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## *Introduction*

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From the beginning of the Zionist enterprise in the nineteenth century, the role of religion and the place of religion in a Jewish polity has persisted as a central question and continues to elude easy definition, to say nothing of resolution. Most Zionist thinkers of the “classical” period at the turn of the century and in the early decades of the present century at least in some measure viewed Zionism as an escape from the dead hand of religious obscurantism and as a way of easing the Jewish masses into the mainstream of Western civilization. In some sense, and with respect to the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe, Zionism was a kind of nondeistic reform movement that some observers viewed as an effort to keep the bath water and throw out the baby. Be that as it may, the major thrust—both ideological and practical (in its settlement expression)—was of a secularizing character, but with a strong buttressing of the enterprise by traditions, acts, and rituals drawn from the religious context. These served a twofold function: they provided a web of familiarity, a skein of continuity to ease passage into an uncharted and indeed revolutionary situation, while providing a baseline or at least vocabulary for the evolvement of new societal forms; and secondly, they provided a matrix of legitimation for a possibly illegitimate act—the displacement of the native Arab population. (This second factor is only now beginning to function in a heightened fashion.)

Thus we confront an interesting and rather confusing situation in contemporary Israel where to all intents and purposes—ideationally, behaviorally, even electorally—the majority of the population is nonobservant if not fully secular, while the national symbols, rhetoric, framework are all heavily influenced and interlaced by traditional

Jewish (European) religion. Even though Israel cannot be said to be a particularly “religious” country, it tends to be seen as such by outsiders and, we would aver, increasingly by Israelis themselves. Furthermore, and to add to the seeming contradiction, while basically nonobservant, it tends to be “Orthodox” in this nonobservance, rather than tied to or tending to any of the less taxing, less rigid forms prevalent, let us say, in the largest Jewish Diaspora of our times, the United States of America. Thus those who see a possibly rosy future for the Reform or Conservative movements transplanted to Israel are, we feel, bound to be disappointed.

Insofar as a religious system took root in Israel, it was that system that emerged from the Eastern European context even to the point where in its more extreme manifestations it has overtaken and absorbed similarly inclined groupings coming from a totally different environment—the Sepharadim of the Middle East and North Africa. In effect, both ideological systems undergirding Israeli society—the religious and the secular—are overwhelmingly Eastern European in derivation.

Until the 1967 Six-Day War, the relationship between the secular majority and the religiously observant minority stayed on a more or less even keel symbolized by what has come to be called the “status quo agreement”. Basic religious needs would be respected and indeed supported by the state—a sort of a minimalist agreement from the viewpoint of the religious—while loyalty to the Zionist state—also rather minimalist—would be returned by the religious. Religion would supply a sort of ceremonial continuity to the enterprise while recognizing that its “divisions” and “armor” were thin and unlikely to carry the day. At the same time, the state would make it possible for at least basic identification on the part of the observant with a broader societal consensus.

Since 1967, the status quo has been violated by both camps. Inroads into public religious observances have been made by the non-religious majority, and increasing demands for financial support and stricter observance in the public and even personal arena have been made by segments of the religious minority. The battle has increasingly been joined with the additional complication of the “national” element, which is associated more and more with a religious stance, playing a role. Although the country’s political and intellectual elite is overwhelmingly secular or nonobservant, one sees signs of religious symbols being increasingly used for the purposes of political legitimation and as a unifying theme. One reason for this utilization of religious themes is that of all the ideological camps for prestate and early state Israel—the socialist, the militantly secular, the general Zionist—

only the religious sector appears to retain a sense of continuing dynamism and commitment. Thus at the same time as every life in Israel is marked increasingly by a secular encasement, the religious context enjoys (paradoxically) greater and greater "respect" and legitimacy. Numerically, the relationship between secular and religious has not significantly changed, but the dynamic interplay has undergone change in the direction of greater intrusiveness of religion at least symbolically and politically than in the past.

Now, while the issue of religion and state and of religion and politics has been widely if only sometimes adequately dealt with in the literature, the *nature* and *functioning* of religion among Israelis and in the society at large has not enjoyed much serious treatment. In effect, this book will be the first to set forth a more basic picture of how and what Israelis believe, and how they act or do not act upon those beliefs. It is our contention that knowledge of these elements of any society, and perhaps especially Israeli society, is of more than passing importance

## THE BACKGROUND

In Israel, religion can be viewed as a source of unity, but in reality it is often a source of division and tension. To say that the religious situation in Israel is unique and complex is a platitude that is still worth keeping in mind as one approaches the subject.

There are several working hypotheses with which scholars approach the current religious situation in Israel. The simplest and most common notion is that of continuity with Jewish traditions of the past wherein the question of specific traditions must be raised. If Israel is indeed reflective of Diaspora religious traditions, then which Diaspora do we have in mind? Currently, Diaspora seems to mean the English-speaking world, in which more than 50 percent of world Jewry resides. Very often one encounters wholesale projections of the Jewish religious situation from there on to the Israeli scene (that is, the division into Reform and Conservative majority, and an Orthodox minority). Such projections are absurd and totally divorced from reality because they fail to note the most important facts about the history of Israeli Judaism: first its continuity with the Diaspora of Eastern Europe, and then its continuity with the Diaspora of Arab countries, whose descendants currently comprise the majority of Israel's citizens.

