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Religious Zionism in Pursuit of Redemption

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I. Land, Messiah, Redemption: The Biblical Vision

1. Genesis 12:1-7

1 The LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you. **2** I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you and curse him that curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.” **4** Abram went forth as the LORD had commanded him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. **5** Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot, and all the wealth that they had amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in the land of Canaan, **6** Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, at the terebinth of Moreh. The Canaanites were then in the land. **7** The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I will assign this land to your offspring.” And he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

2. Genesis 13:5-13

5 Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, **6** so that the land could not support them staying together; for their possessions were so great that they could not remain together. **7** And there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram’s cattle and those of Lot’s cattle.—The Canaanites and Perizzites were then dwelling in the land.—**8** Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, between my herdsmen and yours, for we are kinsmen. **9** Is not the whole land before you? Let us separate: if you go north, I will go south; and if you go south, I will go north.” **10** Lot looked about him and saw how well watered was the whole plain of the Jordan, all of it—this was before the LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—all the way to Zoar, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. **11** So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they parted from each other; **12** Abram remained in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the Plain, pitching his tents near Sodom. **13** Now the inhabitants of Sodom were very wicked sinners against the LORD.

3. Genesis 15:13-21

13 And He said to Abram, “Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years; **14** but I will execute judgment on the nation they shall serve, and in the end they shall go free with great wealth. **15** As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a ripe old age. **16** And they shall return here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” **17** When the sun set and it was very dark, there appeared a smoking oven, and a flaming torch which passed between those pieces. **18** On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I assign this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates: **19** the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, **20** the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, **21** the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

4. Genesis 23:1-16

1 Sarah’s lifetime—the span of Sarah’s life—came to one hundred and twenty-seven years. **2** Sarah died in Kiriath-arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham proceeded to mourn for Sarah and to bewail her. **3** Then Abraham rose from beside his dead, and spoke to the Hittites, saying, **4** “I am a resident alien among you; sell me a burial site among you, that I may remove my dead for burial.” **5** And the Hittites replied to Abraham, saying to him, **6** “Hear us, my lord: you are the elect of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places; none of us will withhold his burial place from you for burying your dead.” **7** Thereupon Abraham bowed low to the people of the land, the Hittites, **8** and he said to them, “If it is your wish that I remove my dead for burial, you must agree to intercede for me with Ephron son of Zohar. **9** Let him sell me the cave of Machpelah that he owns, which is at the edge of his land. Let him sell it to me, at the full price, for a burial site in your midst.” **10** Ephron was present among the Hittites; so Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, all who entered the gate of his town, saying, **11** “No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and I give you the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead.” **12** Then Abraham bowed low before the people of the land, **13** and spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If only you would hear me out! Let me pay the price of the land; accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there.” **14** And Ephron replied to Abraham, saying to him, **15** “My lord, do hear me! A piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between you and me? Go and bury your dead.” **16** Abraham accepted Ephron’s terms. Abraham paid out to Ephron the money that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites—four hundred shekels of silver at the going merchants’ rate.

5. Isaiah 11:1-13

1 But a shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse, a twig shall sprout from his stock. **2** The spirit of the LORD shall alight upon him: a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and valor, a spirit of devotion and reverence for the LORD. **3** He shall sense the truth by his reverence for the LORD: he shall not judge by what his eyes behold, nor decide by what his ears perceive. **4** Thus he shall judge the poor with equity and decide with justice for the lowly of the land. He shall strike down a land with the rod of his mouth and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips. **5** Justice shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his waist. **6** The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid; the calf, the beast of prey, and the fatling together, with a little boy to herd them. **7** The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw. **8** A babe shall play over a viper's hole, and an infant pass his hand over an adder's den. **9** In all of My sacred mount nothing evil or vile shall be done; for the land shall be filled with devotion to the LORD as water covers the sea. **10** In that day, the stock of Jesse that has remained standing shall become a standard to peoples— nations shall seek his counsel and his abode shall be honored. **11** In that day, my Lord will apply His hand again to redeeming the other part of His people from Assyria—as also from Egypt, Pathros, Nubia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the coastlands. **12** He will hold up a signal to the nations and assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. **13** Then Ephraim's envy shall cease and Judah's harassment shall end; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

