

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

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Dedicated in memory of Louis & Mollie Simons and Harry & Anna Eisenhofer



ישיבת רבנו יצחק אלחנן

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

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Table Talk: Quotes and Questions for Family Discussions

Prepared by Rabbi Marc Eichenbaum

Yeshiva University's Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein
Center for Values and Leadership

The Holiness of Israel: When reading the following sources, reflect on what makes Israel holy. Is there holiness to the land itself? Is the holiness related to the mitzvot performed there? Are the relatively mundane activities done in Israel imbued with holiness as well?

Ketubot 110b

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.

Ramban (1194–1270), Vayikra 18:25

The Sages stated in the Sifri: “[If your hearts lead you astray and you serve and bow to other gods] and you will quickly be banished [from the good land that God gives you]” (Devarim 11:17): Even though I [God] am exiling you from the Land of Israel, you should still perform mitzvot so that when you return they will not be new and unfamiliar to you. An analogy: a man is upset with his wife and sends her to her father’s house. He says to her: “Keep wearing your jewelry, so that when you return they will not be new and unfamiliar to you.”

Rabbi Moshe Alpert

Describing the first Israeli elections to the Knesset in 1949 (quoted in Vered Kellner, *Longings and Disappointments: A Voter in Exile in New York*)

At 5:35 AM we woke up, my wife, my brother Reb Shimon Leib and my brother-in-law Reb Natanel Solduchil. And after we drank coffee we put on Shabbat clothing in honor of this great and holy day, because 'This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be happy on it.' After 2,000 or more years of exile, you could say that from the six days of Creation until this day, we have not merited to see a day like this, that we are holding elections in a Jewish state. Shehechiyanu! Blessed is the One that kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this day! So we went to the voting station near Chabashim Street with our identity cards in hand. With great and mighty joy we walked the short way there, and the entire way I walked like it was Simchat Torah and I was circling with a Torah scroll, because I was holding the identity card of our new Jewish State in my hand. ... Then the holiest moment of my life arrived. The moment that neither my father nor my grandfather had the privilege to experience in their lifetimes. Only me, in my time, in my lifetime, did I merit to experience such a holy and pure moment as this. ...What joy for me and my portion!

Israel's Role in the World: How does Israel relate to the Jewish people's mission to the world? What does Israel represent to the world? In what ways is Israel living up to this responsibility? In which areas can she improve?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), Bereishit 48:3–4

The Jewish nation is to represent agriculture as well as commerce, militarism as well as culture and learning. The Jewish people will be a nation of farmers, a nation of businessmen, a nation of soldiers and a nation of science.

Thereby, as a model nation, to establish the truth that the one great personal and national task which God revealed in His Torah is not dependent on any particular kind of talent or character trait, but that the whole of humanity in all its shades of diversity can equally find its calling in one common spiritual and moral mission and outlook in life.

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904)

Old New Land (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), p. 248

The spell of the Sabbath was over the Holy City, now freed from the filth, noise and vile odors that had so often revolted devout pilgrims of all creeds when, after long and trying journeys, they reached their goal. In the old days they had to endure many disgusting sights before they could reach their shrines. All was different now. ... the lanes and the streets were beautifully paved and cared for. ... Moslem, Jewish, and Christian welfare institutions, hospitals, clinics stood side by side. In the middle of a great square was the splendid Peace Palace, where international congresses of peace-lovers and scientists were held, for Jerusalem was now a home for all the best strivings of the human spirit: for Faith, Love, Knowledge.

Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952)

Address at the opening session of Israeli Constituent Assembly, February 15, 1949

Today we stand on the threshold of a new era. We leave the dawn light of provisional authority and enter the full sunshine of ordinary democratic life. ... Let us not be over arrogant if we say that this is a great day in the history of the world. In this hear a message of hope and good cheer goes forth from this place in the Sacred City to all oppressed people and to all who are struggling for freedom and equality.

The Fulfillment of Prophecies : Do you see the State of Israel as the fulfillment of the Torah's prophecies? If yes, which prophecies have been fulfilled and which have yet to be fulfilled? Do you see God's hand in the founding of Israel and in your personal life?

Yirmiyahu, 31: 16–17

Restrain your voice from weeping,
Your eyes from shedding tears;
For there is reward for your labor...
And there is hope for your future—
Your children shall return to their land.

Tehillim, 126

When the Lord brought back the captivity of Ziyyon,
we were like men in a dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
and our tongue with singing:
then they said among the nations, The Lord has done great things for them.
The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.
Bring back our captivity, O Lord, like the streams in the Negev.
They who sow in tears shall reap in joy.
He who goes weeping on his way, bearing a bag of seed,
shall come back with a joyful shout, carrying his sheaves.

Golda Meir (1898–1978)

My Life (New York: Dell Publishing, 1975), pp. 250–251

Sometimes I used to go to Lydda and watch the planes from Aden touch down, marveling at the endurance and faith of their exhausted passengers. "Had you ever seen a plane before?" I asked one bearded old man. "No," he answered. "But weren't you very frightened flying?" I persisted. "No," he said again, very firmly. "It is all written in the Bible, in Isaiah, 'They shall mount up with wings of eagles.' And standing there on the airfield, he recited the entire passage to me, his face lit with the joy of a fulfilled prophecy — and of the journey's end.

Michael Oren

Six Days of War (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 307

[Commander] Motta [Gur] sat on the ground and gazed at the walled city. It was a bright, cool morning, and the sun was on his back. The gold and silver domes of the Temple Mount glowed before him. He closed his eyes, as if in prayer. He was about to enter the Jewish pantheon, along with King David, who'd conquered Jerusalem and in turned it into his capital; Judah the Maccabee, who'd purified the Temple after its desecration by the Hellenists; Bar Kochba, who'd thrown himself against Rome and lost the Jews' last desperate battle for Jerusalem. Then came the centuries of enforced separation, landscape transformed into memory. And now the landscape was reemerging from dream, shimmering back into tangible reach.

The Inherent Connection between Israel and the Jewish People: How is the Jewish people's relationship to Israel different to their connection to other lands they have lived in throughout history? Is this connection a spiritual, historical, or social one? What connection do you feel most strongly when you are in Israel?

Rashi (1040–1105), Bereishit 1:1

In the beginning (Genesis 1:1): Said Rabbi Isaac: It was not necessary to begin here. Rather the Torah should have started with “This month is to you,” (Exodus 12:2) which is the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded, (since the main purpose of the Torah is its commandments). Why did God commence with “In the beginning?” Because of (the verse) “The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations” (Psalm 111:6). For if the nations of the world should say to Israel, “You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan,” the people of Israel can reply, “The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created and gave it to whomever He deemed proper. When God wished, He gave it to them, and when God wished, He took it away from them and gave it to us.”

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaKohen Kook (1865–1935)

Orot, Lights from Darkness, Land of Israel, Chapter 1

The land of Israel is not an external thing, an external national acquisition, a means to the goal of general unity and strengthening of the physical or even spiritual. The land of Israel is an intrinsic section of the nation, attached to it with a living bond, entwined with its existence in internal uniqueness.

It is therefore impossible to explain the uniqueness of the sanctity of the Land of Israel, to actualize the depths of love for her, in any humanly rational way. It is only through the divine spirit which is on the nation as a whole, through the natural spiritual nature which exists in the soul of Israel, which spreads out through contemplating the Land of Israel as an external value which serves only the purpose of uniting the nation, even for the sake of enabling the Jewish idea in exile, guarding its form, strengthening faith and reverence and strengthening practical mitzvot in their proper form, does not produce durable fruit. This foundation is rotten, compared to the sacred strength of the Land of Israel. True strengthening of the Jewish idea in exile will only come via deep embedding in the Land of Israel; via yearning for the Land of Israel, [the Jewish idea] will continually receive all of its independent traits.

Anticipating of redemption is the force which maintains Jewry in exile, and the Judaism of the Land of Israel is the redemption itself...

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (1948–2020)

Future Tense (New York: Schocken Books, 2012) pp. 46–47

In Israel, Jewish life is a community of fate. There, Jews, from the most secular to the most pious, suffer equally

from war and terror, and benefit equally from prosperity and peace. Judaism, in Israel, is a presence you breathe, not just a religion you practise. In Israel as nowhere else, Jewishness is part of the public domain, in the language, the landscape, the calendar. There you can stand amid the ruins and relics of towns that were living communities in the time of the Bible and feel the full, astonishing sweep of time across which the Jewish people wrestled with its fate as Jacob once wrestled with the angel. And there you become conscious, in the faces you see and the accents you hear, of the astonishing diversity of Jews from every country and culture, brought together in the great ingathering as once, in Ezekiel's vision, the dismembered fragments of a broken people joined together and came to life again. That is why, for Diaspora Jews, spending time in Israel is an essential and transformative experience of Jewish peoplehood and why Birthright, the American programme aimed at sending all young Jews to Israel, is so successful. At the same time, it is equally important that young Israelis spend time in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. There they discover what it is to live Judaism as a covenant of faith, something many of them have never fully experienced before.