Like many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Israel has a Ministry of Religious Affairs that recognizes certain religious commu-

nities and gives them government support and supervision. These include the Druze (who for the first time in history are separate from Islam and Arabs), Catholics, Bahais, Samaritans, various Christian groups, and Jews. Religious judges in all communities are paid by the state, and the jurisdiction of religious courts is limited to personal matters, marriage, divorce, and sometimes inheritance. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is normally held by one of the religious parties and serves as a source of patronage and political influence. Most of the budget is devoted to Jewish religious services.

Of the four religious movements among Jews in the United States—Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist—only the third has a significant presence in Israel. When we speak of religious groups in Israel, we mean Orthodoxy. The other movements are totally unknown to most Israelis and are generally regarded with as much empathy as Rev. Moon's Unification Church or Confucianism. While Reform Judaism in the United States claims more than a million adherents, in Israel it might claim a few thousand at most.

The historical connections between political Zionism in its current forms and Judaism have to be examined to understand recent developments in Israeli politics, especially since 1967 and 1973. Zionism has always been a secular movement, not only because its leaders were secular in their life-style and beliefs, but because they did not base any of their thinking on religious traditions. The mere creation of Zionism, which defined Jews as a nation and developed a secular nationalism, was an active rejection of Jewish religious traditions. Zionism is "the transformation of the concept of Jewry from a divine pilot project into a human problem soluble through human devices" (Marmorstein 1969, 57). The secular character of political Zionism, and its rebellion against Jewish tradition, caused the opposition shown by Orthodox Jewry in Eastern Europe and Palestine.

What makes the religious situation in Israel so complex and unique are two factors. First, the majority of Israelis are nonobservant, constituting a majority subculture that is distinctly secular in its life-style. This majority is referred to in everyday Hebrew as *hilonim*. A minority subculture, making up about 20 percent of the population, contains Orthodox Jews of all varieties and is referred to as *datiim*. Within the *dati* subculture, one can distinguish further between the Zionist-Orthodox and the non-Zionist.

Second, compared to any Diaspora community today, Israel has a larger percentage of Orthodox Jews, and it has a far higher percentage of Jews whose ancestors lived in Arab countries. The last demographic factor is historically not only unique but revolutionary, and this for a number of reasons, such as the relative newness of the

modernization dimension and the much higher rate of religious traditionalism among Sepharadim.

Throughout modern Jewish history, non-European Jews, known as Sepharadim, were a small minority of the world Jewish population, as they are today. If one takes the best estimates for the number of Jews in the world today (around 12 million), only about 15 percent are of Sephardic origin, but the majority of this minority now live in Israel and in fact are a majority of the population! This segment of reality, often forgotten, has been shaping Israeli culture and has begun to critically influence the Israeli religious situation.

### **Orthodoxy Faces Modernization and Zionism**

The process of leaving the ghetto and gaining formal equality between 1770 and 1870 in Europe is regarded today by some Orthodox Jews as a major disaster because it destroyed the traditional Jewish community. While secularization posed the question of defining individual and collective Jewish identity, those who avoided it found themselves in a defensive position against the whole modernizing world. Since the eighteenth century, Orthodox Judaism has been in retreat, and on the defensive, in the face of modernization.

Orthodox Jewish leadership reacted with a total rejection of modernity. It attempted complete separatism, not willing to risk any contacts. Quite soon it was clear that such a complete ghettoization was impossible in the modern world. The solution has been a selective, tactical involvement in modern culture. Separatism was reinforced by strict ritualism and regimentation, continuing the historic Jewish option of maintaining barriers between the Jewish community and outsiders, who in the modern world include both non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews. Contact with the outside world is allowed for economic survival, and it is limited to occupations that would not entail an intense commitment to modern values. The war on modernity is waged by keeping the tradition to the fullest, resisting change, and acting confidently. Thus, Orthodox Jews might be found in some kinds of retail trade, but only rarely in science and the professions. Secular work might be necessary for survival, but it is never comparable to the higher calling of Talmudic studies and the jealous keeping of the 613 commandments that guide the life of the observant Jew.

### **Orthodox Reactions to Zionism**

For the Orthodox, Zionism as it first appeared on the scene was a

challenge and a danger, worse than assimilation or secularization, and in fact did represent one form of radical secularization. Zionism refused to leave Jewish identity and the Jewish community behind. It claimed them to itself, offering a radically new definition of what Jewishness meant. It actively rejected religion as representing passivity and ignorance. Zionism was a vote of no confidence in God and his Messiah, and an insult to 2000 years of tradition.

Most Orthodox reactions to Zionism were identical to the general Orthodox reaction to modernity and secularization. Orthodox leaders did not accept the Zionist definition of the Jews as a nation in search of a homeland, but remained faithful to the ancient definition of Jews as a religious community waiting for the Messiah. All over the world, including Palestine, pitched battles were launched by the Orthodox against Zionism beginning as early as the 1880s and the 1890s. The old Orthodox community in Jerusalem, for example, denounced Zionist newcomers to the Ottoman authorities and expressed horror at the revival of Hebrew as a secular language.