6. Micah 4:1-5

1 In the days to come, the Mount of the LORD's House shall stand firm above the mountains; and it shall tower above the hills. The peoples shall gaze on it with joy, **2** And the many nations shall go and shall say: "Come, Let us go up to the Mount of the LORD, to the House of the God of Jacob; that He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths." For instruction shall come forth from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. **3** Thus He will judge among the many peoples, and arbitrate for the multitude of nations, however distant; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war; **4** But every man shall sit under his grapevine or fig tree with no one to disturb him. For it was the LORD of Hosts who spoke. **5** Though all the peoples walk each in the names of its gods, we will walk in the name of the LORD our God Forever and ever.

II. Theology, History, Sociology: A Rabbinic Reframing

7. Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 110b-111a

In relation to the basic point raised by the mishna concerning living in Eretz Yisrael, the Sages taught: A person should always reside in Eretz Yisrael, even in a city that is mostly populated by gentiles, and he should not reside outside of Eretz Yisrael, even in a city that is mostly populated by Jews. The reason is that anyone who resides in Eretz Yisrael is considered as one who has a God, and anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as one who does not have a God. As it is stated: “To give to you the land of Canaan, to be your God” (Leviticus 25:38).

The Gemara expresses surprise: And can it really be said that anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael has no God? Rather, this comes to tell you that anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as though he is engaged in idol worship. And so it says with regard to David: “For they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave to the inheritance of the Lord, saying: Go, serve other gods” (I Samuel 26:19). But who said to David: Go, serve other gods? Rather, this comes to tell you that anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as though he is engaged in idol worship.

The Gemara relates: Rabbi Zeira was avoiding being seen by his teacher, Rav Yehuda, as Rabbi Zeira sought to ascend to Eretz Yisrael and his teacher disapproved. As Rav Yehuda said: Anyone who ascends from Babylonia to Eretz Yisrael transgresses a positive mitzva, as it is stated: “They shall be taken to Babylonia and there they shall remain until the day that I recall them, said the Lord” (Jeremiah 27:22).

The Gemara asks: And how does Rav Yehuda respond to this argument? The verse is clearly referring to the Temple vessels, not to the people. The Gemara answers that another verse is written: “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the hinds of the field, that you not awaken or stir up love, until it please” (Song of Songs 2:7). Rabbi Yehuda derived from here that no act of redemption should be performed until a time arrives when it pleases God to bring about the redemption.

And Rabbi Zeira maintains that the oath mentioned in that verse means that the Jews should not ascend to Eretz Yisrael as a wall, i.e., en masse, whereas individuals may immigrate as they wish. The Gemara asks: And what does Rav Yehuda reply to this? The Gemara answers that this command is derived from another verse in which “I adjure you” (Song of Songs 3:5) is written. The Gemara asks: And how does Rabbi Zeira explain the repetition of this oath in these verses?

The Gemara explains: That verse is necessary for that which was taught by Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, who said: Why are these three oaths (Song of Songs 2:7, 3:5, 8:4) needed? One, so that the Jews should not ascend to Eretz Yisrael as a wall, but little by little. And another one, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, adjured the Jews that they should not rebel against the rule of the nations of the world. And the last one is that the Holy One, Blessed be He, adjured the nations of the world that they should not subjugate the Jews excessively.

And how does Rav Yehuda respond? It is written: “That you not awaken or stir up love” (Song of Songs 2:7), which serves to amplify and include a prohibition against Jews immigrating to Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara asks: And how does Rabbi Zeira explain the extra emphasis of this phrase?

The Gemara explains: He needs this phrase for that which was taught by Rabbi Levi, who said: These six oaths, i.e., the aforementioned three verses containing oaths, each of which contains the phrase “That you not awaken or stir up,” why are they necessary? Three are those that we said and explained above. The other three oaths are as follows: That those who know should not reveal the end of days; and that they should not distance the end of days by saying that it is still distant; and that they should not reveal the secret of the Jews to the nations.

