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Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner • Rabbi Reuven Ziegler



Special Edition Marking
the 20th Yahrtzeit of
Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l



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Introduction

Mrs. Stephanie Strauss

Director, S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program, Yeshiva University

Our rabbis (*Vayikra Rabbah* no. 13) teach us that Torah study in Eretz Yisrael has no parallel in the rest of the world. With this in mind, many students choose to study for a year or more at yeshivot and seminaries in Israel. This unique opportunity provides a valuable and enriching experience where living and learning in the Jewish homeland, being immersed in the world of the yeshiva and engaging in intensive Torah studies are an integral part of daily life.

Why did our rabbis assume that Torah study in Eretz Yisrael has no parallel? R. Avraham Y. Kook, *Orot HaTorah* ch. 13, explains that Torah study in the Diaspora is focused on the individual who is studying, while Torah study in Israel is focused on the community, on the nation as a whole.

The Yeshiva University S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program brings a community-minded approach to the year of study in Israel. The program is a formal arrangement between Yeshiva University and more than 43 learning institutions for men and women in Israel, enabling the hundreds of students enrolled in our program to learn firsthand about Israel's land, people, history and culture.

The Israel year is a pivotal and transformative moment in a student's life. Our Israel staff strives to nurture and enrich that experience by providing students support and guidance throughout their year(s) in Israel. .

At Yeshiva University in NY, a student can continue on his or her path of Torah growth while at the same time studying at one of the premier research universities in the world. Our top-notch roshei yeshiva and excellent college faculty combine to offer students opportunities that are available only at Yeshiva University. Nowhere but here can a young man or woman participate with hundreds of fellow students in chessed and service learning missions across the United States and around the world. Nowhere but here can he or she receive the training to excel in careers from medicine to business, politics to academia, the rabbinate to finance, and only at YU will they have a 94.5% chance of being employed or in graduate school within five months of graduation, as was the case with YU's class of 2012.

It is with great pride that we present this collection of articles as part of the commemoration of the 20th yahrtzeit of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, zt"l. In addition to his contributions to the philosophy of Torah Umadda, he was a champion of the school of Religious Zionism in the 20th century and it is our privilege to showcase his ideas as presented by some of his students and students' students.

The Religious Zionism of Rav Soloveitchik: A Synthesis of Worlds

Rabbi Dr. Aharon Rakeffet-Rothkoff

Faculty, YU Israel Kollel, Gruss Campus • '59YC, '61R, '67BRGS

Compiled by Sam Fromson,¹ based on the shiurim of Rabbi Dr. Rakeffet.

This article attempts to give a full and fair account of Rav Soloveitchik's relationship with Religious Zionism, the long journey he travelled to develop this relationship, and the synthesis of worlds that he achieved.

There are two key issues to consider; the first is why the Rav was so firmly anti-Zionist when he arrived in America. To understand this, we must discuss the Rav's historical and sociological background; his childhood in Europe and early years in America. We must also examine the trends of secularism, nationalism and communism in 19th and early 20th-century Europe, along with the responses of the Yeshiva world.

The second issue is how the impact of the Holocaust and birth of the State of Israel caused the Rav to fundamentally change his perspective. We will examine the philosophy of activism and Religious Zionism that he developed, and consider the nature of the Rav's Zionism and how his independent thought, creative intellect and family heritage gave rise to a Zionism different to that of other 20th-century thinkers.

The Rav's Agudah Philosophy

Attitude formation is a complex process. Attitudes develop based on a complex interplay between environmental factors, familial influences, personal experiences and intellectual arguments. This section will highlight several factors that were key to the formulation of the Rav's initial Agudist philosophy. We will highlight: his family influence, the struggles faced by his father teaching in a Mizrachi school, his exposure to the world of Agudah in Berlin, and the role models he found when beginning life in America.

¹ Sam Fromson is a rabbinic student in the YU Israel Kollel.

Rav Chaim of Brisk

During the 19th century, deep rifts spread across the Jewish world. The secularism of enlightenment philosophy clashed with the Torah values of Orthodoxy. The political trend of nationalism in the 19th century also deeply impacted the Jewish world. If the Italians, Germans and Hungarians could have their own autonomous states, then perhaps this could also be a realizable dream for the Jewish people. The desire to return to Jerusalem and renew the link with *Eretz Yisrael* is embedded in religious thought and prayer, and nationalism provided a secular language in which to express this religious ideology. The continued presence of persecution and anti-Semitism acted to crystallize Jewish nationalism, and it was following the tragic accusation of Dreyfus for treason against France that Theodore Herzl first gave form to the dream of a Jewish State in Israel.

Zionism caused a huge upheaval in the Yeshiva world. Herzl appealed to many Jews, but the religious world recoiled from the practical secularism that he preached. The yeshiva world of Eastern Europe was partially isolated from the powerful influence of the Enlightenment, yet ideas still travelled from Western Europe and could have strong impacts. The most famous yeshiva of those times was Volozhin, and this drama was played out in their *beit midrash* even before Herzl began his campaign.

The most famous rosh yeshiva of Volozhin was the Netziv, Rav Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin; he was well versed in Enlightenment literature and was a passionate supporter of the nascent Zionist vision. His son, Rabbi Meir Berlin (who later changed his last name to Bar-Ilan), became the president of World Mizrachi, which the Religious Zionist Organization founded in 1902, and his closest student was Rav Kook.

The co-rosh yeshiva of Volozhin was Rav Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, and, though he left Volozhin to become the rabbi of Slutsk, his son, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, stayed in Volozhin and soon rose to the fore. He became a dominant personality in the yeshiva, with many followers. Rav Chaim was vehemently opposed to Zionism, which he viewed as godless secular nationalism, which would only result in taking Jews away from Judaism. However, he deeply loved and cared about the holiness of the Land of Israel, delivering high level *shiurim* on *Kodashim* and *Taharot* (two complex areas of the Talmud that are mostly applicable in Temple times). This duality was a key component of the Rav's heritage.

Rav Moshe Soloveitchik in Warsaw

The Rav's father, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, began his main rabbinic career as the community rabbi of the town of Khislavichi, where the Jewish population was mostly Lubavitch and religious. The Russian revolution changed Jewish life irreparably. Communism rampaged throughout Russia and religious life was decimated. Communism engendered a deep hatred of tradition and religion, and many youth were swept up in the tide as it engulfed the country. The Rav's family managed to escape from communist Russia and arrived in Warsaw. Warsaw was a center of Ger Chassidism and the Chassidic towns in Russia were centers of the newly founded Agudah movement. Agudah was founded in 1912 with the intention of creating an over-arching organization to unite Torah Jews in the face of secularizing influences. However, the conservative element rapidly gained

dominance within the organization and Agudah came to be defined in opposition to Mizrachi and its support for Zionism. Agudah stood for the values of traditional European Torah Jewry and it was within this environment of ideological conflict that the Rav grew up.