The success of Zionism among the Jewish intelligentsia and in negotiating with world powers made a deep impression on Orthodox leaders. There was a point when Zionism seemed to be invincible, gaining more support and collecting more success, which constituted a shock to the Orthodox who were losing members to assimilation.

### **Orthodoxy: Anti-Zionist, Non-Zionist, and Zionist**

One characteristic of Orthodox Jewish life is the various grades and shadings of Orthodoxy, leading to competition and sectarianism. Thus one cannot speak of 'Orthodoxy' without specifying particular groups. A general measure of Orthodoxy would be the extent to which a group uses the Hebrew language versus Yiddish in everyday life. All ultra-Orthodox groups always use Yiddish; Zionist Orthodox use Hebrew.

Some non-Zionist Orthodox leaders see the coming Zionism and the founding of the state of Israel as an opportunity for Jews to improve their situation, but not as the beginning of redemption. The anti-religious Zionist groups will avoid any contact with the state because they see it not only as illegitimate, but as an act of blasphemy. For them the state is still a place of exile, until the coming of the Messiah.

Some of the ultra-Orthodox groups, though non-Zionist, are ready to cooperate with the state of Israel when it suits their purposes. Thus, they will accept financial support for their schools from the state as well as other forms of assistance. Unlike the Zionists how-



ever they will never see the state as having religious significance or being the 'beginning of redemption.'

There was a handful of Orthodox rabbis in the 19th century who were calling for a Jewish national revival, such as Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kallischer of Posen, in Prussia. In 1862 he issued a call for the 'redemption of Israel', following the example of the Italians, the Poles, and the Hungarians. Such ideas, and such rabbis, were the rare exceptions rather than the rule.

In May 1912, 200 Orthodox leaders from Germany and Eastern Europe met in Kattowitz (Katowice) to start Orthodoxy's first organized response to Zionism, *Agudat Israel*, which exists today as a political party in Israel and as a political lobbying group elsewhere. Agudat Israel is an anti-Zionist Orthodox movement, the best-known political reaction of Orthodoxy to Zionism.

The ideologue of this movement was Nathan Birnbaum, a brilliant intellectual who collaborated with Herzl in the early days of political Zionism and then became disillusioned. He became convinced that the secular definition of the Jews as a nation was inadequate, and secularization would lead to the disappearance of the Jewish people. Orthodoxy had to take a firm stand against Zionism, in the form of a political organization. Agudat Israel was Diaspora-oriented. Its center in the years between the two world wars was in Poland, where about one-third of the Jews in that country were its supporters and where it had elected representatives in the Polish parliament in the 1930s.

Historically, Agudat Israel has been opposed to the idea of a Jewish state, but it was deeply affected by the Holocaust, and its opposition was softened. A major effect of the Holocaust was the loss of most of its constituency in Eastern Europe, resulting in Agudat Israel becoming more of a minority, more pro-Zionist, and more prepared to accept the reality of Zionist success.

In Israel after 1948, the party has been pragmatically involved in state institutions and accepts the state for all practical purposes. It supports governing coalitions and is rewarded with ample budgets for its Orthodox schooling system. The state of Israel is accepted *de facto*, but it is judged to be without the religious significance assigned to it by religious Zionists.

### The Ultra-Orthodox Anti-Zionist

There is a small community in Jerusalem that continues the life of the Diaspora and preserves the historical tradition in the most authentic way, constituting a sort of living museum. *Neturei Karta* (Guardians of

the City—in Aramic) was created in response to the growing accommodation to Zionism on the part of Agudat Israel since 1948.

Members of the community do not use government identity cards, do not use Israeli money or postage stamps, and do not accept any services from the state. Neturei Karta represents today the classical ultra-Orthodox reaction to Zionism, viewing the latter as an abomination, a heresy, and a blasphemy against historical Judaism. The Zionist heresy is that of defining Jews as a nation. Jews cannot be a normal nation because they have been chosen by God to be a Holy People. The condition of exile will end when God wants it to end. Jews were sent into exile because of their sins, not because of any worldly weakness. Building up worldly strength is not real redemption.

The state of Israel was conceived and born in sin because Zionism is not just a rebellion against history but against divine judgment. Such a rebellion will surely be punished and cannot be recognized in any way. Jewish nationalism was an imitation of gentile ways, and Jews should not rebel against gentile rule but wait for divine redemption. The Zionist state is a passing shadow, and the problems of Zionism in recent years represents divine punishment.

## Religious Zionism

The beginnings of religious Zionism can be found in Eastern Europe around the turn of the century. Several Orthodox rabbis accepted Zionism pragmatically, as a movement that improves life for some Jews but is devoid of religious significance. At that point it was clear that Zionism and modernism were on the ascendant, and Orthodoxy needed to move in the direction of accommodation. The Zionist religious camp was created in response to the successes and the vitality of secular Zionism, and has grown or failed to do so in response to its changing fortunes.

It was Rabbi A. I. H. Kook (1865–1935), who himself moved to Palestine and served as chief rabbi there, who developed the concept of Zionism as part of the divine plan for redemption. This notion made possible a new alliance between Orthodoxy and Zionism, involving only a minority of the Orthodox to be sure, but a significant group nevertheless. This group was gaining from the vitality of Zionism, while Orthodoxy seemed in real decline.