8. Menahem Meiri, Commentary to Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111a

Every place where wisdom and fear of sin are found has the status of the Land of Israel. Thus the Rabbis said; "Anyone who lives in Babylonia lives, as it were, in the Land of Israel."

The Rabbis [prohibited departure from the Land] because Israel does not ordinarily attain wisdom and fear of sin outside of it—on account of the multitude of troubles and the yoke of Exile that they suffer there—save by great effort....

In the Land of Israel, however, wisdom and fear of sin are ordinarily found, so that on account of them, its inhabitants comprehend the Glory of their Creator and merit to enjoy the radiance of the *Shekhinah*.

III. Zionism, Judaism, and Messianism

A. Messianic Roots

9. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings and Wars 11:1, 3-4

1 In the future, the Messianic king will arise and renew the Davidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will build the Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel. Then, in his days, the observance of all the statutes will return to their previous state. We will offer sacrifices, observe the Sabbatical and Jubilee years according to all their particulars as described by the Torah. ...

3 One should not presume that the Messianic king must work miracles and wonders, bring about new phenomena in the world, resurrect the dead, or perform other similar deeds. This is definitely not true. ...

4 If a king will arise from the House of David who diligently contemplates the Torah and observes its commandments as prescribed by the Written Law and the Oral Law as David, his ancestor, will compel all of Israel to walk in (the way of the Torah) and rectify the breaches in its observance, and fight the wars of God, we may, with assurance, consider him Messiah. If he succeeds in the above, builds the Temple in its place, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is definitely the Messiah. He will then improve the entire world, motivating all the nations to serve God together, as Zephaniah 3:9 states: "I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose." ...

10. Derek Penslar, "Herzl's Dream," in *Theodor Herzl: The Charismatic Leader*, 2020, p. 16

Herzl's diaries from his adulthood are rich in detail and filled with revealing personal admissions, so the silence about religious influences or knowledge is telling. At the outset of his Zionist career, Herzl encountered criticism of his pamphlet *The Jewish State* from Vienna's chief rabbi, Moritz Gudemann, who supplied rabbinic texts abjuring an organized return of Jews to the land of Israel. Herzl could offer only the weak rejoinder "that it would be possible to find at least an equal number in favor of Zionism. To be sure, I am too ignorant to supply them." Herzl told Reuven Brainin that he first heard about the Exodus as a schoolboy but then later read about it in a book of Jewish legends that he received as a bar mitzvah gift. It was this version, not the biblical one, that Herzl found riveting and compelling. He blended together in his mind aspects of the Exodus story with that of the Messiah and felt compelled to write a poem about it, but he was afraid to tell his schoolmates about his fervid thoughts lest they taunt him as what Herzl called a "man of dreams." Sometime after that, Herzl relates, he dreamed that he beheld the Messiah, venerable and majestic, who took Herzl up in his arms into the heavens, where they encountered Moses (who, in Herzl's description, bore a striking resemblance to Michelangelo's famous statue of the prophet). The Messiah then said to Moses, "for this child I have prayed!"

B. The Forerunners

11. Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, "Seeking Zion," in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg, rev. ed., 1997, pp. 111-12

A NATURAL BEGINNING OF THE REDEMPTION

THE REDEMPTION OF ISRAEL, for which we long, is not to be imagined as a sudden miracle. The Almighty, blessed be His Name, will not suddenly descend from on high and command His people to go forth. He will not send the Messiah from heaven in a twinkling of an eye, to sound the great trumpet for the scattered of Israel and gather them into Jerusalem. He will not surround the Holy City with a wall of fire or cause the Holy Temple to descend from the heavens. The bliss and the miracles that were promised by His servants, the prophets, will certainly come to pass—everything will be fulfilled—but we will not run in terror and flight, for the Redemption of Israel will come by slow degrees and the ray of deliverance will shine forth gradually.

My dear reader! Cast aside the conventional view that the Messiah will suddenly sound a blast on the great trumpet and cause all the inhabitants of the earth to tremble. On the contrary, the Redemption will begin by awakening support among the philanthropists and by gaining the consent of the nations to the gathering of some of the scattered of Israel into the Holy Land.