Longing for Israel: Throughout the centuries Jews have longed to return to Israel. Which elements of the following poems speak to you the most? How is our longing for Israel present in our prayer services? What is the value of continuing to long for Israel even after we have regained her?

R' Yehuda HaLevi (1075–1141)

“My Heart is the East,” Translated from the Hebrew by A.Z. Foreman

My heart is in the east, and the rest of me at the edge of the west.

How can I taste the food I eat? How can it give me pleasure?

How can I keep my promise now, or fulfill the vows I've made

While Zion remains in the Cross's reign, and I in Arab chains?

With pleasure I would leave behind all the good things of Spain,

If only I could gaze on the dust of our ruined Holy Place.

Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934),

“To the Bird,” Translated from the Hebrew by Jonathan A. Lipnick

Greetings to you, kind bird, upon your return

From the hot lands back to my window

Back to your pleasing voice, My soul perishes
In the winter when you leave.

Sing, tell me, my beautiful bird,
About the wonders of the distant land.
Is it full of evils and hardships also
There in the hot beautiful land?

Will you bring me regards from my brothers in Zion, From
my brothers far and near?
O happy they are! Do they know
How I suffer, O suffer, from grief? ...

Tell me, my bird, the secret of all secrets
And what did they whisper of their prey?
Did they offer comfort or hope for days
When its fruit like the Lebanon will roar?

And my brothers the workers who sow with tears,
Have they harvested the omer with joy?
O that I had wings to fly to the land
Where the almond and date-palm blossom!
What shall I tell you, good bird?
What do you expect to hear from my mouth?
From this cold corner of the earth you will not hear songs,
Only dirges and sighs and wailing.

Shall I tell you about the hardships
Which are known in the land of the living?
O who will count the number of passing sorrows,
The approaching and raging troubles?

Fly, my bird, to your mountain, your desert
You are happy for you have left my tent.
Were you to live with me, O wing of song,
You too would cry bitter tears at my fate.

But weeping and tears will bring no cure
These cannot heal my wounds.
My eyes have grown dim, a sack filled with tears
My heart has been struck like a weed.

Now the tears and the bruises have stopped
But the end of my sorrow has not yet come.
Greetings my dear bird upon your return
Oh please cry aloud for joy!

Rachel “HaMeshoreret” Bluwstein (1890–1931), “Perhaps,” Palestine-Israel Journal, Vol. 3 Nos. 3 and 4 (1996).

Perhaps it was never so.

Perhaps

I never woke early and went to the fields
To labor in the sweat of my brow

Nor in the long blazing days
Of harvest
On top of the wagon laden with sheaves,
Made my voice ring with song
Nor bathed myself clean in the calm
Blue water
Of my Kinneret. O, my Kinneret,
Were you there or did I only dream?

Israel as a Refuge: What was life like before we had Israel to turn to in times of persecution? How has Israel protected Jews throughout the world? How has this protection influenced our psyches?

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993)

Kol Dodi Dofek (translated by David Z. Gordon, 2006) Six Knocks

Eight years ago, in the midst of a night of the terrors of Majdanek, Treblinka, and Buchenwald; in a night of gas chambers and crematoria; in a night of total divine self-concealment; in a night ruled by the devil of doubt and destruction who sought to sweep the Lover from her own tent into the Catholic Church; in a night of continuous searching for the Beloved — on that very night the Beloved appeared. The Almighty, who was hiding in His splendid sanctum, suddenly appeared and began to beckon at the tent of the Lover, who tossed and turned on her bed beset by convulsions and the agonies of hell. Because of the beating and knocking at the door of the mournful Lover, the State of Israel was born. How many times did the Beloved knock on the door of the Lover?

Dr. Erica Brown,

Blue and White Not Red, October 15, 2015

So what would the Middle East look like if there were no Israel? What would our Jewish Diaspora community do were there no refuge in times of despair? Think of the fate of Jews from Yemen and Syria, Russia and Ethiopia, France and the Ukraine — to name but a few. They found a friend in Israel when they could no longer live in comfort or safety where they were. Israel does not say to Jews in need worldwide, "It's complicated." Instead, the message is, "Welcome Home." It's time for us to think about what loyalty means, even a complicated loyalty — if that's what it must be for some. It must fundamentally involve our love, our allegiance, our pride, our support and our willingness to put aside differences when the country is in pain. Blue, white and red cannot forever be the colors of a flag stained in blood.



A DISCUSSION ABOUT ISRAEL AND ALIYAH

Introduction: We asked four panelists to provide insights and guidance about Aliyah. This roundtable discussion recognizes that Aliyah is a very personal decision and each family has its own set of factors to consider. Yet these insights are valuable, not only for those considering Aliyah, but even for those who can't, at this time, see it as a possibility, and for those who are already living in Israel.

Rebbetzin Meira Davis is Director of Rebbetzins' Programming at RIETS. She served alongside her husband, Rabbi Edward Davis, at Young Israel of Hollywood for 36 years.

Rabbi Chaim Eisenstein is a Ra"m (Rabbinic Faculty) in the YU Israel Kollel and the Rabbi of Beis Medrash Mevakshei Emes in the Mishkafayim neighborhood of Ramat Beit Shemesh.

Mrs. Aliza Pilichowski is the Mayor of Mitzpe Yericho.

Rabbi Larry Rothwachs is the Director of Professional Rabbimics at RIETS and Rabbi of Congregation Beth Aaron in Teaneck, NJ. He accepted the position of Rabbi of the new Maromei Shemesh community that is being built in Ramat Beit Shemesh.

Please provide some background about your connection to the Land of Israel and Aliyah

Rebbetzin Davis: In 1935, my mother's family fled from Germany to Palestine, where many of her European relatives had emigrated earlier. That sealed her love for Eretz Yisrael even though they later needed to emigrate to the United States for *parnasa* purposes. My mother, AH, inculcated a strong love for Israel, Zionism and Israeli culture in her children. My husband

and I had planned to make Aliyah at the conclusion of 10 years in his first Rabbinical position in Richmond, VA. In anticipation of this move, we spoke only Hebrew to our children. Ultimately, we were faced with some special educational needs which could not be addressed in Israel at that time. We moved to Hollywood, FL and became very invested in the physical and spiritual growth of our small new congregation and community. Two of our four children who now reside in Israel made Aliyah when they finished their seminary programs. The other two

made Aliyah with their families when their oldest children were entering second and third grades. Two of our grandsons whose parents and siblings reside in the United States made Aliyah after the army portion of their yeshiva's hesder program, with their next brother following in their footsteps this summer. A few years ago, my sister made Aliyah and recently remarried to a long-time American Oleh. They are all very happy and fulfilled living in Israel. My husband and I spend three months a year in Israel, though have not officially made Aliyah.

Rabbi Eisenstein: During the first few years of our marriage, my wife and I thought that we would be spending the rest of our lives teaching Torah in America until the coming of Mashiach. We dreamed about the prospect of living in Eretz Yisrael, but never considered it a reality. Then I got an offer to teach at Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh, and it was a great opportunity, so we made Aliyah with our three young children and have been living here for the last 19 years.

Mrs. Pilichowski: My parents dreamt of making Aliyah for as long as I remember. My father would sing “*shirei am*” with us and listen to Israeli singers like Naomi Shemer and Uzi Chitman on our record player. My mother would long for us to be on a kibbutz and become true *chalutzim*. Making Aliyah was a part of our connection to Am Yisrael. My parents fully integrated the emotions of “*Am Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael*” (The Jewish people observing the Torah of Israel in the Land of Israel). When my husband Uri and I met, we knew that we wanted to live in Israel and raise our family here. We were privileged to study in Israel right after we got married before moving to America where we lived in Los Angeles and Boca Raton. Both of these communities, under the leadership of Rabbi Steven Weil and Rabbi Efrem Goldberg, developed deep connections to Eretz Yisrael. It was always understood that we would one day come back to Israel. We spoke to our children daily about the excitement and belonging that we longed for in Eretz Yisrael. When an opportunity provided itself, it was a natural progression to move back to Israel.

Rabbi Rothwachs: My wife and I both thought about Aliyah when we were newly married and planning our future together. However, as our professional careers evolved, first in Jewish education and then in the rabbinate,

we ultimately came to the conclusion that remaining in the U.S. was the most appropriate choice for our family. We recently announced that we hope to make Aliyah in a few years. While there is certainly some personal motivation involved — two of our married children are living in Eretz Yisrael and a third has plans to do so soon — we have decided to move in this direction at this time, as we have been offered an opportunity to spearhead a new community in Israel. Being able to fulfill our personal dream by making Aliyah, live closer to children and grandchildren, and continue to engage in community building, presents us with an opportunity that we have decided to seize.

Please provide some general observations that may be helpful for someone considering Aliyah.