Kook was ready to sacralize the secular actions of Zionism, giving the new settlements in Palestine a religious meaning. If Zionism was the beginning of true redemption, even secular settlers were engaged in positive action. The hope was that eventually they would see the



light, combine Zionism with Judaism, and return to religion. This view of Zionism having religious significance led to an active involvement in all aspects of Zionist activities in Palestine. After 1948, it meant that the National Religious Party has been a partner in most Israeli governing coalitions.

### THE PRESENT: WHAT IS HAPPENING IN ISRAEL?

In Israel, differences among different groups can be illustrated in their attitudes towards Israeli Independence Day. The most anti-Zionist, Neturei Karta, fly black flags. For them, it is a day of mourning. They spend it reciting psalms and following other mourning customs. Members of Agudat Israel, which is considerably less extreme and slightly less anti-Zionist, treat the Day as a regular working day. They simply ignore it. Their school system, which operates independently of the state but enjoys government financing, stays open. Religious Zionists celebrate Independence Day with other citizens, but some of them, the most patriotic, carry out special religious services with thanksgiving prayers, thus expressing the belief that the state has religious meaning. These recent traditions of reactions to the secular state reflect early historical reactions to Zionism.

The settler on the West Bank, his head covered with the knitted skullcap and an Uzi slung over his shoulder, has become an emblem of Israel in the late 1980s. Much media attention has been directed toward incidents in which bus stop shelters have been burned or defaced after they were used to display advertisements showing scantily clad women. Less conventional, but perhaps more significant, reports and pictures appear to reveal Mr. Shimon Peres, the Labor Party leader, to be undergoing a process of Orthodoxization. First, Mr. Peres goes to the Wailing Wall after being sworn as prime minister in 1984, then he is observed taking Talmud lessons from a chief rabbi. That these displays of piety were subject to ridicule and derision is also part of the story.

Incidents such as the burning of bus stop shelters seem in this light to be the least significant, and this is confirmed when we learn that some feminists in Israel joined with the ultra-Orthodox in condemning the advertisements and sometimes in defacing them. This is reminiscent of similar cases in other places, such as the United States. Both parties to this surprising (and not so surprising) alliance, the ultra-Orthodox and the feminists, represent marginal groups, which essentially stand outside the Israeli political arena on most vital issues. The whole bus-shelter affair is totally unrelated to other, more

important, issues of religion and ideology.

The now emblematic religious settler on the West Bank is a true reflection of events there, but he does not represent the majority of Israelis, or even the majority of Orthodox Jews in Israel. It is important to recall that there is still a clear negative correlation between Orthodoxy and Zionism among Jews. Those who are more Orthodox are less (or anti-) Zionist. The West Bank settlers rank high on the Zionism scale, but low on the Orthodoxy scale. Thus, for example, a woman has served as a secretary general of *Gush Emunim*, the settler organization. This would be inconceivable among the more Orthodox. The nationalist Orthodoxy of Gush Emunim is new and messianic, unlike that of most Orthodox Jews in the world.

One of the terms most commonly used in connection with the religion and political issue in Israel (and in other places) is 'fundamentalism'. When this term is used, in the case of Judaism in Israel, to denote Orthodoxy and nationalism, it is plainly wrong. Fundamentalism is a technical concept, denoting a specific Protestant movement, started in early twentieth century in reaction to religious modernism in the United States. The movement acquired its name from the 11 fundamentals it adhered to, including such tenets of Christian faith as the Virgin Birth and the literal truth of the Bible. Using this term for other times and other places is misleading and counterproductive because it might hinder current perceptions of different realities.

One of the reasons for the attractiveness of this concept is that it leads immediately to associations with fundamentalism in other places, and often those using it would like to imply that fundamentalism and fundamentalists all over the world are the same, be they Americans, Iranians, or Israelis. While there might be an underlying common psychological component in various forms of fundamentalism, it seems that this term, growing out of a specific historical context, does not have much meaning beyond its native soil. Most Orthodox Jews are not nationalists and not Zionists. Religious Zionists in Israel, the so-called fundamentalists or fanatics, have little in common with Conservative Baptists in the United States or with Iranian Shiites who promote an Islamic republic.

Moreover, no religious Jew can be emblematic of the majority of Israelis because that majority, despite all developments and appearances, is still nonobservant, if not consciously Zionist. Only around 20 percent of Israelis are observant, and they constitute a separate subculture characterized by its own life-style and separated from the majority of Israelis by the same structures that have separated Jews from their non-Jewish neighbors in the past—rules about diet, dress, and calendar. This minority subculture is clearly not becoming a ma-

majority. If there is a resurgence of religion in Israel, it can be found in several areas. The first is that of personal 'conversion', in which young and not-so-young Israelis, members of the nonobservant majority, make the personal decision to become Orthodox. Such cases in Israel have numbered in the thousands since 1973, and they constitute a considerable social movement.