The prophet Isaiah (27:6 and 12-13) expressed this thought as follows: "In the days to come shall Jacob take root, Israel shall blossom and bud; and the face of the world shall be filled with fruitage. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will beat off his fruit from the flood of the River unto the Brook of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great horn shall be blown; and they that were lost in the land of Assyria, and they that were dispersed in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem." He thus revealed that all of Israel would not return from exile at one time, but would be gathered by degrees, as the grain is slowly gathered from the beaten corn. The meaning of, "In the days to come Jacob shall take root," in the first verse above, is that the Almighty would make those who came first—at the beginning of the Redemption—the root planted in the earth to produce many sprigs. Afterward Israel will blossom forth in the Holy Land, for the root will yield buds which will increase and multiply until they cover the face of the earth with fruit.

12. Yehuda Alkalai, *A Beckoning Voice*, in Chaim I. Waxman, "Messianism, Zionism, and the State of Israel," *Modern Judaism* Vol. 7, No. 2, May 1987, p. 180

It is well-known and accepted by all Israel that (the redemption) depends upon *teshuvah*....Therefore, there is no greater *teshuvah* than than (sic) for us to accept upon ourselves His Godliness, that is, to return to His land....That is to say, when God will be our God, which is, when we return to His land, on that day will God be One and His name One.

C. Religious Zionism and its Opponents

13. Zionism vs. Judaism: David Hartman, "Crisis and Tradition," *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating its Future*, 2000, pp. 18-19

The Zionist rationale for supplanting the religious dimension of the Jewish past rests on Zionism's belief in the primacy of the nation as an end in itself rather than a transparent symbol of God's rule in history. However important their role in the past, Torah and Halakhah should not be regarded as essential components of Jewish identity. The concepts of God, election, the call to be a holy people are remnants of an early religious stage of our national consciousness. A Torah way of life should be viewed instrumentally, that is, as a means of national survival, not as a permanent foundation of Jewish identity. This radical reformulation preserves many of the central categories and concerns of Jewish identity—land, peoplehood, history, and language—while offering radically new interpretations of their value and meaning. The framework appears intact, but its content has been transformed from within.

Although secular Zionists have emptied Jewish history of religious content, they nonetheless share with religious Jews a common interest in the continuity of the community as a tangible political and social entity. Zionists fear that the problem of antisemitism will not disappear, and the Jewish people cannot survive through their participation in a religious way of life. The Torah can no longer be the organizing principle of Jewish collective consciousness but should be replaced by the idea of the Jewish nation. The Zionist solution thus involves a fundamental transmutation of values. The tradition defined Israel as God's elect community. Liberation *and* election, the Exodus *and* Sinai were the constitutive moments of the divine drama of Jewish history. Zionism, however, turns Jewish history into a national drama. Instead of theology and the vocabulary of the sacred, it substitutes the language of politics, economics, and social survival to explain the historical destiny of the Jewish people.

14. Shalom Ber Schneerson of Lubavitch, *The Voice of Torah*, pp. 224-25

Yet the old follower of the 'enlightenment' or the pupil of the schools that spread disbelief in the Lord and in His Torah, is aware that he has gone astray from the path of the Torah, and the commandments and that he is not a right Jew. There is, therefore, hope that sooner or later he will take this to heart and return to the Lord, for even though he has sinned, he is of Israel and has a divine spark in Him; and when he realizes well that he is opposed and contrary to the divine will and that he is not a proper Jew at all, it will be possible that he will be roused sooner or later and feel a discontent with the extent of his separation and, with the evil and bitter thing that he has done in abandoning G"d.

He may then make an agreement with himself to walk in the way of the Torah and the commandments as is enjoined him by the Lord our G"d through his servants the prophets. But the Zionists are far more cunning in their evil and they have made nationalism a substitute for Torah and commandments. Mandelstam in his open letter stated that a Jew was not one who fulfilled the commandments but one who was a Zionist even though he did not put on Tephilin and did not keep the Sabbath, etc. etc. The periodical, Hashiloach, wrote in the past year, that even one who transgressed all the commandments of the Torah, even one who denied the existence of G"d, was a Jew provided only that he was a nationalist.