Rebbetzin Davis: Learning Hebrew can help with an ultimately successful Aliyah. It can be the key to communicating with one's surroundings, understanding the culture, feeling more connected to the people and the Land, and feeling an overall sense of belonging. Our grandchildren who are being raised in predominantly non-Anglo areas speak English with very strong Israeli accents. The ones in heavily Anglo communities speak English with American accents, even the younger ones who were born in Israel.

The more planning that is done in every area, the more successful the Aliyah experience can be. Prepare your family, with conversations about some of the big challenges: six-day work and school week, no Sundays off, time zone differences, missing family members who are far away, lower salaries, adapting to a new culture, educational system and healthcare system, finding desirable and affordable

housing, security concerns. Lowering expectations and being flexible helps.

It's important that family in Israel and outside of Israel are familiar with WhatsApp and Zoom, which can provide incredible and meaningful “visiting” opportunities with many family members and friends.

Rabbi Eisenstein: We have to start with the perspective that Eretz Yisrael is the best place in the world to live. No matter which stream of Orthodoxy speaks to you, there are opportunities for growth that are unparalleled elsewhere. For growth oriented people, there are so many diverse communities with a focus on Torah and spirituality.

That said, making Aliyah does come with challenges. First and foremost is *chinuch*. The education system here is significantly different than in the U.S. That in itself would not be a reason to forgo Aliyah. However, if one is coming with children between the ages of 9 and 17, there is a significant concern that the child will have a difficult time adjusting. I personally have told families not to come in certain situations because of this issue. Other families have moved here with pre-teens and teens and were successful. It is really important to do a lot of research and speak to mentors and rebbeim who have experience with this before deciding on Aliyah when one has children this age.

Second, in Eretz Yisrael, we merit to live in the palace of the king. In the palace of the King, there is a different emphasis — there is more of a focus on spiritual matters and less of a focus on materialism. We sometimes see ads in magazines by developers or other proprietors who try to present the possibility of living an American lifestyle in Eretz Yisrael. For the most part, that is not true. The homes are often smaller, cars are often more expensive and the salaries that people earn don't usually allow for that same

lifestyle. All in all, it is a worthwhile sacrifice to be able to live in the palace of the King. Yet it is important for those considering Aliyah to be aware that they will be living a more modest lifestyle in Eretz Yisrael.

When we made Aliyah through Nefesh B’Nefesh, they showed us a PowerPoint presentation about Aliyah that gave a more realistic view of what to expect when making Aliyah. One of the points that was made — which brings us to our third point — is that we should be aware that we are moving to the Middle East. Everyone is aware of the security challenges in Eretz Yisrael and the prospect of terror, *chas veshalom*. HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave us Eretz Yisrael as a place where we have the opportunity to reach great spiritual heights while also being in a place where there is a lot of tension, surrounded by people who want to destroy us. That reality creates a hardened culture that also requires adjustment. It is a culture that pervades many parts of life, from the schooling of children through professional life, and even daily interactions in the supermarket and on the bus. Israel life is truly like a *sabra* that is hard on the outside and soft on the inside. It is a challenging adjustment, but one that is worthwhile in order to achieve the spiritual heights that come along with living in Eretz Yisrael.

Mrs. Pilichowski: Aliyah is, like its namesake, an elevation. It is a privilege to live in a time where it is “easy” to make Aliyah. Uri and I had always imagined that we would move to Israel and our lives would be significantly more challenging than our lives in the United States. But in reality, it is all about one’s perspective. When we moved to Israel, we had friends who had a fantastic opportunity to move to Germany. They decided, quite quickly, that an international experience for their children would be

a great educational experience. When I juxtaposed this to what I heard from many friends about their hesitations about moving to Israel, there was a striking contrast. After thousands of years of our parents and grandparents crying for the day that they could touch the Kotel, we are still hesitant about moving. There are definitely challenges when making Aliyah, but one’s perspective is the overriding rule.

How should the topic of Aliyah be addressed in the Diaspora community? What does it mean to be a Zionist living in the Diaspora?

Rebbetzin Davis: As someone who guides rebbetzins, and someone who has struggled with this personally, I can say that this is a challenging issue for many Rabbinic couples who feel they should make Aliyah, while weighing the important role they play in growing higher levels of Yiddishkeit in their communities and in outreach efforts.

In discussing this topic with one of my daughters who lives in Israel, we thought that each person knows what his or her considerations are when it comes to making Aliyah and can make an honest decision of what is best. That doesn’t make someone less of a Zionist if they live in the Diaspora. We can still support and love Israel from afar.

Rabbi Eisenstein: I think it’s important to recognize that there are people who try very hard to make Aliyah and for whatever reason are not able to do so. On the other hand, every Jew in the Diaspora should be dreaming, praying and open to the opportunity to come to Eretz Yisrael.

One of my great rebbeim, Rav Abba Bronspiegel, *zt”l*, would often tell a story of a late 19th century *rav* in Europe who went to live in Eretz Yisrael, and his congregation felt that he

was leaving them behind. Before he left, he told the apocryphal story of a Jew in Poland who was running away from a government official who constantly tormented him. On his way out of town, this official caught him and asked where he is running, to which the Jew replied that he was going to celebrate a holiday called “Yom Pleitaseinu” (the day of our escape). The official ran in to town and saw that no other Jews were getting ready for a holiday, so he went over to one of the other Jewish townspeople and asked why Yankel said that he is celebrating Yom Pleitaseinu. This other Jew was sharp and figured out what was happening, so he answered that Yom Pleitaseinu is a personal holiday. Each Jew has a day when he gets a message to celebrate Yom Pleitaseinu and Yankel just got that message. This *rav* told his congregation that his Yom Pleitaseinu has come, and it was time for him to go to Eretz Yisrael. We all have to look out for the call of our Yom Pleitaseinu, which may take time to come, or which may come to us in a very subtle way, and when it does come, try to take advantage.

Mrs. Pilichowski: The term Zionism was born in the Diaspora. In many ways, Zionism is more alive in the Diaspora than in Israel itself. I feel that my upbringing in the Diaspora heightens my appreciation for my life in Israel. Yesterday, as I was driving through traffic in Jerusalem, I lamented the extra time that my trip was taking. I looked out the window at the Temple Mount and stopped my train of thought and recognized that I am living the dream of our people. Sitting in traffic in Jerusalem! Thousands of people trying to move around a flourishing city, watching the construction of more roads, infrastructure, housing, and culture all around me is invigorating! We are living in the Zionist fulfillment of our dreams. Being a Zionist in the Diaspora is powerful, but being in Israel

and being in the front seat is an even greater opportunity and I am grateful for this gift.

Rabbi Rothwachs: When publicly addressing the topic of Aliyah, I prefer to differentiate between our national/communal obligation, on the one hand, and one's individual obligation, on the other. From a national/communal perspective, there is great value in promoting Aliyah and I believe that rabbis in the Diaspora should be clear and unapologetic in their messaging. There should be no discomfort, nor hesitancy, in proclaiming the message that the future of the Jewish people is in Eretz Yisrael, and thus, as a community, we should be able to plan passionately and, when appropriate, self-reflect critically. That being said, the question of Aliyah for individuals is a very personal one, and must be respected as such. There are many different factors that are relevant to the question as to whether one should make Aliyah, and, if so, when. This reality must be met with respect and individuals who choose to live outside of Israel should be supported and their personal choice validated. Nobody should be made to feel guilty for living in the Diaspora or feel that they are less Zionist because of it.

Should I date/marry someone who doesn't have the same approach as me to Aliyah?

Rebbetzin Davis: It depends on how strongly you both feel about your positions, what each of your concerns are and if you are willing to be open and flexible. You are never going to fully agree on everything with your future of current partner. Figure out if this is a make it or break it condition for you or perhaps something you are willing to compromise on. Certainly it is easier if you are both on the same page from the beginning.

One of my daughters was speaking with her soon-to-be husband the night before the wedding and she had no interest in making Aliyah, while he was determined to do so. He asked her to express what she felt was holding her back from going. She explained that her primary concerns were learning and using the language as well as having no family there. They compromised. They would wait to make Aliyah until their oldest child was going into first grade (which they missed by a year). That would give them time to establish some work experience and savings. By the time they actually made Aliyah, the family part was less of an issue, as by then, two of her sisters and one brother as well as her husband's brother were already living in Eretz Yisrael.

Rabbi Eisenstein: When it comes to dating in general, it is more important to focus on ideals than on the details. Like talmud Torah, chesed and other attributes that people look for in a spouse, they shouldn't be hyper-focused on which yeshiva they will send their kids to or which community they will live in, but on what their ideals are. The details can be worked out later. The same is true regarding living in Eretz Yisrael. If they have the same ideals, even if one envisions making Aliyah right away and the other a few years later, they can build off of those ideals. They might make Aliyah right away, or five, ten, twenty years later, but if they share the same ideals, it will make for a healthy relationship. When looking for a spouse, one should be looking for someone to strive with in Torah, davening and chesed, but also in a longing for Eretz Yisrael.