Rav Moshe began teaching in a Mizrachi school, an enlightened institution in which secular studies were encouraged alongside Jewish studies. The Rav saw how his father was mocked and rejected by his family due to his association with a Mizrachi institution. Furthermore, the Rav saw his father suffering within the school, as his conservative views differed from the more radical and modern approach of certain members of the faculty. The intense sensation of pain a child feels when he sees his father unhappy runs deep, and the Rav's childhood experiences of watching his father suffer firmly established a negative association with Mizrachi organizations.

Life in Berlin

In 1926, the Rav travelled to Berlin, the center of the German Jewish world. The Judaism and rabbinic life in Berlin was a world away from that which he had been exposed to in either Russia or Poland. He was exposed to the world of Torah and *Derech Eretz*, the legacy of Rav Hirsch. He attended *shiurim* of the *Sridei Aish*, went to visit Hildesheimer, and encountered a *beit midrash* full of rabbinic students with a mature secular education. This was not the Agudah that the Rav was exposed to in Russia, this was Agudah with PhDs; sophisticated, educated and worldly. The Rav was overawed by this experience. During the six years he spent in Berlin, he mixed with the greatest Jewish thinkers of the 20th century, and was in the thrall of the great leaders of the Agudah movement. The Rav aspired to follow this path, to become one of these great Agudah leaders, entrenched in the world of Torah and of tradition, yet also well versed in secular philosophy, science and politics.

Agudah in America

The third factor that influenced the formulation of the Rav's Agudist position was the role models he encountered in America. In 1932, the Rav came to the United States, brought in by the Chicago Hebrew Theological College. When the Depression hit the American economy, the community was unable to honor the contract, and so the Rav moved to Boston. Religious life in Boston was a challenge and the person that Rav Soloveitchik respected most was Rabbi Eliezer Silver. Rabbi Silver was the first American-made *talmid chacham*, a student of Rav Chaim Ozer who had come to America and worked in the insurance business before serving as a community rabbi in Harrisburg. In 1937, Rabbi Silver led the American delegation to the last European Agudah conference, and received a mandate to establish Agudah in the United States. Rav Soloveitchik was one of the founding members. In the late 1930s, when the rabbinic leaders of Agudah refused to support a boycott of Germany and of Hitler, the Rav sided with them. This decision seems perverse in hindsight, but we must recall that Agudah of the 1930s was still stuck in the mind-set of the ghetto. They maintained an inherent aversion to confronting government authority and they felt that a boycott would only anger Hitler and make the situation worse for European Jews.

The highlight of the Rav's Agudist career was the eulogy he gave in 1940 for Rav Chaim Ozer. This was the clearest, most expressive and eloquent expression of Agudah philosophy ever given on American soil. The Rav described two of the unique garments of the *kohen gadol* (high

priest): the *tzitz* (head-plate) and the *choshen* (breast-plate). The *tzitz* represents the mind committed to halachic issues for which the *kohen gadol* is the ultimate authority, and the *choshen* represents worldly issues, the political, the military and the questions of practical reality for which the *kohen gadol* must also be the ultimate arbiter. There can be no separation between the bearer of the *tzitz* and the *choshen*; rabbinic control must be absolute in both realms. The Rav fully condoned the actions of the Agudah in not boycotting Hitler, and echoed Rav Chaim Ozer's disapproval of Zionism and the secularizing influences with which it was inextricably linked. For the Rav, secular Zionism's attempt to sever itself from the domain of halachah and from the purview of rabbinic authority could not be tolerated.

Antithesis and Synthesis

We now deal with the issue of how the Rav justified the switch from being a committed Agudist to being a powerful and eloquent advocate for Religious Zionism. The Rav himself described this process in terms of a dialectic comprised of three stages: his thesis was Agudah, the primacy of the insulated Torah community and adherence to doctrine as defined by the rabbinic leadership; the antithesis was the pain, disaster and destruction of the Holocaust; and his synthesis was an activist Religious Zionism. In this section we explain the latter two stages of this journey and distinguish between two fundamental components of his great synthesis; first, the necessity for constant, dynamic reevaluation of *hashkafic* (worldview) decisions, and second, the religious mandate of activism and creativity. The Rav dealt extensively with the question of the rationale behind his change of heart, and we draw from his own allegory and exegesis to support and explain this process.

Rejection and Destruction

The initial catalyst for the Rav's change of heart came in 1943, when the horrific nature of the destruction being wreaked among European Jewry became evident. American Jewry woke up to Hitler's crimes and many members of the Agudah leadership, who had rejected a boycott in the 1930s, announced that the time had come to take action. Two days before Yom Kippur, Agudah leaders, the Rav among them, marched to Congress to request a meeting with the president. The greatest rabbinic delegation that America could muster was denied an audience. Their protest went unanswered and they returned home, defeated and dejected. When the full extent of the destruction of European Jewry became apparent, the knowledge that six million Jews had been murdered and countless communities obliterated caused deep and lasting mental anguish. Furthermore, it caused the Rav to make a frank and full reevaluation of his philosophy. The Rav came to the decision that he had been wrong; he had been wrong about the primacy of rabbinic edict in the realm of *hashkafah*, and he had been wrong about the relevance of Jewish activism.

Religious Innovation—Yosef and the Brothers

In his addresses to the American Mizrachi Association, which were subsequently transcribed as the *Chamesh Derashot*, the Rav explained the first aspect of this change of heart. The Rav noted that in the realm of halachah, the rabbinic majority reigns supreme. G-d gave the Torah to man and our capacity for halachic creativity and decision-making is axiomatic to a live and vibrant relationship to G-d. In *hashkafah* however, the rules are different. For questions that are outside

the four volumes of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the focus is not on man's insight and deduction, rather we have to be constantly evaluating what it is that G-d wants of man. We have to continually reevaluate our decisions to ensure they align with *ratzon Hashem* (the will of G-d), and we have to adapt to the world around us. In *hashkafah*, there is no edict that is infallible and no rebbe who is exempt from this obligation for constant reappraisal and review. Once halachah is fixed by man it becomes law that even G-d cannot alter, the heavenly voice affirms *lo bashamayim hi*—it is not in heaven. *Hashkafah*, however, must be in a constant state of flux and adaptation.