### **Saying No to the Enlightenment**

This is a historical victory for Orthodoxy over Zionism as some of the sons and grandsons of those who rejected Orthodoxy and embraced Zionism are moving in the opposite direction. Moreover, it is a rejection of secular culture. It is "the Enlightenment in reverse" (Marmorstein 1969, 107), going against the historical secularization of the Jews, of which Zionism has been an integral part. The grandson of Isaac Gruenbaum, a famous antireligious Zionist leader in Poland before 1940 and in Israel after 1947, is a celebrated Talmudist today, having rejected his secular family, and he is only one among many such cases. The newly Orthodox express their rejection of Israeli identity by using traditional Jewish names for their children and by speaking Hebrew in the Diaspora pronunciation, or even Yiddish.

Of course, psychological factors are important in the search that leads Israelis to become Orthodox Jews. The religious camp points to the emptiness of secular life in Israel, and is quite correct in its diagnosis. These individuals search for community and for a moral order, looking away from the selfish, empty materialism of most secular Israelis.

Two observations need to be made in this context. First, the movement from secularism to religion, however significant, has not changed the minority status of the Orthodox in Israel. Second, most of the returnees to Judaism, according to the (negative) correlation presented above between Orthodoxy and Zionism, turn non-Zionist or even anti-Zionist as a result of their change of heart. They seem to be saying "we have tried all modern answers, including Zionism, and they didn't work."

### **Political Discourse**

The second realm in which we can observe a significant change is that of political discourse. What we can observe, and this has been going on since 1967, is the growing use of religious symbols by nonreligious leaders and, even more so, the growing confidence of religious politi-

cians in making pronouncements about matters both religious and secular. It is important to recall that most members of recent Israeli cabinets have remained totally secular in their behavior and political discourse, and this includes some of the more visible Israeli leaders, such as Yizhak Shamir, Shimon Peres, Ezer Weizman, Yizhak Rabin, Ariel Sharon, and Moshe Arens. It is also important to recall that among Israeli nationalists, secularism is still common.

The secular nationalists should not be discounted or ignored. There are atheist Zionists who are as militant about their atheism as about their Zionism, and this phenomenon exists quite openly and quite emphatically in Israel. Meir Uziel, a popular right-wing columnist (and a grandson of a chief rabbi), writes about attempts by his religious allies in nationalism to make him a believer. "And none of them succeeded. Why? Because there is no god. The Holocaust is the scientific proof for that. The Holocaust is also the theological proof of that. The Holocaust is God's way of punishing man for believing in him. That is His way, Blessed be He, to show us that there is no God" (Uziel 1985, 35). It is hard to imagine such blasphemy published in the United States, but in Israel it has not aroused much response.

Well-known nationalist leaders such as Yuval Neeman or General Rafael Eitan have never been known to attend synagogue in their lives. Nevertheless, all Israeli politicians recognize the new vitality of the Orthodox minority and, like politicians elsewhere, will use it to suit their own goals.

The problem of Zionism since 1967, and the severe crisis of Zionism since 1973, have created a relative, and only relative, 're-Judaization' of political discourse in Israel. After 1967, religion was needed to justify holding the whole of Eretz Yisrael, and after 1973, it was needed to provide hope for the future. On the one hand, religion is a source of energy for Zionism. On the other hand, the return to religion remains a symptom of the decline of Zionism. Religion is seen as the only answer to the crisis of justification that Zionism has been undergoing. It might indeed be. Only two generations ago Judaism seemed doomed and Zionism was full of vitality. Now the tide has turned, and religion offers hope and justification while Zionism appears to be in decline.

### **The Failure of Secularism**

An important part of the Zionist revolution was the attempt at cultural secularization. Not only personal secularization, the experience of most Zionists (or their parents), but a cultural one, secularizing

Jewish life and language. The problem was that Jewish culture had been totally religious for hundreds of years. The movement for cultural transformation from religion to secularity was deliberate and energetic. Secularization has meant not only the negative process of rejecting religious traditions, but also the positive process of creating a secular identity and a secular worldview. Actually, much of humanity is still busy constructing a secular culture to replace religious traditions that are part of human history everywhere. Has the cause of secularization succeeded completely anywhere?

Because secular Jewishness is defined negatively, through an absence of something, while the historical Jewish identity was defined positively, the whole enterprise of Jewish secular culture suffers from a basic weakness. No one could doubt the authenticity of the Orthodox tradition. No one can doubt the Jewishness of the Orthodox who have the legitimacy of historical continuity. The secularists cannot claim that Orthodoxy is false to Jewish tradition; they can only claim that their own version is just as legitimate.

If there is a struggle and competition between secular and religious groups in Israel, the secular groups are at a disadvantage. They consistently claim that they represent an authentic brand of Jewishness or Judaism. They claim that Judaism was always 'pluralistic'. On the other side are the Orthodox, and they have the advantage of not having to justify their Jewishness. No one will doubt their Judaism or their Jewishness. They are historically authentic and don't have to prove their claim to this authenticity. When the secular majority claims the mantle of Jewish continuity, it is on shaky ground. The religious minority can claim it without any challenges. If one wants to claim an authentic Jewish identity, clearly the Orthodox have the upper hand.

One version of secularism is based on admitting that Jewish culture has been totally religious, but it represents the humanist-universalist values of justice, peace, equality, and charity. Jewish traditions are thus reinterpreted in a universalistic way, but the basic structure, such as the calendar of Jewish holidays, remains in place. The need for rites of passage is met by the traditional religious ones.