Mrs. Pilichowski: I don't know if there are cut and dry rules for who to date or marry. I strongly believe that in a committed relationship with mutual respect (which I think is the most basic and most important part of any marriage), a couple can find the right

path and make the right decisions. I am reluctant to say that living in Israel is the only path for everyone.

Rabbi Rothwachs: If an individual comes to the conclusion that living in Eretz Yisrael is essential for their future and a "nonnegotiable" point for discussion, then this needs to be shared openly before dating. In this type of situation, it would, in my opinion, be unfair to enter a relationship without disclosing this expectation, creating the potential for resentment down the line.

All of that being said, if one would ask me if making Aliyah should be on his/her list of "dealbreakers," I would advise them that this not be put on the list of critical goals while choosing a life's partner. Unlike other important values and personality traits, this is an area where there should be flexibility and openness. If the couple discovers that they are compatible and aligned in the most important of ways, I would be confident that they will ultimately decide how best to resolve any disagreements in this regard.

How does one navigate family conflicts relating to the decision to make Aliyah, both in terms of the nuclear family (e.g. one child is resistant to Aliyah) or the extended family (e.g. parents or siblings who might be hurt)?

Rebbetzin Davis: If the issue is in the immediate family, this is a difficult situation which requires a lot of patience and discussion with those not on board — specifically having them articulate their concerns and/or fears of making Aliyah — which can be very real and valid. Some issues may be resolved beforehand with creative thinking and further information for the child, while validating their

concerns. An older child may opt to stay in America in a mutually acceptable arrangement with a trial period that could be extended depending on how it is working for everyone. We really need to daven for Hashem's help and guidance.

Regarding the extended family, the concerns should be acknowledged, not dismissed. Healthy communication, sharing feelings and listening to and validating each other's positions can pave the way to creation of ways to keep in stronger touch with each other and to promote understanding by all. Propose some means that can allow more connection on a regular basis, such as monthly family Zooms.

On a personal level, our nearest child lives 200 miles from us in Florida. None of our other children are closer than 1,100 miles from us. Four of them have made Aliyah. Our other four children and their families are in the northeastern United States. Three of our northern grandchildren have made Aliyah independently. My husband and I feel *bishvili nivra* WhatsApp, which enables our entire family, wherever they are, to share texts, news, pictures and videos at any given moment — a treasured gift. With additional audio-visual technology, i.e. Zoom, FaceTime, Google options, we can “visit” and “see” each other in real time. A true bracha. For me, this reinforces the much greater sacrifice of people who made Aliyah years ago and the difficulty for their out-of-Israel family to be in contact with each other.

Mrs. Pilichowski: Moving anywhere is very difficult and can have detrimental effects on both the nuclear and extended family. That being said, it can provide other opportunities. Most decisions are not black and white, including leaving family. My advice to families that are even considering Aliyah at any point, is to open the conversation and always keep it on the table. It is important to share with both your children and your parents and siblings your love of Israel and why you long to be in Israel. One of my close friends thought that I was crazy for moving to Israel. She encouraged me to stay in the United States where life was just “easier.” After lobbying her point for many weeks, she said, “I know that you won’t ever listen to what I am saying, because your heart is in Israel.” After she expressed this, she recognized that some decisions are more important than a logical analysis. One of my colleagues who was relocated outside of Israel and was deeply saddened by her departure told me, “When someone comes to Jerusalem, a piece of Jerusalem is left in their soul that they have to return. It is like a magnetic pull. I know that I will be back, because my soul will make me come back.” Understanding that this is our home will always pull us back. Express these feelings always to the ones you love and will miss and more importantly, express them to yourself so that you know that you will come home.

Rabbi Rothwachs : Making Aliyah when a child, especially pre-adolescent

or adolescent, is not on board, carries the potential of significant risk. I would certainly not recommend uprooting such a child(ren) without first seeking objective advice from qualified professionals, including mental health counselors and Jewish educators. In some cases, the underlying cause of the child’s resistance may be anxiety due to the anticipated changes or fear of the unknown, in which case, the issues could perhaps be properly managed. At times however, the presenting resistance may run much deeper and, if not appropriately honored and correctly addressed, the potential results can be catastrophic. In certain cases, it would most certainly be a reason to put Aliyah on hold.

If the resistance presents from beyond the nuclear family, while there may be profound sensitivities at play, prospective Olim need not necessarily put their plans on hold. On the one hand, it is quite understandable that members of one’s extended family may find it quite challenging to support their loved ones’ plans to move to another country. Some may even dramatically react to such news with painful expressions of abandonment. While such reactions must be received with understanding and sensitivity, appropriate boundaries must be established when making major life decisions. In my experience, even when the initial resistance may be quite intense, reconciliation and acceptance ultimately follow.



RABBI SOLOVEITCHIK THE ZIONIST

"Rabbi, if only I knew our suffering was paving the way for the Messiah," cried a Jewish refugee to R. Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brest-Litovsk shortly before his death in World War I—era Warsaw. R. Hayyim rebuffed him, questioning whether it was self-evident that the advent of the Redeemer justified the mass carnage and horrific suffering that came with the war.

One of R. Hayyim's grandsons was my mentor, R. Joseph Soloveitchik. The thirtieth anniversary of his death is being commemorated this Passover. He became known in North America as "the Rav," meaning the one preeminent rabbi. He devoted most of his creative efforts to advancing his grandfather's innovative approach to Talmud study, known as the "Brisker method," a conceptual approach to legal reasoning. But he broke with family opposition to secular studies, getting a PhD in philosophy at the University of Berlin and writing theological works that have earned the attention of Jewish and non-Jewish readers.

He never publicly acknowledged any personal doubts or misgivings about this choice, despite the controversy it provoked. The same held true privately, at least in my conversations with him. He also broke with the family's opposition to Zionism, serving for decades as honorary president of the Religious Zionists of America. Rejection of Zionism was widespread among many great Talmudists of his father's and grandfather's generations. He openly allowed that going his own way caused him a great deal of soul-searching and pain. His Zionist affiliation marked a departure from those he most esteemed.

Secular journalists typically ascribe pockets of rigorously Orthodox antagonism to Zionism to the belief that Jews will only govern themselves in the land of Israel when the Messiah comes. This explanation may hold true for some Hasidic groups, but not for non-Hasidim. Lithuanian rabbis, among whom the Soloveitchiks stand very tall, objected to the Zionist movement

institutionalized by Theodor Herzl in the 1890s for a straightforward reason: Its leadership was not God-fearing. The Rav's grandfather, R. Hayyim, associated briefly with the new, strictly Orthodox Agudat Israel party, which was formed in 1912. Agudists were critical of the Zionists to varying degrees. R. Hayyim's scions eventually turned away from Aguda, deeming it overly politicized. In the 1930s the young R. Joseph Soloveitchik served as one of Aguda's Torah authorities in North America. If not an anti-Zionist, he did not identify openly with the Zionist movement.

During World War II and its aftermath, he shifted from Aguda to the Mizrahi, which was a religious Zionist party. This turn came about because he recognized that old-fashioned methods of safeguarding Jewish existence were not equal to twentieth-century threats. In the modern world, one cannot rely on the tolerance extended by majorities to religious minorities in their midst. It was an age of mass movements and

angry mobs, and the time-tested Jewish strategy of appealing to the higher sentiments or narrower self-interest of the ruling powers did no good. The Jewish experience of Nazism naturally led to profound reassessments. The aspiration, and to the extent possible, the achievement, of Jewish self-rule and self-defense were now thought essential to survival, and to the self-respect without which bare physical survival is undignified. The State of Israel, in the Rav's opinion, did a great deal to improve the state of the Jewish people. This practical, historically informed line of thinking is how I understand his evolution into the spokesman of religious Zionism I encountered as a young man.

Rabbi Soloveitchik's outlook remains influential among religious Zionists. But in all likelihood it is a minority position. Most religious Zionists adopt a more eschatologically tinged theology of history. The dominant figure here is the great Talmudist and mystic Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, who died in 1935. He served as chief rabbi of the Ashkenazi community in Palestine. For him and for subsequent generations of acolytes, the return of the Jews to their homeland was not merely, or even primarily, a solution to the physical menace of an anti-Semitic world. It was a spiritual renaissance which could not but lead to messianic fulfillment.

Rabbi Hayyim saw secular Jewish nationalism as the sworn enemy of Orthodoxy. His grandson saw it as a valuable, creative, and useful movement with much to contribute to Jewish welfare. But the shift is perhaps less than it seems on the surface. The Rav continued to laud the positive achievements of secular Zionism although its ideology stood in conflict with adherence to God as Orthodoxy comprehends it. The more messianic tendency in religious Zionism of the sort inspired by R. Kook, by contrast,

celebrated the radical transformation of Jewish spirituality. It exalted the state and its military prowess in a way that R. Soloveitchik could not. It interpreted the secularism of leading Zionist activists, many of whom were inspired by socialist or liberal-nationalist eschatologies more than by biblical ones, as unwitting agents of divine historical cunning. Its expectations of the Jewish state were and remain to this day ebullient, and the depths of disappointment when history confounds expectation are equally profound.