15. Yoel Teitelbaum (Satmar Rebbe), *VaYoel Moshe*

The general principle is: apart from the grave sin of violating the oath, [the Zionists] have additionally polluted the House of Israel with apostasy and heresy, God save us. Consequently it is not surprising that there was an instance of flaring wrath and anger emanating from God... Even during the Churban, exalted righteous individuals were murdered as a result of the violations of the sinners, who influenced others to sin, and the flaring wrath was terribly frightful and could not be contained. (This is apart from the fact that the Zionists themselves were engaged in criminal activities that potentiated all the evil, since they concluded that the destruction would make it easier for them to realize their goal of sovereignty and rule. They hoped to be 'built up' on the ruins of the Churban of our people.

16. Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, *Declaration of the Rabbinic Supporters of Zionism*

Anyone who thinks that the Zionist idea is related to the redemption to come at the end of days and to the coming of the Messiah, and therefore thinks that it negates and nullifies one of the pillars of our holy faith – is just wrong! There is nothing of Messianism within it. The essence of Zionism and its establishment is just about the improvement of the situation of our suffering brothers.

17. Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, *Lights from Darkness*

Eretz Israel is not something external to the Jewish people, a necessary framework of communal life and a basis of material or even spiritual existence. Eretz Israel has an intrinsic value, vitally associated with the Jewish genius. Activating the Jewish soul in its inner recesses, the sanctity and attraction of Eretz Israel cannot be accounted for in mere rationalist-humanist terms. Rather ought we consider it in the light of the divine spirit resting on Israel as a whole and its imprint on the Jewish character. Here lies the source of natural, healthy Jewish sensibility, which reflects the heavenly lustre and ideal of Eretz Israel. The alien idea regarding Eretz Israel as a mere instrument of national survival, fortifying Jewish existence, religious faith and practice in the Diaspora, will not yield lasting fruit, since it disregards the sacred character of Eretz Israel. The effective regeneration of diaspora Jewry depends solely upon the degree of its involvement in Eretz Israel. Only the hope generated by this Land is capable of infusing life into Jewish existence. Thus, Diaspora Judaism is a function of the prospect of salvation, whereas Jewish Eretz Israel denotes salvation itself.¹⁴

D. Political Messianism

18a. Tzvi Yehuda Kook, Psalm 19 for the State of Israel

... (People) speak of the beginning of Redemption... We are in the parlor, not in the vestibule... the return to Zion, the Kingdom of Israel being rebuilt anew... This is the revelation of the Kingdom of Israel being rebuilt anew... This is the revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven... The Israel Defense Force is total sanctity; it represents the rule of the people of the Land in His Land... We must know that the Kingdom of Heaven is being revealed in this kingdom, even the kingdom of Ben Gurion.

18b. Tzvi Yehuda Kook, "Conquest of the Land in Every Generation," *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, pp. 174-76

The Ramban clearly determines that conquering the Land of Israel to ensure Jewish sovereignty is the *Milchemet mitzvah* of the Torah. This is a precept of the Torah, and there is no way of getting around it. There is no nation without a land, and the concrete, living, here-and-now Israel is compelled to hold onto its Land. This precept continues in every generation, and the Ramban emphasizes this three times.

In previous generations, including generation of *Tzaddikim*, we did not fulfill this *mitzvah*. Why? Because we were in a situation where, against our will, we could not. This is similar to what transpired a few times in Russia, when, just before *Sukkot*, the Four Species hadn't arrived. What is there to do? Nothing! *If he did not find an etrog, he is not to take a quince, nor a pomegranate, nor anything else.* The precept is still in effect, but there is no possibility to perform it. This is similar to conquering the Land. Though an obligation always exists, it is impossible to perform it without the weapons of war. Thus, previous generations did not have the technical capacity to fulfill the commandment. Today, thank G-d, we have the 'etrogim' of war, and this precept has returned to our hands. *Hashem* brings down empires and raises them up. *Raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.* *Hashem* toppled the Turks, and in their place, He raised up nations who recognized the Bible, and the people to whom it belongs. Out of the Balfour Proclamation sprang the Hebrew Fighting Brigade. Little by little, the chance to conquer the Land, and to renew the precept took form. The *mitzvah* includes possessing the Land and dwelling there. Possession of the Land has the sense of conquest, and from this, the *mitzvah* of living in the Land is made possible, so that the Land will not lie in desolation.