The attempt to create a viable secular Jewish identity and mythology has been only a partial success. After 100 years of secular Zionism, the basic questions about secular culture in Israel remain. What is a Jewish identity, and if it is Jewish, how can it be secular? The callow tradition of a secular identity cannot compete with the richness of the Judaic heritage. There are almost no secular rites of passage, with the exception of secular weddings or funerals. The majority of Israelis wanting to keep their claim to Jewish identity, support keeping the

Jewish nature of the state, even though this term is interpreted in many different ways. A majority support some role for Judaism in the state, and tying public behavior to Jewish tradition (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983).

The defeat of secularism and the relative desecularization of Israeli life is tied to other ideological changes. Secularism is usually tied to universalistic values, but these values are weak in the Israeli context. At the same time, it is crucial to realize that the Israeli elite is still thoroughly secular. This includes government leaders, the military, and the academic world.

### THE NEW ORTHODOX CONFIDENCE

The crisis of Zionism has been accompanied by the rise of Judaism in its historical form including a resurgence of what has been despised as the culture of the ghetto. The failure of the Zionist secular revolution has led to growing Orthodox vitality, with Orthodox groups feeling confident enough to challenge the secular majority on a variety of issues.

The new confidence and energy of religious groups, both Zionist and non-Zionist, is the third realm in which changes are evident. Orthodox groups in Israel are showing vitality and confidence, which are striking against the background of the demoralized nonobservant majority. They take more initiatives than in the past and are ready to demonstrate and take public stands on issues, both "religious" and general.

Non-Zionist Orthodox groups are more confident as they witness the crisis of Zionism and the demoralization in the nonobservant majority. The failure of Zionism is the source of renewed energy and hope. The failure of the Zionist secular revolution has led to growing Orthodox militancy, with Orthodox groups feeling confident enough to challenge the secular majority on other than purely religious issues.

The Orthodox in Israel and in the Diaspora have been showing their new confidence in renewed political efforts and in recruiting new members among secular Israelis. The crisis of Zionism has led the non-Zionist Orthodox to a sense of heightened confidence and has resulted in greater demands vis-a-vis Zionist and secular parties as well as from the religious Zionists.

Ideological developments in recent years can best be explained as reactions to the crisis of Zionism and attempts to overcome it. The return to the religious source is an attempt at renewal in the face of crisis and disintegration. Because other ideological justifications for



Zionism cannot do the job, religion as a source of legitimation has become more popular. Zionism has been in the throes of a growing crisis of legitimacy, and religion has become an extremely important source of aid in this crisis. In the alliance between Zionism and religion, the benefits and needs used to be mutual, but now, clearly, Zionism is the more needy of the two.

The *Gush Emunim* movement offers rejuvenation to Zionism, and rejuvenation to the moderately Orthodox. This double-headed renewal represents a double-headed crisis. Zionism is in trouble, and religious Zionists have not escaped unscathed. Gush Emunim is the heir to the Orthodox Zionist tradition now in sharp decline. The reason for the decline is the crisis of Zionism, leading to the resurgence of non-Zionist Orthodoxy. The choices for religious Zionists are to move towards the more Orthodox and leave Zionism behind, or to try and keep Zionist faith through an injection of messianic Judaism.

While the non-Zionist Orthodox gain their confidence from the failure of Zionism, the religious Zionists demonstrate their faith in the future of Zionism through reliance on messianic hopes, which seem more substantial than what is available to secular Zionists. Only Gush Emunim and similar groups have solid answers in the form of religious justifications. Its members can offer revitalization for Zionism through religious faith because all other methods of justifying Zionism have proven inadequate. It is sufficient to believe in God and in Old Testament divine promises, and the justification for the praxis of political Zionism follows with flawless logic. The influence of those who could present religious justifications consistently and naturally has grown with time.

Today there is a retreat of religious Zionists in the face of the non-Zionist Orthodox, and a process of Orthodoxization among religious nationalists as they become less Zionist and more Orthodox. The moderately Orthodox nationalists have been moving towards stronger Orthodoxy, which in turn means a growing distance from Zionism.

### THE CURRENT SITUATION: A COAT OF MANY COLORS

Traditional Judaism, at least in the European context, was challenged, as we noted earlier, by the breakdown of the ghetto walls, the siren call of modernity, and the nationalist response in emergent Zionism. Traditional Judaism everywhere in retreat, but still a potent force in the struggle against the inroads of the world of the "others," seemingly suffered a death blow with the destruction of East European Jewry in the

Holocaust. Concomitantly and largely as an outgrowth of these shocking events, the Zionist-secular vision achieved at least part of its aims with the establishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. Clearly the balance had shifted away from religious traditionalism and towards secular nationalism. Had the script been followed in its logical entirety, the Jewish people would have relinked themselves to temporal history with religion assigned its limited place in the context of modernity as upholder of the sacred order, repository of collective memory, and dispenser of limited ritual and ceremonial tasks. But, as has been noted, traditional religion has emerged as a key player in the drama of a reemergent Jewish political entity and, rather than act as a mere backdrop the religious enterprise, has assumed considerable importance.