R. Soloveitchik liked to recount the exchange between R. Hayyim and his fellow Jew in Warsaw because he realized it provided the key to his decidedly mundane brand of Zionism. If divine providence is irrevocably committed to cosmic redemption through politics, and if being on the right side of that history is the highest moral imperative, then the price to be paid in blood and suffering is a secondary consideration. For the Rav and the tradition he continued even as he diverged from it, the human cost cannot be ignored. This led him to insist upon the distinction between judgments of political prudence and theological claims about the working out of the divine plan. He was a religious man who was a Zionist, not someone who wanted Zionism to become a religion.

On the rare occasions when he made pronouncements on Israeli affairs, the lesson of that anecdote always seemed to be in the background. In 1968, at the height of the euphoria that followed Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, he ruled that decisions about concessions of land for peace should be left to military experts, not to rabbis. He said this in spite of his conviction that most of the land taken by the Israeli army is part of the biblical land of Israel and that occupying it fulfills a divine commandment. His point: The safety of the current residents of Israel should be

paramount, and Israel's military leaders are the most well-informed about the pros and cons of which positions to hold and which to abandon. Although he was skeptical about the prospects for peace, he went on the record to affirm that compromising Israeli rights was advisable for the sake of a genuine peace.

In 1982, Lebanese Christian militia allied to Israel perpetrated massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. This time the Rav demanded that Prime Minister Menachem Begin appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate Israel's failure to prevent the massacres. Carnage and suffering make a claim upon a Torah-informed conscience.

Do such interventions make him a liberal, as some would say? This distorts more than it clarifies. It would be more accurate to think of R. Soloveitchik's political declarations as profoundly conservative. In the course of his life he moved from the anti-Zionist to the Zionist camp. But then, from within religious Zionism, so to speak, he criticized the transformation of politics into the anticipation of a messianic future.

The last two centuries are marked by a great thirst for messianic fulfillment. The goal has sometimes been material welfare, sometimes egalitarianism, or universal love, or national self-expression, or some combination of ideals. Often this has promoted rebellion against traditional religion, which is viewed as a brake on transformational idealism. At other times the language and passions of traditional religion have been mobilized, usually one-sidedly, on behalf of idealistic yearnings. In such times, it is vital that we keep faith with the eternal present of religious doctrine as manifest in the life of study, prayer, and interpersonal action. In this, as in so many other areas, my teacher was his grandfather's heir.



RAV SOLOVEITCHIK ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

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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 Mizrahi 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 Mizrahi religious Zionists ... My links with the Mizrahi grew gradually; I had my doubts about the validity of the Mizrahi 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

Mizrahi 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)¹

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

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).² 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.³ By helping establish Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel and building Torah institutions there, the Mizrahi 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 Mizrahi 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

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.”

Mizrahi 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 Mizrahi’s position that Torah can and should engage the world, that it can meet any challenge and be applied in any circumstance.⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶ Furthermore, he believed that divine providence had decreed that in the dispute between Religious Zionists and anti-Zionists, the Religious Zionists had been correct.⁷ 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 Mizrahi was based not only on its 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.⁸

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.⁹ 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.¹⁰

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 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.¹¹ 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.”¹²

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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

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 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.”¹⁵ 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-arets, 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.¹⁶

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*.¹⁷ 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.*¹⁸

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.

2. 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).

Endnotes

1. Actually, the Rav's father had earlier associated himself with Mizrahi when, in 1920, he became head of religious studies at the Mizrahi-affiliated Takhkemoni Rabbinical Seminary in Warsaw. The question of the exact timing of the Rav's move from Agudah to Mizrahi 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.

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

3. *Five Addresses*, 31–33.

4. *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).

5. *Kol Dodi Dofek*, 70–71.

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

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

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

I see two elements in the Mizrahi: (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.

9. 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.

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

11. 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.

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

13. 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 *hekhsher mitzvah*, to the attainment of the larger goals of justice and divine worship. See his article, "Leha'avir Gilulim min ha-Aretz," *Alon Shevut* 145 (5755), 13–23.

14. "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.

15. *Ibid.*, 309.

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

17. 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.

18. Blidstein, *op cit*.



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Soloveitchik zt"l at <https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-joseph-b-soloveitchik/>

Celebrating 75 Years of Yeshiva University's Impact on the State of Israel

Mrs. Stephanie Strauss

Assistant Vice President for Israel Strategy and Enrollment
Executive Director, Yeshiva University in Israel
Director, S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program



THE VALUES OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY IN ISRAEL IN ACTION

We are entering one of the most reflective periods of the Jewish calendar, commencing with the holiday of Pesach and concluding with Shavuot. The exodus of *yetziyat Mitzrayim* is aptly referred to as our physical redemption and our emergence as an independent nation. Shavuot, also called *z'man matan Torateinu*, is the culmination of our nation's transcendent journey, our spiritual redemption.

The four cups of wine we drink at the Seder represent the four "*leshonot geula*" — *v'hotzeiti* (and I will take out), *v'hitzalti* (and I will save), *v'ga'alti* (and I will redeem), *v'lakachti* (and I will take as a nation), illustrating the four stages of redemption. Hashem "taking us" as his chosen people sets the stage for the apex of our peoplehood — our receiving of the Torah at Har Sinai, *k'ish echad b'lev echad* — like one person with one (united) heart.

The fifth and final stage of redemption mentioned in Sefer Shmot is *v'heveiti etchem el ha'aretz*, "and I will bring you to the land." Only after settling the land can we actualize our independence and thrive in our modern, burgeoning nation state. Israel at 75 continues to evolve through its own physical and spiritual redemptive process, and the achievements of the modern State of Israel in science, innovation and global responsibility, and of course its contributions to the world of Torah are too numerous to be listed on these pages.

At Yeshiva University, we teach our students to excel in those same areas and more. As the flagship Jewish university, we incorporate our core Torah values into our education, including Torat Tzion, the mandate to be a part of bringing redemption and to strengthen the deep bond between Yeshiva University and the State of

Israel.

The expansion of programs and offerings at Yeshiva University in Israel serves as a bidirectional portal of activity and a testament to that bond. Over the last several years, we have brought more students to Israel than ever before, to supplement and enhance their education by engaging with Israeli society and our more than 5,000 alumni.

Students can participate in a winter break trip to get a glimpse of the Israeli tech ecosystem, or they can spend a summer fully immersed in one of several experiential educational programs. Our students intern at strategic Israeli companies and non-profits, study at laboratories in Bar Ilan, run day camp for Israeli youth at risk, and participate in archeological digs.

This past fall we launched a semester abroad program to enable upper-

classmen and upper-classwomen to spend an additional YU semester in Israel, living at our Jerusalem campus, and taking a range of high-level academic courses to complement their Torah learning in our batei medrash at YUI.

All of these programs are designed to give students year-round opportunities to spend time in Israel in a uniquely YU environment, including shabbatonim, tiyulim, shiurim with YU Roshei Yeshiva, and networking and mentoring with our alumni.

As we emerged from COVID and the effects of the pandemic remained, we led a group of organizations to host a mental health expo for the Anglo community that was attended by more than 1,500 people. Recognizing the need to offer more, we opened the Jerusalem Therapy Center, a partnership between Wurzweiler School of Social Work and Amudim. The center offers therapy in English to olim, lone soldiers, gap year students and others at subsidized rates, while offering professional training seminars to clinicians and educators.

Our community outreach has intensified with compelling programming for alumni, including leveraging our professional network to assist recent olim in gaining employment. The Rosenbaum Aliyah



"Morim Shlichim" visiting from the World Zionist Organization's education department participating in a day of professional development at Yeshiva University

Incentive Fund provides additional support for alumni olim by offering loan repayment grants to those who qualify. We continue to work closely with government officials to pave the way for more YU graduates to make Aliyah; bringing the values inculcated in them at Yeshiva, and fully integrating into Israeli society.

In the other direction, we are blessed to have several Israeli faculty teaching at YU schools, including a graduate of unit 8200 who serves as director our master's program in cybersecurity, and the director of the "YU Innovation Lab," our university accelerator that gives Israeli startups entry to the U.S. markets. Each year, there are 15-30 bogrei Tzahal and sherut leumi studying at Yeshiva University, where they are

provided with scholarships and elevated to hero status.

We recently brought one hundred of the World Zionist Organization's "morim shlichim" to the Wilf campus for a day of professional development seminars with senior faculty of the Azrieli Graduate School for Jewish Education and Administration. These Israeli teachers will return to Israel imbued with a deeper understanding of Yeshiva University's unique role in the Jewish community and better equipped to meet the challenges of educating Jewish children on both sides of the ocean.

Just as YU's Israel campus serves as the conduit between Yeshiva University and the State of Israel, so too does Yom Ha'Atzmaut, as a manifestation of Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael, serve as the bridge between the physical redemption of Pesach and the spiritual redemption of Torat Yisrael and Shavuot.

