” (Joshua 11:12), not only by military leadership such as that of Othniel ben Kenaz, Shamgar ben Anat, and Barak ben Abinoam, not only by David and

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Solomon—but also by embodying a definite Torah ideology, by fighting for a particular world order, by observing laws and judgments, by identifying with the *Shekhina*. Heroism is sometimes demonstrated not only on the battlefield, but also in day-to-day life, in a stubborn fight for the realization of definite values, of creativity, and existence despite the obstacles.

Rabbi Akiva organized congregations and Torah study despite Pappas ben Yehuda's warnings, "Akiva! Do you not fear the [punishment of the Roman] kingdom?" (*Berakhot* 61b). He was more heroic than Joab ben Zeruiah. Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava gave *semikha* to five disciples against Rome's edict (*Sanhedrin* 14a). He demonstrated more heroism than Samson. And the martyrs of Worms were more heroic than Gideon and Barak combined. This great, mighty, and awesome God cannot be defeated by exile or any power, not Hitler, and not Bevin, not Loy Henderson, and not the Mufti. None can oppress this Creator.

The great, mighty, and awesome God is a part of the Jew's consciousness, part of his daily "*Shulhan Arukh*." The great, mighty, and awesome God links the Jews into a *Knesset Yisrael* which transcends history, time, politics, and logic. The great, mighty, and awesome God connects the Jew of Morocco with the Jew of New York, the Jew of Yemen with the Jew of London, and the Jew of the German concentration camps with the Jew of Tel Aviv. The great, mighty, and awesome God carried us through the dark Middle Ages and the falsely seductive present day. The great, mighty, and awesome God ignited in us in the longing for redemption in a Messianic era. Despite the fact that all laugh at me, "I believe in a complete faith in the coming of Messiah, and although he may tarry, yet I will await him every day that he may arrive."

The great, mighty, and awesome God brought us back to the Land of Israel, and gave us courage to drain its swamps and water its deserts. The great, mighty, and awesome God gives the Jewish heroes in the Land of Israel faith and the power to defend Jerusalem, Mishmar HaEmek, and Degania. The great, mighty, and awesome God turned us into an eternal people.

And when did the Men of the Great Assembly create the new idea of a historical and politically transcendent *Shekhina* nation? It is precisely when Jews had, through the grace of Cyrus, built their own kingdom and built it with self-sacrifice and heroism. It was precisely at that time when the Men of the Great Assembly proclaimed this new *Shekhina* nation. Indeed, we must have a state, as well as a legal-political nation with all its accoutrements, for the state and the nation will serve as the laboratory in which the great ideals and values of the political nation and values of

“great, mighty, and awesome” will be realized. The Men of the Great Assembly argued that we should not reduce “great, mighty, and awesome” from its transcendental Torah attribute to “great, mighty, and awesome” in the political-legal sense.

My colleagues, happy are we that we merited to see that today the *Knesset Yisrael* can interpret “great, mighty, and awesome” according to its simple meaning, in the sense of physical and political heroism. This is an *Athalta de-Ge’ula*, a beginning of the Redemption. Today, together with Moses, we sing: “I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and rider He has thrown into the sea” (Exodus 15:1). The heroes of *Eretz Yisrael* sanctify God’s Name. But not for one moment can we forget that “great, mighty, and awesome” must become an expression and manifestation of a much higher ideal, and this idea must not be lost. Otherwise, the deification of the State will become *Avoda Zara*.

Therein lies the principal task of Mizrachi. A religious *Eretz Yisrael* also means an *Eretz Yisrael* which serves the Torah of *Knesset Yisrael*, which stands above all. But this *Knesset Yisrael* philosophy is a matter of Torah principles. The secret of the Men of the Great Assembly’s historical success lies in the identification of *Knesset Yisrael* with the Torah of Israel. A Torah nation must be reborn if we want to uphold the Eternity of Israel. Rabbi Saadia Gaon’s word: “This nation is not a nation other than through its Torah” (*Emunot ve-De’ot* 3:7) is an axiomatic truth. Torah does not exclusively mean Torah literature, *biddushei* Torah, Torah journals, or even *yeshivot*. As important as all this work is, we must now move up to the second plan. Torah means simply teaching Torah to *tinokot shel Beit Rabban*, school-children, not just in Israel but also and perhaps mainly in exile. A majority of the population of *Knesset Yisrael* still lives abroad, and here the danger is very great.

The Mizrachi must become a great, powerful Torah organization that must find its expression in educational work, in building *yeshivot*, and in planting the spirit of Torah *she-bi-khtav* and *be-al pe* in the tender hearts of the youth. This kind of work will guarantee the realization of “great, mighty, and awesome” in all its implications, both that of Jeremiah as well as the Men of the Great Assembly.