Also, the spiritual wasteland, represented by people who deny the Torah, must be returned in repentance. The word *yishuv*, is common to both the settlement of the Land, and to the learning of Torah *yeshiva*. There is a connection between them in the Holy Tongue. The drive toward settlement takes power from the spiritual might of the Torah. Torah, war, and settlement are three sides of a triangle. And how incredibly privileged we are to be assertive in all.

19. Manifesto of the Land of Israel Movement, August 1967

Zahal's [Israel Defense Force's] victory in the Six-Day War placed the people and the state within a new and fateful period. The whole of Eretz Yisrael is now in the hands of the Jewish people, and just as we are not allowed to give up the State of Israel, so we are ordered to keep what we received there from Eretz Yisrael.

We are bound to be loyal to the entirety of our country – for the sake of the people's past as well as its future, and no government in Israel is entitled to give up this entirety, which represents the inherent and inalienable right of our people from the beginnings of its history.

20. Shlomo Aviner, "Messianic Realism"

Moral Considerations

Just as the Divine commandment to conquer the Land overrules the principle of "that he may live by them", so also does it transcend the human notions of national rights to the Land. This follows from the fundamental Jewish idea that human ethics and the universal sense of justice found in man, derive their reality solely from the word of God. Such is the message transmitted to the world in the account of the Binding of Isaac, wherein the categorical superiority of the Divine over human morality, is dramatically exposed. Man is, no doubt, instructed to act justly and righteously, but this too has no other meaning but that grounded in the will of the Creator. This, ours is not an autonomous scale of values, the product of human reason, but rather an (sic) heteronomous or, more correctly, "theonomous" scale rooted in the will of the Divine architect of the universe and its moral order.

21a. Yehuda Amital, "The People of Israel Before the Land of Israel," *Sevivot* Vol. 22, 1989

For two millennia we were the victim.. .and suddenly we have changed from being the victim to being the ruler. Now as we come to deal with those over whom we rule (even if they are hostile to us), it is incumbent upon us to apply practically all of the lofty concepts of morality and humanity that we developed when we were ruled over by others.

**21b. Yehuda Amital, "What is the meaning of 'Reshit Tsemihat Ge'ullatenu'?"
Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought Vol. 39, No. 3, Fall 2006**

These people began to speak about a vision of the complete eretz Yisrael, but they didn't notice the Arabs living within the borders of that 'whole land of Israel' (12).

. . . The students of R. Tsevi Yehuda [Kook] . . . explained that the beginning of the redemption refers not to the Jewish nation dwelling in the Land of Israel, but rather to the absolute sovereignty of the Jewish nation over all parts of *erets Yisra'el*. . . . According to this understanding, if a major aspect of the purpose of the State is the fulfillment of the command to exercise sovereignty over *erets Yisra'el*, then a state that hands over territories betrays its purpose, and we must question whether it is still "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption" . . . (9).

IV. On the Religious Significance of the State of Israel: A Normative Perspective

22. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings and Wars 12:4-5

4 The Sages and the prophets did not yearn for the Messianic era in order to have dominion over the entire world, to rule over the gentiles, to be exalted by the nations, or to eat, drink, and celebrate. Rather, they desired to be free to involve themselves in Torah and wisdom without any pressures or disturbances, so that they would merit the world to come, as explained in the Laws of Repentance.

5 In that era, there will be neither famine or war, envy or competition for good will flow in abundance and all the delights will be freely available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know God. Therefore, the Jews will be great sages and know the hidden matters, grasping the knowledge of their Creator according to the full extent of human potential, as Isaiah 11:9 states: 'The world will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the ocean bed.'