Our fervent prayer for the global YU community and for all of Klal Yisrael is that the *l'shana haba'ah B'Yerushalayim* that we sing at the Seder coupled with the gift of Israel's 75th Independence Day will bring the *geula shleima* in time to celebrate Shavuot in the rebuilt Beit Hamikdash.



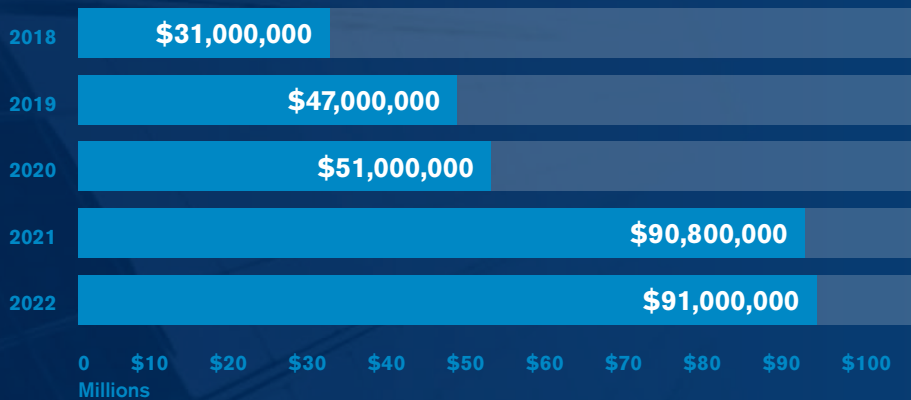
YU brought students on the S. Daniel Abraham Program to the OurCrowd conference in Jerusalem to learn more about the startup ecosystem in Israel.



Yeshiva University

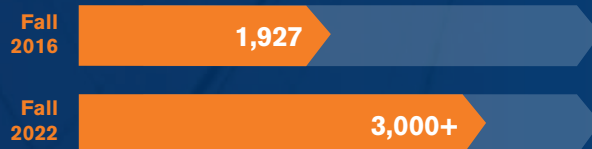
YU BY THE NUMBERS

PHILANTHROPY RISES: New cash and commitments, which includes cash donations, multiyear pledges and estate gifts.



GRADUATE ENROLLMENT INCREASED BY OVER

60%



UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT rose significantly in fall 2022 with an over

20%

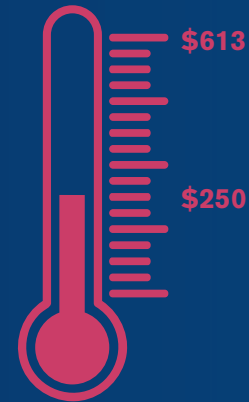
increase in new students from fall 2021.



YU STUDENTS FIND SUCCESS:

Over 95%

of YU undergraduate students are employed, in grad school or both within six months of graduation.



WE ARE MAKING GREAT PROGRESS

toward our goal of raising

\$613 million

through our **Rise Up Campaign**, which has already raised more than \$250 million.

YU'S TOTAL DONORS ARE UP

18%

IN 2022.



YU LIBRARIES CONTAIN A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE, WITH

700,000 physical volumes,

313,000 electronic books and 75,000 electronic and physical journals and 202,212 linear feet of shelving—almost 38 miles.

THE CARDOZO LAW SCHOOL INNOCENCE PROJECT directly exonerated

193
innocent
people



using DNA testing for crimes they did not commit.

YU CELEBRATES GRADUATES AT EXPANDED 2022 COMMENCEMENT:

YU Ishay Ribo Concert capped the day of festivities that attracted

over 16,000

people to Arthur Ashe Stadium in Queens, New York.

THE PARNES CLINIC AT THE FERKAUF GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

is among the four largest psychology training clinics in the United States: Serves over

600

patients at any given time and provides over 1,500 appointments per month.



RIETS EDUCATES THE NEXT GENERATION OF RABBIS:

80%

of all major Modern Orthodox congregations are led by RIETS graduates.



YU FACULTY LAUNCH CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH:

Received

\$3,940,758

in grants for 2022.

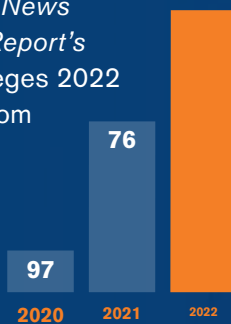


FY21

FY22

THE UNIVERSITY ROSE 29 SPOTS #67

in its *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Colleges 2022 ranking, from 97 to 68.



YU IS THE 3rd RANKED UNIVERSITY in all of New York City.



YU IS RANKED

#33

for best value in the *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Colleges rankings.

In 2022, *Fortune* magazine ranked **THE KATZ SCHOOL'S ONLINE MASTER'S DEGREE** in cybersecurity

2nd

in the nation.



NEARLY PERFECT RATE OF YU UNDERGRADUATE ACCEPTANCE TO MEDICAL SCHOOL:

92% of YU undergraduates who applied to medical school earned admission between 2013 and 2022 with 492 applying and 451 accepted. This acceptance rate is more than double the national average.



SHIDDUCHIM, HOUSING AND ISRAEL'S ECONOMY: HOW YIRMIYAHU'S FOREWARNINGS BECAME TODAY'S SONGS

Od Yishama's Gloomy Context

At any Jewish wedding today, the phrase sung with the most enthusiasm and joy is the familiar,

עוד ישמע בערי יהודה ובחצות ירושלם קול ששון וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול כלה.
Again there shall be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

If someone were to be cornered at a wedding and asked what this phrase means, they would probably answer confidently that it's a pasuk (verse) from somewhere in the Nevi'im (Prophets) about a bride and groom and happiness. And while the phrase is from the Nevi'im, and it *does* speak about a bride and groom, they might be surprised to find out that it's not a pasuk at all,

it's not really about a wedding, and the context is not at all happy.

The phrase "*kol sason v'kol simcha*" appears several times in Sefer Yirmiyahu, and each time the context is loaded with doom, destruction, and sorrow. Yirmiyahu generally uses the phrase not to celebrate weddings in Yerushalayim (Jerusalem), but to announce how they will come to a bitter end. Here are the first three times the phrase appears:

והשבתי מערי יהודה ומחצות ירושלם קול ששון וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול כלה כי לתרפה תהיה הארץ:

Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; for the land shall be desolate.

Yirmiyahu 7:34

כי כה אומר ה' צבאות א-לֵהי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנִּנִּי מִשְׁבִּית מִן־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה לְעֵינֵיכֶם וּבִימֵיכֶם קוֹל שִׁשּׁוֹן וְקוֹל שְׂמִיחָה קוֹל חֲתָן וְקוֹל כֻּלָּה:

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

Yirmiyahu 16:9

והאבדתי מהם קול ששון וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול כלה קול רחים ואור נר:

Moreover, I will cause to cease from among them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp.

Yirmiyahu 25:10

The phrase is less about weddings than about the city in which the weddings take place: Yerushalayim. The sound of weddings in the streets serves as a

barometer of Yerushalayim's spiritual and physical state. And for the most part, it's a gloomy forecast!

In all these instances, the context of this familiar phrase is the opposite of the joyful association we are used to. So why do we sing these words? **How has this phrase associated with doom and destruction become the most popular wedding song?!**

A Hopeful Twist

The answer stems from the fourth time Yirmiyahu speaks about *kol chatan v'kol kallah*, where there emerges a ray of hope. Yirmiyahu declares:

כֹּה אָמַר ה' עוֹד יִשְׁמַע בְּמִקוֹם־הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים חֲרֵב הוּא מֵאִין אָדָם וּמֵאִין בְּהֵמָה בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְחֻצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם הַנִּשְׁמוֹת מֵאִין אָדָם וּמֵאִין יוֹשֵׁב וּמֵאִין בְּהֵמָה: קוֹל שִׁשׁוֹן וְקוֹל שִׂמְחָה קוֹל חֲתָן וְקוֹל כַּלָּה קוֹל אֹמְרִים הוֹדוּ אֶת־ה' צֶבֶךְ־אוֹת כִּי־טוֹב ה' כִּי־לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ מִבָּאִים תוֹדָה בֵּית ה' כִּי־אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוֹת־הָאָרֶץ בְּבְרָאשְׁנָה אָמַר ה':

Thus said the LORD: Again there shall be heard in this place, which you say is ruined, without man or beast—in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man, without inhabitants, without beast—the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of bridegroom and bride, the voice of those who cry, “Give thanks to the LORD of Hosts, for the LORD is good, for His kindness is everlasting!” as they bring thanksgiving offerings to the House of the LORD. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as of old—said the LORD.

Yirmiyahu 33:10-11

Despite all the destruction that will come, Yirmiyahu now declares that Yerushalayim will rise out of it, and once again, the celebratory cheering of weddings in the streets will return. This is a bombshell of positivity. If you look closely at these psukim, you'll notice that the song we sing is actually a carefully selected compilation of just

the scattered positive phrases within this prophecy.