Almost all of the chapters comprising the present volume underscore this development in one way or another. But the emergent picture is not an uncomplicated one. While the religious factor looms large, no less important are questions concerning ethnicity *within* the Jewish community and the place of Arabs within the larger context. One major thrust of the essays of Sobel and of Ayalon, Ben-Rafael, and Sharot is the continuing valence of ethnicity and an almost inchoate and certainly unformulated wish that religion fulfill a binding, healing role. Ayalon et al. observe that most secular Israelis see the religious secular division as more sharp and divisive than ethnic and class divided, this tends to hold on the cognitive level. At the affective and evaluative level, we are told that "ethnicity and class prove to be more important . . . than religious or secular positions." Similarly in the case study analyzed by Sobel, one finds the religious "threat" providing a framework and context for what quickly becomes apparent as a class and ethnic split undergirding the communal structure. In fact, as demonstrated in this essay, the potentially divisive role of religion is tempered by the growing concern with an outside threatening force (Arabs) wherein intracommunal splits—whether ethnic, class, or religious—appear eminently bridgeable in the face of a common enemy.

Not unrelated to a sense of external threat represented by Arabs, is the spectre of a seemingly largely secular, at least behaviorally secular, population in thrall to upholders of an antimodern traditionalist position that runs counter to the way most Israelis behave and to their presumed secular-nationalist ethic. Secularization seems preeminently the path being followed by most Israelis, and yet, as Beit-Hallahmi observes, thousands are involved in the return movement, and though only a small minority are actively affected, public opinion is largely supportive.

What has happened here? What is the meaning of this seemingly

perverse embrace of a life-style so out of sync with that of the majority of Israelis? Why does the movement have a relatively high rate of retention—an accomplishment not shared by the various non-Judaic sects and cults that have lately enjoyed some growth in Israel?

Clearly the traditional religious context provides a dimension of legitimation and anchored continuity that these groups could not supply. The seeking of communal and individual legitimation through association—passive or active—with a core element of Jewish praxis and past is high up on the societal agenda. Some of the evidence brought to the fore by Kedem clearly demonstrates just how extensive is this curious traditionalism in a population of apparent secularists, where some 70 percent of a student sample expressed religious emotion tied to national events and where large numbers were in favor of religious legislation against the raising of hogs, for store closing on the Sabbath, for exclusively religious marriage, for religious education in secular schools, and so on. Separation, notes Kedem, as understood in an American context, is far from the reality of Israel, as is the way in which Israelis relate to non-Orthodox representation of Judaism. While one might contest Beit-Hallahmi's assertion that Israelis have not responded to "Reform and Conservative messages . . . because they do not feel the need for another type of Judaism," there is little question but that alternative forms of Jewish religious practice and identity have been slow in appearing. As Weber observed, tradition might be viewed as the authority of the eternal yesterday, and Israelis collective yesterday remains an important strut in their affirmation of today.

Nowhere is this affirmation of traditional modes more apparent than in the growth and expansion of religious education and, more specifically, the yeshivot. Bar-Lev speaks of the pressures towards the 'Haredization' of religious education where after a "try" at making some accommodation with modernity the present trend is backward, to a world of isolation, segregation, and particularism. The traditional yeshivot, while allowing the introduction of hints of modernization on the administrative level, rather supinely neglect dealing with any of the attendant problems of modernization involving Israeli society, such as the role of religion in the secular context, ethnicity, inequality, and other matters of no less central importance. The traditional yeshivot appear to be fighting the battles that marked the secular-Zionist world two or three generations earlier, such as Hebrew versus Yiddish as the language of instruction, the world at large or the shtetl, outreach to the masses or to an elite minority.

It is in the hesder yeshivot with their symbolically charged combination of sword and text that a glimmer of change, of moderniza-

tion, is filtering through into a world still anchored in the nineteenth century. Clearly, the road to modernization within Israeli Judaism holds more promise of movement coming from this more indigenous, highly traditional context than from movements viewed as essentially foreign and indeed sectarian, such as the Reform and Conservative streams that have succeeded in capturing the majority of American Jewry. Indeed, as Tabory asserts, Reform and Conservative in striving for legitimacy are denied the possibility of presenting themselves as something new, as a true alternative. The hesder yeshivot recognized their "newness" but attempted (and succeeded to a point) in demonstrating how the new (army service) was in fact a device making the old (Torah study) feasible in a new context. Not only on the pragmatic level could justification be found, but on a more abstract religious level where the new was transformed into a commandment having meaning in and of itself with respect to participating in the divine plan for bringing people, book, and land into alignment.

The Reform movement undermined the traditional normative system. The change represented in the new yeshiva trend upholds the normative system, albeit with changed methods, but with the core value system left intact and assertively enhanced.

Orthodoxy in Israel is prepared to accept if not embrace the irreligious, or even the quirky, but is not so inclined with respect to organized ideologically fueled alternatives that are viewed as sectarian threats to the normative order. And in this the Orthodox rabbinical leadership seems to enjoy wide support from not only the observant and traditional but among the otherwise religiously indifferent as well.