Years ago, I talked about the awesome task of the Mizrachi. At that time the *Va’ad ha-Hinukh ha-Haredi* was founded. I must say that the committee has done very good work. But I want to be very candid: What Mizrachi has accomplished for education is far from enough. Education must not simply be another department in the Mizrachi, for which an obligatory seat is provided at its annual conference. The work of education must become almost the nerve center of the Mizrachi. But the

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budget for it is too small and interest in it insufficient. More attention needs to be paid to the qualitative side of education. There is no magic formula for establishing a Day School. A yeshiva can become a quality institution only if one directly toils away at it. The right atmosphere must be created, filled with warmth and love for all *kodshei Yisrael*. It does not happen if one becomes distracted from it. I know from my own experience.

You may ask me what I have accomplished in the last seven or eight years. “And we say to my lord we have an old father and a young child of his old age” (Genesis 44:20). I have learned a lot of Torah, ancient Torah, and I have hundreds of young children of my old age whom I have raised in Boston. I do not boast that my yeshiva is the best, as others do. But I do know one thing: What I have accomplished came through pain, suffering, sleepless nights, and long hours in the yeshiva. The HaPoel HaMizrachi has repeatedly tried to organize a religious youth movement [in Boston] and succeeded. Today, the Shomer HaDati has seventy to eighty teenage members, and most of them are from our yeshiva. The children will belong to Mizrachi.

The negation of exile should not be the motto now, even if certain Israeli Mizrachi leaders want it to be so. There should be only a feeling of obligation towards the exile—an obligation in the sense that the small country of Israel, with its political-legal nation, should be a force on behalf of the larger *Knesset Yisrael* that embodies the *Shekhina* and bears the flag of the Men of the Great Assembly with “great, mighty, and awesome” etched on her.

“For will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot hold You, how much less so can this house which I have built!” (I Kings 8:27). Can the God of Israel be “squeezed” into a small *Beit ha-Mikdash*? Can the Infinite be reduced to a three-dimensional space? Can the *Shekhina* and *Malkhut Yisrael* fit into a small area in the Middle East? The God of Israel is transcendent, above time and space. The Infinite cannot be conceptualized and cannot be subsumed in the frame of a physical concrete Temple. Nor should Jewish sovereignty be entirely limited to the State of Israel. Does this mean that one does not need a Temple or a Jewish state? God forbid! Such a conclusion is false. Solomon built the Temple, and his prayer was said during the dedication of the First Temple. Joshua and David built a Jewish state. Both the Temple and the kingship were holy and precious to the Jews.

The conclusion is not that there is no need for a Temple, but that the Temple is not the final objective. It is merely a means of realizing a high purpose.

What is the holy purpose, the foundation of all foundations? Solomon defined it: “For they will hear your great Name and your strong hand and your outstretched arm and pray towards this house” (I Kings 8:42). The House of God just needs to be the place where Godliness will be revealed, where everything that is noble, elevated, and beautiful, and good should be realized, where Your Great Name, strong hand and outstretched arm—a divine world-order with absolute justice and truth—should be clearly demonstrated. We must, of course, have a corner of the earth where the *Shekhina* should not be in exile and where it can be revealed to everyone—neither unclean, nor diminished, nor enslaved to *Avoda Zara*.

And the One God knows that we need it, that we must have it. “We are ridiculed and blasphemed by the Gentiles, to be killed, destroyed, stricken and disgraced.” People have lost *derekh erez* and their respect for us. Bitter, dark enemies defile our name, our Torah: “the enemy has blasphemed, your Great Name is defiled” (from the *piyyut*, *Eile Ezkera*). We must restore honor to the name of Israel and alleviate the humiliation of its prophets and sages. We must sanctify the name of Heaven publicly. And where can we do this completely, if not in our own *melukha* and in our own *Beit Mikdash*?

“And also to the stranger that is not of Your people Israel that comes from a distant country for [the sake of] Your Name” (I Kings 8:41). Behold, the sincere non-Jew, the stranger, who does not know of your people and arrives from far away, without any understanding of Jews and their God, must see in the Temple something beautiful, elevated, and holy, something that will contradict the distortions of all the haters of Israel from Apion to Bevin. “You will hear from the heavens, the foundation of your throne, and you shall do all that the stranger shall call unto You, so that all the peoples of the earth shall know your Name, to hold you in reverence as do Your people Israel” (I Kings 8:39). “Great, mighty, and awesome” must be revealed in the house of God and the land of God.

Our own children, for whom Judaism is strange and who see in Jewish existence only a curse, a terrible, dark, satanic fate which pursues the downtrodden Jew, who know not either the God of Israel or His Torah, its promises and covenant, because “they were exiled to the land of the enemy whether far or near” (I Kings 8:46)—they must be impressed by Your Temple, *Ribbono shel Olam!* They have adopted a foreign culture, a culture that is antagonistic to our aspirations and hopes. They must see a new vision of Israel, a new Torah conception of the world, a new world ethic, a new prophetic nation “and they will pray to you toward the land which you gave to their fathers, the city which you chose and the house

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which you built for your sake” (I Kings 8:48). It was for this purpose that Solomon built a Temple, for this purpose we build the State of Israel.

“And you will hear from heaven the foundation of Your throne their prayer and their supplication and you will carry out their judgment” (I Kings 8:49).