The Rav connected this message to the conflict between Yosef and his brothers. All the children of Ya'akov knew that there would be an exile, as had been told to Avraham. Yosef wanted to question the comfortable life of the family and challenge them to rethink the status quo of life in Cana'an in preparation for the inevitable trials ahead. The brothers rejected this. They judged Yosef guilty of treason for even suggesting it; they were happy with life in Cana'an, comfortable, settled and secure. The divine voice rang out that Yosef was right. Yosef's visions proved true and he eventually ended up as viceroy over all of Egypt, able to guide them safely to Egypt and soften the blow of exile. The Rav explained that the Mizrachi of 1902 represented Yosef Hatzadik and Agudah represented the other brothers. Mizrachi wanted to reevaluate Jewish life in Europe, to prepare for the Jewish future and ensure Jewish continuity, whereas Agudah were content with the status quo. Mizrachi fought and dreamed, and without them there would have been no place for refugees to go to following the war. Without the *yishuv*, Hitler would have killed Judaism. The Rav saw this as a full retroactive justification of Mizrachi philosophy.

Activism—Ya'akov and Eisav

The second component of the Rav's Religious Zionism was activism, the necessity for Jews to take a stand in world affairs, to be people of deeds as well as of books. He developed this philosophy building within the tradition of his father and grandfather. The essence of the Brisk conception of Torah is the mandate of *imitatio Dei*, intellectual creativity of man emulating the creativity of G-d through the study of Torah. The Rav felt that this creative power must also be actualized beyond the realm of the intellect and carried into the outside world. To substantiate this message, the Rav drew from the episode in which Rivkah engineers a deception of Yitzchak to give the *brachot* (blessings) to Yaakov. He described Yitzchak as the epitome of holiness and sanctity, the *korban shelamim* who never left the Land of Israel. According to Yitzchak's worldview, the best possible path for Ya'akov was to be as an "*ish yoshev ohelim*" (a man who dwelled in tents), insulated from the outside world, shielded from mundane physical, economic and political realities and able to focus solely on the study of Torah. According to Yitzchak's vision, if Ya'akov was ever in need of assistance in practical matters, he could turn to his brother Eisav, the worldly industrialist. That was the view of Yitzchak. Rivkah, however, thought differently; she told Ya'akov to go out into the field, to fight for the blessings of heaven and earth and to gain a foothold in the outside world. She realized that this was the only viable way in which the tent of Torah could survive. The Rav believed that the vision of Mizrachi was to extend beyond the tent of Torah, to establish the ownership of the Jewish people of the Land of Israel in the way that the returning exiles did in the times of Ezra, through weeding and plowing, digging wells and fortifying borders. The Rav came to believe with a full heart that the true

achievement of the State of Israel was the creation of a people with a Gemarah in one hand and a plowshare in the other. This activism was at the heart of his Zionism and at the focus of his entire worldview.

The knock of opportunity—*Kol Dodi Dofek*

Activism comes with obligation. If G-d gave us the power to act, we have a responsibility to do so. The Rav elucidated this beautifully in his 1956 speech at Yeshiva University entitled "*Kol Dodi Dofek*." He told Shir Hashirim's tragic story of a couple deeply in love. One night the young lover knocks on his beloved's door, but she is too tired and tells him sleepily to go away and come back tomorrow. She awakens the next day and goes to look for him; she searches but eventually realizes that he is gone forever, lost to her for all time because she missed her opportunity. The Rav argued that each of us is given a chance to reach for something, to become great and to actualize our potential. We learn from Shir HaShirim that we must not let our apathy, feelings of inadequacy or laziness spoil this opportunity. The Rav spoke of six knocks on the collective door of the Jewish people, six awakenings to call us to awaken and reach for greatness. These six knocks were the six miraculous events accompanying the establishment of the State of Israel:

- The first knock was political; the alliance of the United States and USSR to vote for the existence of the Jewish State.
- The second was military; the victory of the tiny Jewish forces, handicapped by an arms embargo and massively outnumbered.
- The third was theological; the refutation of Christian doctrine by demonstrating that the Jewish people will again be a vibrant player on the world stage.
- The fourth was sociological; the fact that Jews from around the world felt proud to be Jewish and free to re-engage with their Jewish identity.
- The fifth was an international change of attitude due to the birth of the State of Israel; the fact that Jews had a position of power and a homeland meant that Jewish blood could no longer be spilt freely and without fear of retribution.
- The sixth and final knock was the influx of exiles; the return to Israel of Jews from across the world.

This speech became the most famous exposition of Religious Zionist thought given in the 20th century, and the philosophy it contained was a result of the Rav's personal journey over the previous decades.

Brisker Zionism

The Religious Zionist thought developed by Rav Soloveitchik was significantly different to that of other 20th-century thinkers. For both Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Kook, Zionism was connected to Torah. For Rav Kook, however, Zionism was an *a priori* reflection of his Torah perspective, as obvious as *tefillah*, Shabbat or *kashrut*. For the Rav, Zionism was a *posteriori*, a position adopted after tumult and struggle. The Rav, therefore, did not grant Zionism an independent mandate in religious life. He rejected the position of Nachmanides, elucidated in his commentary on *Acharei Mot* (18:25), that mitzvot can only be properly fulfilled in Israel and that, therefore, *yishuv Eretz*

Yisrael (settling the Land of Israel) is more important than all the other commandments combined. This position would lead to the conclusion that Zionism is more important than every other aspect of Torah life. The Rav whole-heartedly rejected this; he believed that Zionism, as with every other *hashkafah*, must be actualized solely within the bounds of a rigid halachic framework. This position often put the Rav at odds with other Mizrachi thinkers who followed the teachings of Rav Kook and saw Zionism as of supreme importance within religious life.

The Rav often quoted the Mishnah in *Yoma* 8:5, which states that if a person is ill on Yom Kippur, then we ask a doctor whether they must eat; the rabbi has no say in the matter. The Rav felt adamant that *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* is similar to Yom Kippur. Just as Yom Kippur is disregarded to save a life, so too is *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*. Thus, when the question of land for peace arose in the 1970s, he felt that the military and political experts ought to determine the best course of action.

Conclusion

Rav Soloveitchik was arguably the greatest exponent of Religious Zionism in the latter half of the 20th century and he travelled a long path to reach this position. By the 1930s, the Rav had become a fervent Agudist. This position stemmed from his family background and formative experiences in Europe and America. It took the war and subsequent establishment of the State of Israel to force the Rav to reevaluate his approach and come to the belief that the Agudah worldview was no longer tenable. He constructed a majestic Religious Zionism built on activism and the passionate desire to seek out G-d's guiding hand in the world. He became an ardent Zionist and a member of Mizrachi yet always maintained his independent view. Each decision he made was subjected to rigorous analysis and halachah was never subjugated in favor of Zionist sentiment.

His switch from Agudah to Mizrachi was a testament to his intellectual honesty and personal conviction. It was hard for the Rav to differ from his family, change his associations and uproot his worldview, yet he came to see this as a fulfillment of two fundamental religious obligations; the drive to attune with the will of G-d and the mandate to emulate G-d's creativity, to be an activist and make an impact in the wider world. Both the content and context of his Zionist philosophy have beautiful and powerful messages for us all.