In between the words that we sing, the doom continues. Yerushalayim is still desolate. There is not a soul to be found. The silence is disturbing and harrowing, just as in the first three prophecies. Yirmiyahu was presumably not singing and dancing while delivering even this fourth prophecy. And yet this time, Yirmiyahu pulls through in his prophetic power and declares that the desolation is only temporary. It's a prophecy of faith, of hope in the face of destruction, that one day there will be joy in the streets again and that Yerushalayim will return to its glory.

Prophecy Becomes Reality

While this expression of faith is powerful and hopeful, it still does not quite match our modern context. Now, 2,500 years after Yirmiyahu gave this hopeful prophecy, when we attend a wedding in Yerushalayim, we sing these words not forebodingly as in the first three prophecies, and not longfully as in the fourth prophecy. Today, these words ring as a joyful description of the present. With weddings happening every day throughout Yerushalayim, we can finally celebrate what we see in front of us. While Yerushalayim still has a long way to go before it has reached its full potential and splendor, Yirmiyahu's wistful longing for the return of joyful sounds to Yerushalayim has become a cheerful and energetic description of reality.

Yirmiyahu's "Once Again" Refrain

Yirmiyahu's hopeful phrase of "*od yishama ...*" is actually embedded in between a group of prophecies about what is to come, many of which involve the same phrase of "*od ...*" The prophecies right before and right after

the *kol sason v'kol simcha* declaration are less well known, but they are equally as dramatic.

The prophecy right before our wedding prophecy is about a field.

Yerushalayim is under siege and heading toward destruction. God tells Yirmiyahu, who has been thrown in jail for all of his prophesying about Yerushalayim's demise, to redeem a field in his hometown of Anatot, on the outskirts of Yerushalayim. God declares,

כִּי כֹה אָמַר ה' צֶבֶךְ־אוֹת, אֶל־לִהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: עוֹד יִקְנוּ בָתִּים וְשָׂדוֹת וְכַרְמִים, בָּאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת.

For thus said the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: "Houses, fields, and vineyards shall again be purchased in this land."

Yirmiyahu 32:15

Yirmiyahu is bewildered. Why is God asking him to waste his money buying back this field? Why would anyone want to own land near Yerushalayim? What a terrible investment in a piece of property that will surely only plummet in value.

Yirmiyahu expresses this to God:

(י"ז) אָהָה אֲדֹנִי ה' הִנֵּה אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ בְּכֹחַךְ הַגָּדוֹל וּבְזַרְעֶךָ הַנִּטְוִיָּה לֹא־יָפֵלָא מִמֶּךָ כָּל־דְּבָר: ... (כ"ה) וְאַתָּה אֹמְרֶתָ אֵלַי אֲדֹנִי ה' קְנֵה־לִּי הַשָּׂדֶה בַּכֶּסֶף וְהָעֵד עֵדִים וְהָעִיר נִתְּנָה בְּיַד הַכַּשְׂדִּים! (17) Ah, Lord GOD! You made heaven and earth with Your great might and outstretched arm. Nothing is too wondrous for You!... (25) Yet You, Lord GOD, said to me: Buy the land for money and call in witnesses—when the city is at the mercy of the Chaldeans!?

Yirmiyahu 32:17, 25

Yirmiyahu says to God, I know you can do everything, and that you took the Jews out of Egypt and gave them the land of Israel. But to say that this piece of property will one day have value again? That's just too far.

God responds with a dramatic phrase familiar from Sefer Breishit, "*Hamimenu yipaleh kol davar*" "Is anything too

wonderous for me?” (Yirmiyahu 32:27)

Yes, God assures Yirmiyahu, one day this field will be worth something again. One day, people will actually want to buy property again in Yerushalayim. Yirmiyahu obeys, and begrudgingly buys the field back for a little over seven shekels. He could never have imagined that by 2023, the housing costs in Jerusalem would have skyrocketed, and that Jerusalem would become one of the hardest places in the world to buy property. One can only imagine how many shekels that piece of property in Anatot is worth today!

There are many songs that use the words, “*od yishama*.” There is even a song to the inspiring words, “*od yeshvu zekeinim uzkeinot birchovot Yerushalayim ...*,” a line from Zecharia 8:4-5 about children and elderly people playing and sitting in the streets of Yerushalayim.

It’s probably not surprising that we have yet to hear any songs celebrating the staggering housing prices in Yerushalayim, and how expensive it is to rent a one-bedroom apartment in Katamon. But Yirmiyahu would be crying from happiness to hear about it. **Yirmiyahu’s dramatic, wistful description of the returning demand of property in Israel has become so real that the country’s best economists have been trying for decades now to reel it back in.**

The Return of Israel’s Economy

The final “*od*” phrase in this string of hopeful prophecies is the immediate continuation of the psukim about the return of weddings. How are new couples supposed to support themselves? Well, Yirmiyahu assures the Jewish people that the job market will flourish once again too:

כֹּה-אָמַר ה' צֶבֶת-אוֹת עוֹד יִהְיֶה בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה
הַחֲרִיב מֵאִין-אָדָם וְעִדְ-בִּהְמָה וּבְכָל-עֲרֵיוֹ נִוָּה
רָעִים מְרַבְּצִים צֹאן: בְּעֲרֵי הָהָר בְּעֲרֵי הַשְּׂפֵלָה

וּבְעֲרֵי הַנֶּגֶב וּבְאֶרֶץ בְּנֵימִן וּבְסִבְיָי יְרוּשָׁלַם
וּבְעֲרֵי יְהוּדָה עַד תַּעֲבֹרְנָה הַצֹּאן עַל-יְדֵי מוֹנֶה
אָמַר ה'.

*Thus said the LORD of Hosts: In this ruined place, without man and beast, and in all its towns, **there shall again be a pasture for shepherds, where they can rest their flocks.** In the towns of the hill country, in the towns of the Shephelah, and in the towns of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin and in the environs of Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah, **sheep shall pass again under the hands of one who counts them**—said the LORD.*

Yirmiyahu 33:12-13

Metzudat David explains (33:13):

ר"ל כ"כ יתרבו הצאן עד שלא יספיקו בעליהם
למנותם בעצמו ויעמיד מונה במקומו להעביר
הצאן לפניו למנותם:

This means to say, there will be so many sheep that their owners will not suffice to count them on their own, and will appoint someone to count them in his stead to pass his sheep before him to count them.

It seemed unimaginable that people in Israel would ever be prosperous again, but Yirmiyahu says that one day it will happen. People will be so financially comfortable again that they will need to hire others to take care of their wealth.

Not everyone who comes to Israel is thrilled about the first prophecy of the astronomic housing costs. Not everyone finds a spouse right away to celebrate the second prophecy. And not everyone who moves to Israel finds themselves suddenly so overloaded with money and possessions that they need to hire others to manage their wealth. But the combination of these prophecies is an astonishingly accurate description of today’s reality. What even a generation or two ago was a sacrifice and a plunge into the unknown has become a secure and sustainable option. Israel’s many wedding halls are booked to capacity, there’s a swelling job market and a strong economy, and there are communities with old people, young

people and everyone in between.

Yirmiyahu and Today’s Aliya Trends

In recent years, Yirmiyahu’s prophecies have taken on even greater significance, especially for North American olim. Yirmiyahu’s prophecies of housing, marriage, and the job market are likely to resonate most strongly with young professionals establishing their lives and careers. And this is exactly the primary age bracket that is now moving to Israel.

Statistics published by Nefesh B’Nefesh and the Ministry of Absorption show that in recent years, the largest demographic of North Americans making Aliya has shifted from retirees to the 18-to-36-year-old bracket. Yirmiyahu’s focus on financial and family stability are exactly what is on the minds of today’s olim, and Yirmiyahu’s promise for a bright future in these areas is of the utmost significance to them. The rise of Israeli undergraduate programs in English, including Yeshiva University’s recent decision to launch undergraduate and graduate programs in Israel, is a further reflection of this historic development in Jewish history. **These students, young professionals and young families are coming to Israel and finding not the desolate and barren Israel described by Yirmiyahu at the beginning of the book, but the flourishing, prosperous country described at the end.**

Yirmiyahu promised we would progress from *od yiknu* to *od yishama* to *od ta'avorna*. And so it has happened: properties in Yerushalayim are valuable again. Weddings have returned. The economy is strong. Young people are coming to Israel like never before to write the next inspiring chapter of this eternal land. One can almost imagine, among the busy city streets and vibrant wedding crowds singing “*Od Yishama*,” Yirmiyahu smiling and singing along.



TORAH OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN: HOW DID RAV LICHTENSTEIN IMPACT RELIGIOUS ZIONISM?