23. David Hartman, "The Challenge of Modern Israel to Traditional Judaism," *Modern Judaism* Vol. 7, No. 3, October 1987

Religious Zionism does not need to treat the rise of Israel as a divine ruse on the way toward realizing the messianic kingdom. There is an alternative perspective from which one can religiously embrace the secular Zionist invitation to return to the land, namely, the observation that Israel expands the possible range of halakhic involvement in human affairs beyond the circumscribed borders of home and synagogue to the public domain. Jews in Israel are given the opportunity to bring economic, social and political issues into the center of their religious consciousness. The moral quality of the army, social and economic disparities and deprivations, the exercise of power moderated by moral sensitivities, attitudes toward minorities and the stranger, tolerance and freedom of conscience – all these are realms that may engage our sense of covenantal responsibility. The existence of the State of Israel, from this perspective, prevents Judaism from being defined exclusively as a culture of learning and prayer. We have left treating the realm of symbolic holy time as the exclusive defining framework of Jewish identity. In returning to the land, we have created the conditions through which everyday life can mediate the biblical foundations for our covenantal identity.

V. The Dawn of Redemption?

24. Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel, Artscroll Siddur

PRAYER FOR THE WELFARE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

אֲבוּנוּ *Our Father in heaven, Protector and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the first flowering of our redemption. Shield her beneath the wings of Your kindness, and spread over her Your canopy of peace. Send Your light and truth to her leaders, officers and counselors, and direct them with Your good counsel. Strengthen the defenders of our Holy Land; grant them salvation; crown them with victory. Establish peace in the land and everlasting joy for its inhabitants.*

Remember our brothers, the whole House of Israel, in all the lands of their dispersion. Speedily bring them to Zion, Your city, to Jerusalem, Your dwelling place, as it is written in the Torah of Moses, Your servant: Even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world, from there HASHEM, your God, will gather you, from there He will fetch you. And HASHEM, your God, will bring you to the land which your fathers occupied, and you shall occupy it; and He will make you more prosperous and more numerous than your fathers.¹

Unite our hearts to love and revere Your Name and to observe all the precepts of Your Torah. Speedily send us Your righteous Messiah of the House of David to redeem those who long for Your salvation.

Reflect Your glorious majesty upon all the inhabitants of the Earth and let everyone who breathes declare: HASHEM, God of Israel, is King and His dominion rules over all. Amen. Selah.

25. The Dangers of Messianic Zionism: Gershom Scholem,
"Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism,"
The Messianic Idea in Judaism, 1971

One word more, by way of conclusion, should be said about a point which, to my mind, has generally received too little attention in discussions of the Messianic idea. What I have in mind is the price demanded by Messianism, the price which the Jewish people has had to pay out of its own substance for this idea which it handed over to the world. The magnitude of the Messianic idea corresponds to the endless powerlessness in Jewish history during all the centuries of exile, when it was unprepared to come forward onto the plane of world history. There's something preliminary, something provisional about Jewish history; hence its inability to give of itself entirely. For the Messianic idea is not only consolation and hope. Every attempt to realize it tears open the abysses which lead each of its manifestations *ad absurdum*. There is something grand about living in hope, but at the same time there is something profoundly unreal about it. It diminishes the singular worth of the individual, and he can never fulfill himself, because the incompleteness of his endeavors eliminates precisely what constitutes its highest value. Thus in Judaism the Messianic idea has compelled a *life lived in deferment*, in which nothing can be done definitively, nothing can be irrevocably accomplished. One may say, perhaps, the Messianic idea is the real anti-existentialist idea. Precisely understood, there is nothing concrete which can be accomplished by the unredeemed. This makes for the greatness of Messianism, but also for its constitutional weakness. Jewish so-called *Existenz* possesses a tension that never finds true release; it never burns itself out. And when in our history it does discharge, then it is foolishly decried (or, one might say, unmasked) as

"pseudo-Messianism." The blazing landscape of redemption (as if it were a point of focus) has concentrated in itself the historical outlook of Judaism. Little wonder that overtones of Messianism have accompanied the modern Jewish readiness for irrevocable action in the concrete realm, when it set out on the utopian return to Zion. It is a readiness which no longer allows itself to be fed on hopes. Born out of the horror and destruction that was Jewish history in our generation, it is bound to history itself and not to meta-history; it has not given itself up totally to Messianism. Whether or not Jewish history will be able to endure this entry into the concrete realm without perishing in the crisis of the Messianic claim which has virtually been conjured up—that is the question which out of his great and dangerous past the Jew of this age poses to his present and to his future.

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