An Optimistic Zionist

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Zichron Dov Beit Midrash of Toronto
'95YC, '97R

גָדוֹל יְהִי כָבֹד הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אַחֲרָנוּ מִן הַרְאָשׁוֹן.
*The glory of this house, the latter, will be greater than the glory of the first.*¹

The Optimism of Zechariah and Chaggai

In the early years of the second Beit haMikdash, the prophets Chaggai and Zechariah were charged with inspiring a ragtag group of 42,000 refugees to restore the Jewish community, reestablish a Jewish commonwealth, and build the second Beit haMikdash. Many of Zechariah's prophecies were delivered in visions, and one of his best-known visions includes the following dialogue, between Zechariah and a malach:

And he [a malach] said to me: What do you see? And I said: I have seen a menorah formed entirely of gold, with its bowl on its head and seven lamps upon it, seven and seven channels to the lamps upon its head, and two olive trees upon it, one on the right of the bowl and one on its left.

And I declared and said to the malach who spoke to me: What are these, my master? And the malach who spoke to me declared and replied to me: You know what these are! And I said: No, my master.

And he declared and said to me: This is the word of G-d to Zerubavel, saying: Not with might and not with strength, but with My spirit, declares G-d, Lord of Hosts.

Zechariah 4:2-6

ויאמר אליו מה אתה ראה ואמר
ראיתי והנה מנורת זהב כליה וגלה
על ראשה ושבעה נרתיה עליה
שבעה ושבעה מוצקות לנרות אשר
על ראשה: ושנים זיתים עליה אחד
מיימין הגללה ואחד על שמאליה: ואען
ואמר אל המלאך הדבר כי לא אמר מה
אליה אדני: וייען המלאך הדבר כי
ויאמר אליו הלווא ידעת מה המה אלה
ואמר לא אדני: וייען ויאמר אליו
לאמר זה דבר ד' אל זרבבל לאמר
לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אם ברוחיו אמר
ד' צבקות:
זכוריה ד:ב-ו

The dialogue between prophet and malach caught the sensitive ear of Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik. The malach would later explain the particular images of the vision, but how did his response address the question? And if a malach—whose word to a prophet must be truth—declared that Zechariah understood the vision, how could Zechariah contradict it? And by what right was his denial enshrined as prophetic truth as well?

Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik explained² that the malach was correct: Zechariah did comprehend the symbols displayed to him. The prophet recognized the two olive trees as representatives of the monarchy and the kehunah [priesthood], and he realized that the olive oil represented the

¹ Chaggai 2:8

² Chiddushei Rabbeinu haGriz Soloveitchik [Stencil] Torah #121, and see Nefesh haRav, pp. 76-79

oil of anointing used in the Beit haMikdash. However, Zechariah's declaration of ignorance was also honest: these symbols were incomprehensible in a vision regarding the second Beit haMikdash, for Zechariah knew prophetically that there would be no oil of anointing in this era, and no anointed king or kohen gadol.

The malach then addressed Zechariah's confusion, saying in the name of G-d, "The second Beit haMikdash was built not with might and not with force, but with My spirit." This meant, "I put My spirit into the heart of the kings of the nations, to permit Israel to return to the Land of Israel and build the Beit haMikdash."³ The Jewish return under the Persians was not established by Jewish conquest, and therefore would not be voided by the later Roman conquest.⁴ Therefore, the sanctity of the land would persist, and the holiness of the third Beit haMikdash would be a direct extension of the holiness invested in the second Beit haMikdash, established by Zechariah's generation.

Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik explained that this answered Zechariah's question: the oil of anointing, the anointed king and the kohen gadol were appropriate visions even for his day, for their Beit haMikdash would be a product of the current structure. Zechariah and his generation could be heartened by the news that their efforts would ultimately lead to a grand Beit haMikdash and a full redemption.

This message may be discerned in a prophecy of Chaggai, too. The Jews of Chaggai's day claimed that the Beit haMikdash they were building was entirely unworthy of succeeding the first Beit haMikdash. In response to this national depression, Chaggai prophesied, "The glory of this house, the latter, will be greater than the glory of the first."⁵ As Rabbi Hershel Schachter has explained,⁶ "this house" referred to the second Beit haMikdash, and "the latter" referred to the third Beit haMikdash, which would be an extension of the second. The national frustration was justified, but if they would persevere in their efforts then they would yet see a Beit haMikdash worthy of its name.

Modern Frustration

The disappointment of 2,500 years ago has been echoed in our own day, regarding the aspirations of Religious Zionists for a full restoration of halachic Judaism to our ancient land. In the face of these challenges, many have questioned the wisdom of partnering with secular Zionists. Separatists cite the biblical criticism of the righteous King Yehoshaphat for joining forces with the wicked King Achazyahu,⁷ and they quote the lesson of Pirkei Avot,⁸ "Do not join with a wicked person." Even before the birth of the state, in 1934, Rav Elchanan Wasserman penned an open letter chastising anyone who would join with secular Zionists "in any form of union."

³ Rabbi Hershel Schachter, *B'Inyan Megilat Taanit, Or haMizrach*, Nisan 5734.

⁴ Rambam, Mishneh Torah, *Hilchot Beit haBechirah* 6:16

⁵ Chaggai 2:8

⁶ See note 3 above.

⁷ Divrei haYamim II 20:37

⁸ Pirkei Avot 1:7

When addressing his perspective on secular Zionism, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik counted himself among those questing Religious Zionists. In the concluding portion of his *Kol Dodi Dofek* address, Rabbi Soloveitchik identified two flaws of practical consequence in the thinking of secular pioneers:

It seems to me that political, nonreligious Zionism has committed one grave and fundamental error ... With the establishment of the State of Israel, secular Zionism declares, we have become a people like all people, and the notion of "a people that dwells alone" (Numbers 23:29) has lost its validity ... Under the influence of this spirit of indiscriminate amity, this doctrine of the sameness of all peoples, the representatives of the State of Israel have oftentimes displayed an embarrassing naiveté, improperly evaluated particular circumstances and situations, and failed to discern the hidden intentions of certain individuals. As a result of their childlike innocence, they trust the promises of people who promptly proceed to betray us and are overly impressed by flattery and blandishments...

However, the error of secular Zionism is more serious than its simply not understanding the true meaning of the covenant in Egypt, the covenant of a camp-people, which takes the form of shared fate and involuntary isolation. Secular Zionism has sinned as well against the covenant at Sinai, the covenant made with a holy congregation-nation, which finds its expression in the shared destiny of a sanctified existence...