Tabory demonstrates how Israeli Judaism and the major non-Orthodox streams of Diaspora Judaism occupy increasingly divergent universes. Israeli Judaism is inextricably linked with politics and the political process, while Diaspora Judaism—certainly in the United States—defines itself in terms of community and communion but quite apart from the political process.

But this is not the only fulcrum of divergence between the Diaspora and Israel. A number of the essays in this volume point to the existence of a growing chasm of experience and outlook that seems to point not only to difficulties of a politico-religious nature but of an experiential and expressive one as well. Tabory is no doubt correct in assuming the nontransferability of social, political, and religious movements from one environment to another. How much more should this be the case where histories—personal and collective—are so different. A key but unremarked upon aspect of Israeli society is that it is overwhelmingly only one or at most two generations removed

from Orthodoxy. This is true of European and even more so for the Sepharadi majority of Israel's population. Most Israelis did not come out of a Zionist, antireligious, or religiously neutral background, but in fact might be said to have drifted into secularism and/or non-Orthodoxy without perforce rejecting in any categoric fashion their orthodox roots.

The Jerusalem funeral that is highlighted by a use of mystical metaphor can itself be seen as a metaphor of the relations between Orthodox religiosity and the secular or largely nonobservant majority of Israelis. Though the individual mourner and the collectivity might both evince overriding need for comfort and closure, it is ritual tradition that might not clearly supply these, which is ultimately determinative of behavior.

This again poses a key question. How is acquiescence secured from nonobservant people to oftentimes unfathomable and perhaps even socially and individually dysfunctional behaviors with little or no protest or opposition? As Abramovitch notes, "In Jerusalem, the special cult of purity and kabbalistic concerns over the sacred nature of procreation led to a series of ritual innovations in which the demands of social support were momentarily set aside in favor of the special needs of aiding the spirit of the deceased make the dangerous trans-ition to the world to come." This clearly is difficult to comprehend or explain to the Orthodox noninvolved or peripherally involved, and acceptance on their part can only be explained by a certain passivity or malleability that might characterize the bereaved generally. But in addition, it would seem to reflect (albeit with some anger and impatience as often as not) the willingness of the nonobservant to have the observant define the ritual parameters of their lives either for lack of an alternative, passivity, and not caring or perhaps because of the sense of legitimacy that hangs like an aura above Orthodox practices in most phases of collective life. Alternatively, however, the emergence among some of a "funeral within a funeral" might presage a reaction to the ritual monopoly of orthodoxy, but *not* a revolt against it: a felt need unanswered in ritual to be expressed, yes; an overturning of sacred ritual, no! Abramovitch is taken with the 'mismatching' dimension, the anger many of the nonobservant felt toward religious society for forcing them into a pattern they find absurd or nonmeaningful. One might as easily be impressed with the overwhelming compliance with and lack of protest about these practices and the failure to actively seek change which characterizes the 'mismatching'.

Even with those leaving the religious fold in its most Orthodox manifestation—the Haredi sector—there is a tendency to feel delegitimized and somewhat inauthentic. If religious conversion can be

likened to falling in love, as William James has observed, leaving a religious context might be akin to falling out of love. Shaffir highlights similarities and differences involved in both; in drawing nigh and stepping away from deep religious observance. In many respects the process is similar: a break arrived at through a slow process rather than a sudden revelation. It would appear that Jews still largely convert and apostatize in a rather traditional fashion—step by step, rather than through radical and instantaneous upheaval. It is not accidental that we tend to have much more data about *hozrim betshuvah* than about *hozrim beshe'elah* or those who reject extreme Orthodoxy. It confirms in still another way what we have asserted throughout—the organic and deep legitimating function of religious Orthodoxy in a society demonstrating pervasive need for this kind of affirmation. Shaffir's research is one of the first efforts at breaking through this web of sanctified obfuscation in an effort to reach beyond armoured piety, showing cracks in a wall that the highly Orthodox, the merely traditional, and even some secularists feel a need for.

Unsurprisingly, and as foreshadowed in the work of Shaffir, the sacred canopy extends beyond matters of societal legitimation and reaches down to the behavioral and value contexts. Weller provides us with a sweeping survey showing how religiosity intersects with central patterns of individual behavior, such as family planning, attitudes towards sex, women's roles, attitudes towards minorities (Arabs), and ethics among other subjects. The research done in these areas thus far suggests that the less observant tend to be more "liberal," and the more observant tend towards the illiberal end of the scale. Clearly, as is shown in research done with doctors, social workers, and other professions, being religious has an effect in behavioral terms. It is not a mere cloak thrown over an otherwise "regular fellow." One should of course not be surprised by these findings, but in an age of cynicism, one can nevertheless still find oneself surprised that forces other than those that highlight the Acquarian apotheosis have substance.

One finding noted in Weller's essay does in fact surprise but, on deeper reflection, demonstrates an important point about the way in which religion does and does not function in Israel. We here refer to a study wherein religious pupils scored higher on a test of cognitive morality and achieved higher results on a test of moral reasoning but cheated on exams significantly more than secular peers. One could posit a whole host of possible reasons for this strange finding, ranging from an inbuilt powerful survival instinct having religious justification that overtakes lesser values such as temporal honesty, to a kind of dissonance that highlights the abstract over the practical, the cognitive over the active. But Judaism is a religion of action, of doing, of being,