The mission of the State of Israel is neither the termination of the unique isolation of the Jewish people nor the abrogation of its unique fate—in this it will not succeed! – but the elevation of a camp-people to the rank of a holy congregation-nation and the transformation of shared fate to shared destiny.⁹

To Rabbi Soloveitchik, secular Zionists and Religious Zionists work at cross-purposes regarding core identity and nation-shaping vision, and the state pays a frustrating, real-world price for the ideological shortcomings of the secular model. Nonetheless, Rabbi Soloveitchik mitigated his criticism, declaring that secularists were subconsciously motivated by a purity of heart that would earn their Zionist efforts favor in Divine eyes. He claimed:¹⁰

One may acquire a share in the Creator of the Universe only via construction of an altar, via "And you shall seek... [and you shall find] when you seek Him with your entire heart and with your entire spirit." All of them make this acquisition: The religious—knowingly, the chiloni—without knowledge. We, religious Jewry, believe that the Jew seeks the Creator of the Universe eternally, against his will and willingly, accidentally and intentionally. He seeks Him even at the moment that he cries out that he needs Him not. ... Therefore, all of the parties built altars, from the Mizrachi-HaPoel Mizrachi to the Mapai and Mapam, and brought

את הקניין בברוא העולם אפשר להשיג רק על ידי בנין מזבח, על ידי ובקשותם...[וממצאת] כי תדרשו בכל לבך ובכל נפשך. ואת הקניין זה – עושים כולם: הדתי – מדעת, החילוני – שלא מדעת. אנו, היהודים הדתיים, מאמינים כי היהודי מבקש תמיד את ברוא העולם, באונס וברצון, בשוגג ובכוונה. הוא מבקש אותו אף בשעה שהוא צועק כי איןנו זוקק לו... לפיכך בנו מזבחות כל המפלגות, מזרחי-הפועל המזרחי עד מפא"י ומפ"מ, והקריבו

⁹ *Kol Dodi Dofek*, Reflections on the Holocaust (1992) pp. 100-101, translated from Hebrew to English by Lawrence Kaplan.

¹⁰ *Chamesh Derashot: Vayachalom Yosef*, translated from Yiddish to Hebrew by David Telzner.

korbanot upon them. (And the korban of a Jew is always accepted, even when the person bringing it does not intend for the sake of Heaven.) ... Yes, rabbotai! Even the new, chiloni settlement executed the second acquisition of the land, a permanent acquisition, in heroic fashion, and in an indirect, unwitting way acquired not only a portion of the land of Israel, but also of the G-d of Israel.¹¹

קרבנות עליהם. (וקרבן היהודי הוא לועלם לרצון, אף אם המקריב אינו מתחכו לשם שמים...) ... כן, רבותי! אף היישוב החדש החילוני ביצע את הקניין השני של הארץ לצמיחות באופן הירואי, ובארה בלבתי-ישיר ובלבתי-מודע זהה לא רק בארץ ישראל, אלא גם באקלים בישראל.

Despite the challenges and disappointments of secularisms, the vision of a grand future did not fade from Rabbi Soloveitchik's eyes.

Engagement

Rather than preach a withdrawal of our hands, Rabbi Soloveitchik promoted the engagement of the halachic idealist with the secular reality. He envisioned a world in which Torah and halachah were applied and honored in the modern, public sphere. Toward that end, he articulated a fourteenth "Ani Maamin" declaration of faith, modeled upon the 13 identified in Rambam's teachings:¹²

What is this "Ani Maamin"? It is expressed in a simple declaration, "I believe, with complete faith, that this Torah is to be fulfilled, actualized and fully executed in every place and every era, in all social, financial and cultural circumstances, in all technological circumstances and political conditions." Torah is to be actualized, whether in the simple society and homogeneous market of the ghetto, in which the Jews existed in the manner of "consumers of manna" and the environment was saturated with Judaism and the street was an extension of the home, or in the modern, scientifically developed and designed society, in which the Jew is an integral part of his environs beyond any connection with his personal domain. Torah is to be actualized whether in exile, where it relates to the personal life of the Jew, or in the Jewish state, where it is required to

מהו ה"אני מאמין" הזה? הוא מתבטא בהצהרה פשוטה: "אני מאמין באמונה שלימה שזאת התורה ניתנת לקיום, לגישום ולביצוע מלא בכל מקום ובכל זמן, בכל המערכות החברתיות, הכלכליות והתרבותיות, בכל הניסיבות הטכנולוגיות ובכל התנאים הפוליטיים". התורה ניתנת להגשמה בין חברה פשוטה והמשק ההומוגני של הגיטו בו היו היהודים בבחינת "אוכלי מן" וכל הסביבה הייתה רוויה יהודות, כשהרחוב היה המשכו של הבית; ובין לחברה המודרנית המפותחת והמתוכנת באופן מדעי, שבו היה הדנו חלך אנטיגרלי של סביבתו, ללא שום קשר עם רשות היחיד שלו. התורה ניתנת להגשמה בין גלויות, שם היא מתחילה לחיו הפרטניים של היהודי, ובין במדינה יהודית,

¹¹ See, too, Rabbi Soloveitchik's address to a Mizrachi gathering in 1954, as cited by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein in a lecture transcribed and published at www.vbm-torah.org/alei/14-02ral-zionism.htm. Rabbi Soloveitchik cited Melachim II 14:23, which depicts the sins and triumphs of Yeravam son of Yoash, wicked king of Israel: "Yerav'am son of Yoash 'did not turn away from all the sins of Yerav'am son of Nevat, who had led Israel astray.' Nevertheless, the Rav banged loudly on the table and continued, he 'restored the border of Israel from Levo Chamat to the sea of Arava, as the Lord, God of Israel, had spoken by the hand of his servant, Yona son of Amitai, the prophet from Gat-Chefer!' He concluded that indeed 'God had seen the affliction of Israel.' This expressed not the passive appreciation of a bystander, but rather the Rav's readiness to cooperate with the general community, proceeding from a sense of joint fate and—up to a certain level—even joint destiny."

¹² *Chamesh Derashot: miTal haShamayim*, translated from Yiddish to Hebrew by David Telzner. See also Rabbi Soloveitchik's eulogy for his uncle, Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, published under the title, "Mah dodeich midod."

address novel challenges and to encompass, as well, the structures of communal life.

שם עליה לטפל בבעיות חדשות ולהקיף גם
צורות חיים ציבוריים.

Rabbi Soloveitchik took great pride in the steps taken toward fulfilling this ambition. As he declaimed before the 57th Mizrachi convention, Religious Zionism could point to significant, concrete achievements with pride:¹³

We have merited exhaustion, a constructive, creative exhaustion, due to our great labors of the 18 years since the founding of the state, when our movement—and only our movement and no other—fought tirelessly for a religious land of Israel. We achieved much through our battle: more than 200,000 students in religious schools, laws of marriage and family in the hands of rabbis and judges, a well-organized Chief Rabbinate, kashrut in the military, and also—relatively—public Shabbat observance.

זכאים אנו ליגעה, ליגעה קונסטרקטיבית-
ויצרת עקב פועלתו העצומה במשך 18 שנים
מאז תקמת המדינה, כאשר תנועתנו – ורק
תנועתנו ולא תנעה אחרת – מאבקה ללא-
ליאות بعد ארץ ישראל דתית. הרבה השגנו
הוזות למלחמותנו: למעלה ממאתיים אלף
תלמידים בבתי ספר דתיים, דני אישות וענינו
משפחה בידי רבנים ויושבי על מדין, רבנות
ראשית מאורגנת היטב, כשרות בצבא, וגם –
במידה רלוונטית – שמירת שבת בפרהסיה.

Like the contemporaries of Zechariah and Chaggai, Rabbi Soloveitchik witnessed and recognized the flaws and deficiencies of his era's struggle to build a Beit haMikdash. Nonetheless, Rabbi Soloveitchik embodied the optimism his grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, saw in the malach's words to Zechariah. Understanding the purity in the secular Zionist's activities, committed to the ability of halachah to encompass the modern world, and valuing the religious achievements of his day, Rabbi Soloveitchik recognized that from this modern state, however troubled, could come greatness.

¹³ *Chamesh Derashot: Simchat haYetzirah*, translated from Yiddish to Hebrew by David Telzner.

Rav Soloveitchik

on the Significance of the State of Israel

Rabbi Reuven Ziegler, '90YC¹

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The Two Covenants and the State of Israel

In 1935, on his only trip to Eretz Yisrael, Rav Soloveitchik submitted his candidacy for the chief rabbinate of Tel Aviv as the representative of Agudath Israel, a non-Zionist, perhaps even anti-Zionist, political-religious organization. By 1944, he was chairman of the Central Committee of the Religious Zionists of America. He testifies that his move to Mizrachi was not an easy one, as it entailed a break with his family's position and rejection by his rabbinic peers:

I was not born into a Zionist household. My parents' ancestors, my father's house, my teachers and colleagues were far from the Mizrachi religious Zionists ... My links with the Mizrachi grew gradually; I had my doubts about the validity of the Mizrachi approach...

I built an altar upon which I sacrificed sleepless nights, doubts and reservations. Regardless, the years of the Hitlerian Holocaust, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the accomplishments of the Mizrachi in the land of Israel, convinced me of the correctness of our movement's path. The altar still stands today, with smoke rising from the sacrifice upon it ... Jews like me ... are required to sacrifice on this altar their peace of mind as well as their social relationships and friendships. (Five Addresses, 34, 36)²

A variety of factors—some related to fate and some to destiny—contributed to the Rav's support for Mizrachi and to his personal commitment to the State of Israel.

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² Actually, the Rav's father had earlier associated himself with Mizrachi when, in 1920, he became head of religious studies at the Mizrachi-affiliated Takhkemoni Rabbinical Seminary in Warsaw. The question of the exact timing of the Rav's move from Agudah to Mizrachi has been raised by R. Shlomo Pick, "The Rav: Biography and Bibliography," *B.D.D. 6* (1998), 31–37. However, what interests us here is the Rav's self-perception. The above-cited testimony was delivered in an address to the Religious Zionists of America in 1962.

I. Fate: The last three of the famous “six knocks” described in *Kol Dodi Dofek* all deal with the State of Israel’s contribution to Jewish survival. The State of Israel is a refuge for persecuted Jews; it establishes the principle of Jewish self-defense; and it serves as a bulwark against assimilation for Diaspora Jews, many of whom maintain their sense of Jewish identity through identification with Israel and concern for its welfare.

II. Destiny: The State of Israel aids in the attainment of Jewish spiritual goals in several ways. First, by settling the land and exercising sovereignty in it, the Jewish community fulfills one of the 613 biblical mitzvot, “You shall possess the land and dwell therein” (Num. 33:53).³ Second, the Jewish state is a natural and congenial environment for Torah study, a land in which the Jewish people can transplant and rebuild the destroyed Torah centers of Europe.⁴ By helping establish Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel and building Torah institutions there, the Mizrachi paved the way for Jewish spiritual continuity following the eclipse of traditional European Jewish society in the Enlightenment and its destruction in the Holocaust. In this, the Mizrachi followed the path of Joseph, who, foreseeing the winds of change that would challenge his father’s traditional existence in the backwaters of an undeveloped country, prepared the way for Jewish spiritual continuity even in the sophisticated society of imperial Egypt. Like Joseph, the Mizrachi leaders were also shunned by their more short-sighted brothers for their convictions and actions.

Third, the State of Israel can benefit not only the study of Torah but its application as well, for within the state it is possible to apply Halakhah to a broad range of issues, including modern technology and public life. Others, whether Reform or Haredi, may feel that the Torah cannot survive a confrontation with modern society, and therefore, it must either change in accordance with the times or retreat into isolation. The Rav strongly identified with the Mizrachi’s position that Torah can and should engage the world, that it can meet any challenge and be applied in any circumstance.⁵ Thus, ideally, the State of Israel can provide a framework within which to realize the covenant of destiny by fostering Torah values and applying Halakhah to the full range of human endeavors.⁶

The Rav strongly felt the eternal connection of the Jew to the Land of Israel, and testified on many occasions that he had imbibed from his father and grandfather a love for the land and its sanctity.⁷ Furthermore, he believed that divine providence had decreed that in the dispute between Religious Zionists and anti-Zionists, the Religious Zionists had been correct.⁸ Yet when we ask ourselves which elements of Jewish destiny can be attained *only* in the Land of Israel, we see that it is just the first of them—the specific mitzvah of settlement. The Rav felt that the broader elements of destiny—building Torah institutions, striving for *kedushah*, applying Halakhah to modern society and engaging the world—were equally relevant to the Diaspora and could be achieved there as well. His identification with Mizrachi was based not only on its

³ “Al Ahavat ha-Torah u-Geulat Nefesh ha-Dor,” 424–25; *Five Addresses*, 137–38. See also For Further Reference, #1.

⁴ *Five Addresses*, 31–33.

⁵ *Five Addresses*, 152–57, 174–75, and “Mah Dodekh mi-Dod,” 90–91 (the position that the Rav cites as “some say” seems to be his own, in contrast to that of his illustrious uncle R. Velvel).

⁶ *Kol Dodi Dofek*, 70–71.

⁷ See, for example, “Al Ahavat ha-Torah,” 422–23; *Five Addresses*, 34–35; *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, 239.

⁸ *Five Addresses*, 31–36. This point is also apparent from the Rav’s discussion of the six knocks.

support for religious life in the State of Israel, but on broad philosophical principles with universal application: belief in anti-isolationism, human activism and creativity, and the Torah's ability to purify man and society.⁹

In *Kol Dodi Dofek* and elsewhere, the Rav expresses his strong belief that God's hand was manifest in the founding of the State of Israel.¹⁰ Yet the fact of *yad Hashem* being present in Israel's creation does not necessarily mean that the State of Israel is "the first flowering of our redemption." Nor does the fact that the State is a gift from God mean that it is a value in itself. Rather, the Rav believes that it is an opportunity—an *important* opportunity but not the *only* one—for the Jewish people to protect its existence and pursue its destiny. The goal of combining the two covenants and thereby raising a people of fate to a holy nation of destiny is not limited to the Land of Israel. The State is an instrument that serves (or should serve) the larger values of the Jewish people and the Jewish faith.

The Third Way

In short, the Rav believed that the State of Israel is nothing less than a gift from God that plays an important role in safeguarding Jews' physical survival and identity, and that has the potential to serve as a basis for attaining their destiny. Yet it is also *no more* than that. In a letter written in 1957, the Rav stakes out his position against two other Orthodox approaches:

*I agree with you that there is a third halakhic approach which is neither parallel to the position of those "whose eyes are shut" and reject [the significance of the State] nor the belief of those dreamers who adopt a completely positive stance to the point where they identify the State with the [fulfillment] of the highest goal of our historical and meta-historical destiny. This third approach (which is the normative one in all areas), I would allow myself to guess, would be positively inclined toward the State, and would express gratitude for its establishment out of a sense of love and devotion, but would not attach [to it] excessive value to the point of its glorification and deification.*¹¹

Those "whose eyes are shut" are the Haredim, whom Rav Soloveitchik faults for refusing to acknowledge the miraculous nature of the State's founding, denying its historical significance, and showing no interest in taking part in its development. The "dreamers" are the followers of

⁹ See also *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, 201–02:

I see two elements in the Mizrachi: (1) An Israeli political party that deserves credit for most of the achievements of the religious community in Israel ... (2) A large movement committed to a specific ideology and worldview whose impact is significant both in Israel and in the Diaspora. This movement holds within its hand the answer to a serious dilemma: How can we insert our eternal [values] into the splendor of the modern world? How can we remain steadfast and strong in the very center of the modern society and sanctify the new and that which is occurring on a daily basis with utmost holiness? I cannot join up to any group or association that has emblazoned on its banner [the call]: "Separate from the vast world [and go] into dark caves and set yourselves apart from the world and the rest of the Jewish people." This retreat from the battle is the beginning of defeat and reflects a lack of faith in the eternity of Judaism and its ability to dominate the new world with its powerful currents and changing forms. According to the worldview of our movement, Judaism is immensely powerful and capable of achieving anything. The most developed society too, [even one] leaping and conquering new areas of the natural order, also requires our Torah, and only in it will it find satisfaction.

¹⁰ See, e.g., *Five Addresses*, 170–73. Regarding the question of whether to recite *Hallel* in response to this miracle, see For Further Reference, #2.

¹¹ *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, 163–64.

Rav Kook, who regard the State as possessing inherent spiritual value and assign it an overwhelmingly important role in the unfolding of Jewish destiny. Before pinpointing where Rav Soloveitchik parts ways with them, we must first understand Rav Kook's overall approach to the significance of the State of Israel—a State that in his day was yet to be born.

Rav Kook believes that Judaism comprises two "ideas," the national and the spiritual.¹² These are not identical to fate and destiny. First, fate and destiny exist in a hierarchical relationship, while this is not so clear regarding the national and spiritual ideas. Second, the national idea means that the Jewish nation can express its inner essence only by exercising political sovereignty in the Land of Israel, while fate is a dimension of Jewish existence in all places and under all sovereignties. During the two thousand years of exile, Rav Kook believes, Judaism itself was deficient, for it lacked the national half of its identity. Secular Jewish nationalists, therefore, are to be regarded as "holy rebels," for although they reject the spiritual idea, they are helping foster a renaissance of Judaism itself through their restoration of the national idea. By reestablishing Jewish sovereignty in the Holy Land, they reconnect the Jewish nation to one of its two sources of vitality, hitherto missing, and thereby initiate an inexorable process of messianic redemption. Whether its founders are aware of it or not, the nascent State of Israel contains inherent spiritual value as "the foundation of God's seat in the world," and therefore, it constitutes "man's ultimate happiness."¹³

All such talk of deterministic historical processes, inborn essences, and holy rebellions is foreign to Rav Soloveitchik. He does not perceive any *inherent* value in sovereignty, other than fulfilling the specific mitzvah of settlement, nor does he assign any *inherent* spiritual value to the State, seeing it rather as a base from which to attain *other* objectives.¹⁴ These objectives, fate and destiny, are the same ones Jews pursued during their long exile, since they can be attained in the Diaspora as well. Professor Gerald Blidstein points out that, unlike Rav Kook, Rav Soloveitchik does not accept the Zionist critique of Diaspora Jewish life. Therefore the Rav sees no need for a renaissance of Judaism, nor does he regard the secular Zionist rebellion against religion as a necessary stage in the dialectical unfolding of the Jewish essence.¹⁵

Furthermore, I would add, the Rav believes that if one can speak of a Jewish national character, it is not one that is inborn and essential, but rather one shaped by the nation's historical experiences. Not only does the Rav not speak of the "essence" of the Jewish people, he does not even speak of the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael as an inherent metaphysical property. Professor Blidstein reports that Rav Soloveitchik considered such thinking mythological: "I recall his

¹² For a succinct presentation of Rav Kook's views on this subject, see his essay, "Le-Mahalakh ha-Ide'ot be-Yisrael," in *Orot* (Jerusalem, 1985), 102–18.

¹³ *Orot Yisrael* 6:7, in *Orot*, 160.

¹⁴ In "Yarhei Kallah" lectures delivered in the summers of 1978 and 1981, Rav Soloveitchik suggested that the mitzvot of appointing judges in every city in Eretz Yisrael and eradicating idolatry in Eretz Yisrael are both fulfillments of the commandment of "possession and settlement" of the land. Based on these insights, R. Yair Kahn suggests that these two mitzvot are not merely additions to the literal fulfillment of "possession and settlement," but rather define its essence. In other words, mere sovereignty is not enough, but is instead a stepping-stone, or a *heksher mitzvah*, to the attainment of the larger goals of justice and divine worship. See his article, "Leha'avir Gilulum min ha-Aretz," *Alon Shevut* 145 (5755), 13–23.

¹⁵ "On the Jewish People in the Writings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," in *Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, ed. R. Marc Angel (Hoboken, 1997), 307–08.

developing the theme that the holiness of the land was not ‘mythological’ but a function of its providing the context for a holy society—again a fundamentally Maimonidean orientation.”¹⁶ In a striking passage, the Rav writes that the idea of inherent sanctity approaches fetishism, the belief in the supernatural powers of physical objects:

*For [R. Yehudah Halevi and the Ramban], the attribute of kedushah, holiness, ascribed to the Land of Israel is an objective metaphysical quality inherent in the land. With all my respect for the Rishonim, I must disagree with such an opinion. I do not believe that it is halakhically cogent. Kedushah, under a halakhic aspect, is man-made; more accurately, it is a historical category. A soil is sanctified by historical deeds performed by a sacred people, never by any primordial superiority. The halakhic term kedushat ha-aretz, the sanctity of the land, denotes the consequence of a human act, either conquest (heroic deeds) or the mere presence of the people in that land (intimacy of man and nature). Kedushah is identical with man’s association with Mother Earth. Nothing should be attributed a priori to dead matter. Objective kedushah smacks of fetishism.*¹⁷

Clearly, Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik are working with very different sets of assumptions. Yet even within Rav Soloveitchik’s own school of thought, some have questioned the scant attention he paid to certain values that are consistent with and even congenial to his philosophy, and others have developed Rav Soloveitchik’s line of thought further than he himself may have. For example, one of his preeminent disciples, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, discerns in Israel the possibility of leading a more organic and integrated existence, as opposed to the fragmented nature of life in the Diaspora. Even the mundane aspects of one’s life in Israel attain social and religious value by contributing to the stability and flourishing of the Jewish state, thereby lending one’s life a greater sense of wholeness. Furthermore, without denying the validity or value of Diaspora Jewish life, Rav Lichtenstein views Israel as the epicenter of Jewish life and the locus of the Jewish future. Above all, the sanctity of the land, even when understood in halakhic and not mythological terms, lends a special quality to religious observance in Eretz Yisrael and fosters a sense of being nestled within the divine presence. Indeed, these dimensions of Eretz Yisrael and of Jewish national life within it exerted a powerful pull on Rav Lichtenstein, to which he responded by making *aliyah*.¹⁸ These elements are not foreign to Rav Soloveitchik, but neither does he highlight them. Professor Blidstein aptly comments:

*This image of the State of Israel as a potential embodiment of the broadest ethical and societal vocation of Judaism, a vocation based on a broad covenantal commitment, is perceived by many students of the Rav to be implicit in his teaching. Curiously (and regrettably?), this positive and challenging image does not recur frequently in the published texts available to us.*¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., 309.

¹⁷ *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 150. See also *Family Redeemed*, 64.

¹⁸ See his “On Aliya: The Uniqueness of Living in Eretz Yisrael,” *Alei Etzion* 12 (5764), 15–22, available online at www.haretzion.org/alei.htm. In an essay exemplifying the Rav’s demand that his students think for themselves, that they be *talmidim* and not *hasidim*, R. Nathaniel Helfgot goes on to enumerate other components of Jewish national existence undeveloped by the Rav: Jewish autonomy as expressing *malkhut Yisrael*, the ability to apply Halakhah to national issues on all levels of governmental responsibility, the potential to develop a polity guided by Jewish values, and the consequent ability to serve as a “light to the nations.” See his “On the Shoulders of a Giant: Looking Back, Yet Looking Forward,” *Tradition* 39:3 (Fall 2006), 31–37.

¹⁹ Blidstein, *op cit.*

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik saw himself in light of the biblical Joseph. The latter's constant preoccupation was to safeguard the continuity of Abraham's tradition when relocated into a different civilization. In the Rav's reading, Canaan and Egypt are not just locations but cultures—the simple and old vs. the sophisticated and new. In our day, the Rav felt, the tasks of perpetuating and applying the Torah within new environments would inevitably need to be pursued in both Israel and the Diaspora. He devoted his untiring efforts and creative energies to pursuing these tasks in the leading country of the West. At the same time, he involved himself and expended great concern in ensuring the Torah's continuity in the State of Israel and in shaping the character and future of the young state. It is now up to the next generation to carry forward his work in both centers of Jewish life.

For Further Reference

1. **The mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel:** Rambam does not include this commandment in his *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, but Ramban counts it as one of the mitzvot that should be added to Rambam's list (#4). While Rav Kook's followers make much of this Ramban, seeing it as a guiding factor for their socio-political activities and as a cornerstone of their worldview, Rav Yehuda Amital points out (in his book *Commitment and Complexity* [Jersey City, 2008], 106) that Rav Kook mentions it only once in his voluminous writings. It would seem that neither Rav Kook nor Rav Soloveitchik regards this as more than a mitzvah among mitzvot; therefore, Rav Kook bases his extraordinarily high evaluation of Jewish sovereignty upon other considerations, while Rav Soloveitchik does not assign sovereignty a privileged position among Jewish values. However, Rav Kook's disciples, with a narrower halakhic focus than their master, tethered their understanding of the overriding significance of Jewish sovereignty to this mitzvah (whose status is disputed among *Rishonim*) and thereby elevated "possession and settlement" to a preeminent place among mitzvot.

Hallel on Yom ha-Atzma'ut: There are various reports as to the Rav's position regarding the recitation of Hallel on Yom ha-Atzma'ut. However, even if we were to assume that Rav Soloveitchik opposed its recitation, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein cogently points out that one cannot derive from this ritual question any conclusions regarding the Rav's attitude toward Zionism or the State of Israel (see his "Rav Soloveitchik's Approach to Zionism," *Alei Etzion* 14 [5766], 21–24). He compares this to the opinion of the "eighty-five elders, among them several prophets," who regretfully felt that, for halakhic reasons, they could not acquiesce to Mordecai's and Esther's request to establish a new mitzvah of reading the *megillah* (*Yerushalmi, Megillah* 1:7). Does this mean that they denied that a miracle had taken place in Shushan, or that the great salvation of the Jews from Haman's plot had been unimportant? Analogously, Rav Lichtenstein suggests that Rav Soloveitchik recognized the magnitude of the miracle in his day, but did not necessarily feel that Halakhah warranted the creation of new rituals. Note also that Rav Soloveitchik felt that the true meaning and significance of events would become apparent only with the passage of time. Therefore, just as the Sages waited some time before declaring Hanukkah a holiday (*Shabbat* 21b), so too we should not be hasty in formulating new rituals after Israel's founding or after its astonishing victory in the Six Day War (reported by R. David Hartman, *Conflicting Visions* [New York, 1990], 23, 158; and *Nefesh ha-Rav*, 94).

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