Compiled by the editorial staff based on a shiur given by Rabbi Taragin, May 2022

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein had a major impact on the Religious Zionist community and Israel. How did an American-raised rabbi, who was a student of Rav Soloveitchik and not of Rav Kook, have such an impact? Before dealing with that question, it is important to assess a different question: How did he process the concept of the modern State of Israel? In this article, we will explore several issues and how Rav Lichtenstein related to them.

Navigating Unprecedented Times

We all believe we are living through a unique period of Jewish history. We now have sovereignty over Eretz

Yisrael. We can return to our ancient homeland. We can observe mitzvot that, historically, Jews have been unable to observe for centuries — shemittah, terumos, ma'asros etc. What sources do we draw from in order to navigate these issues?

Our natural response might be to look in Tanach which contains prophecies that discuss the ultimate redemption, and also presents challenges and obstacles that arise while living in Eretz Yisrael. Many people in Eretz Yisrael employ Tanach as a template for interpreting and navigating current events.

Rav Lichtenstein didn't take this approach. In his *sichos*, he emphasized the dangers of creating expectations based on prophetic visions. Chazal already warned us against calculating

the timing of the final redemption (*Sanhedrin* 97b). Furthermore, Chazal tell us that Yaakov wanted to reveal to his children how the final redemption would unfold, and this vision was taken from him (*Pesachim* 56a).

Rav Lichtenstein often spoke about the delicate balance between *ahavas Hashem* (love of G-d) and *yiras Hashem* (reverence of G-d), and that overconfidence in our relationship with Hashem can disrupt that balance. He referenced this idea in a *sicha* for *Parashas Shelach* in discussing the *ma'apilim*, who attempted to go to Eretz Kna'an immediately after Hashem decreed that the Jewish people spend forty years in the desert. This type of overconfidence — that Hashem loves us and we can and should live our lives confidently using prophetic visions

as our guide — undermines our *yiras Hashem* and the realization that the King of the Universe is ultimately determining history in a manner that is mysterious.

Rather than looking to Tanach to navigate the challenges of our time, Rav Lichtenstein would turn to the Talmud, to halachic constructs. Here are three examples.

First, in January 1997, as part of the Oslo Accords, Israel withdrew from most of Chevron. This occurred around the time of Chanukah and it put a damper on the yeshiva's Chanuka *mesibah* (party). Rav Lichtenstein delivered a *sicha* before the *mesibah* started. This would have been the perfect opportunity to quote verses from Tanach citing promises that the land will remain in our hands and that Chevron has a special connection to our Avos. Instead, for over an hour, he discussed the two halachic mechanisms available for disputing parties to settle their differences: *vitur* (unilateral relinquishment) and *peshara* (compromise). Rav Lichtenstein provided a thorough legal analysis of these approaches using classical commentaries on the Talmud and then assured his students that our withdrawal should not be viewed as one of *vitur*, giving up the land without any concern for it, but one of *peshara*, a compromise, which some thought at the time would have potential for peace. He noted that sometimes compromise might be painful, and we should be pained by the prospect of giving over land.

Second, Rav Lichtenstein delivered a *sicha* on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. Again, the *sicha* didn't focus on prophetic visions, but rather deconstructed and analyzed the various components of *yovel* (the jubilee year) such as *shichrur avadim* and *hachzaras karka* (freeing of servants and returning of land) and

how they can be applied to the socio-economic challenges in Modern Israel.

A third example occurred in the late 80's, when Rav Lichtenstein spoke to the students in the chutz la'aretz program of Yeshiva Har Etzion about issues relating to Aliyah. One of the students asked him what he experienced in 1948 as a teenager. Rav Lichtenstein said this his feelings were best reflected in Tehillim ch. 22. The theme of this chapter in Tehillim is crying out for help in a time of crisis and danger. While it is true that the War of Independence was a time of crisis and danger, even forty years later, it was this chapter of Tehillim, rather than the chapters of Tehillim that we recite when we say Hallel, that framed his memory of 1948.

Two Conversations

Rav Lichtenstein's outlook can be observed in his own words by comparing two conversations that took place 50 years apart, one in 1962 and one in 2012. In 1962, Rav Lichtenstein made his first trip to Eretz Yisrael. He records a conversation that he had with his rebbe, Rav Yitzchak Hutner:

One day, I went to see mori ve-rabbi Rav Hutner zt"l, who used to spend summers in Eretz Yisrael. He had an attachment to Eretz Yisrael—he had studied in Yeshivat Chevron when it was still in Chevron. He began to ask me what are my impressions, what do I see here, what do I feel. I discussed with him the vitality of Jewish life and the sense of total community, as opposed to the Diaspora, where one's life is more fragmented. He felt that you could have felt that wholeness and vitality in Eastern Europe as well. Then I said that I think there is a broader range of application of Halakha in Israel. In America, rabbinical courts handled only ritual law, and here they dealt with dinei mammonot (commercial and

financial cases) as well, so here you feel the resonance of Halakha in more areas of life. He said that you could have seen that in Eastern Europe or in North Africa also. I tried to get him to elaborate, and finally he exclaimed, "Why don't you mention the uniqueness of being in Eretz Yisrael? Chazal (Ketubot 112a) speak of Eretz Yisrael as a country that Moshe and Aharon didn't merit to enter, and we are there!" It was stunning to him to meet a ben Torah on an airplane flying to Israel, whose attitude was the same as if he were going to California. I walked out of there like a beaten dog.

In 1962, Rav Lichtenstein viewed Eretz Yisrael through strict halachic structures. Let's fast forward to 2012. Rav Chaim Sabato interviewed Rav Lichtenstein on many areas of Jewish thought and they were collected in a sefer called *Mevakshei Panecha*, which was translated into English under the title *Seeking His Presence*. In one particular exchange, Rav Sabato asked Rav Lichtenstein why he prefers to view the establishment of the State of Israel from a more practical perspective as opposed to Rav Kook's followers who see it as a fulfillment of prophecy. Rav Sabato then added that Rav Lichtenstein's own rebbe, Rav Soloveitchik, wrote about the "six Heavenly knocks" in his essay "Kol Dodi Dofek," which follows a similar approach to that of the students of Rav Kook. Rav Lichtenstein responded:

I don't know to what degree the essay "Kol Dodi Dofek" reflects the Rav's approach throughout his life. I would assume that Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook z"l would wake up in the morning, take in the sounds of the State of Israel, and feel, experience, the State of Israel. The Rav z"l did not wake up in the morning with this deep feeling. "Kol Dodi Dofek" was a very successful work, but it reflects a certain spirit, things that were said on Israel's Independence Day at a time when the State was beginning to strike roots,

but had not yet burst into full flower. It was at such a moment that the Rav said what he said. Those who claimed that he was against Zionist policy or an anti-Zionist were mistaken. He identified with Zionism. What is correct is that the theological component associated with the establishment of the State was not at the forefront of his thought. For me, since we made aliya, I have been more existentially connected to the State than the Rav was. Yet, I still would not approach it with the celebratory tones of Hegelian, historical knocking.

These two quotes succinctly capture Rav Lichtenstein's approach to Zionism and Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Lichtenstein's Impact

Rav Lichtenstein's approach was passed on to multiple generations of students, not only in Yeshiva Har Etzion, but in other yeshivos that were started by his students. Beyond the broader issues discussed above, there are other areas where Rav Lichtenstein made his mark on the hesder movement.

First, Rav Lichtenstein introduced the Lithuanian-style yeshiva to the hesder movement. To Rav Lichtenstein, Yeshivat Har Etzion and Volozhin were basically the same, with a few minor differences. He would even throw in Yiddish lines from time to time during his *shiurim* (which he then translated into Hebrew), because he saw in the yeshiva a connection to the yeshivos of pre-war Eastern Europe.

Second, in the Religious Zionist community, there is a tendency to focus more on national identity rather than individual identity. Rav Lichtenstein emphasized the importance of the individual in the State of Israel. He would often use the terms *Knesses Yisrael* and *Reb Yisrael*, where *Knesses Yisrael* refers to the entire Jewish people and *Reb Yisrael*, to the individual.

For example, regarding political discussions about peace for land, Rav Lichtenstein introduced the concept of *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life) into the discussion. If questions of war and peace were simply a national issue, there would be no room for discussion about *pikuach nefesh* since the *pikuach nefesh* considerations don't apply during wartime because war, by definition, entails risking one's life (see *Minchas Chinuch* 425). Rav Lichtenstein's emphasis on *pikuach nefesh* indicated that the issues also need to be analyzed from the perspective of an individual Jew and not only from a nationalistic approach.

He also stressed that the political agenda of the Religious Zionists shouldn't be wholly focused on land. There are other pressing issues that relate to the individuals in the State of Israel, such as social causes that need to be part of our agenda, as they too reflect Torah values.

A third issue is that Rav Lichtenstein had a sense of optimism for mankind. He often stressed the concept of *tzelem Elokim*, that man was created in G-d's image. This was often seen in the way that Rav Lichtenstein presented "outside" sources. As opposed to Rav Soloveitchik, who would quote other sources as a means of comparing Judaism to other philosophies, Rav Lichtenstein would quote other sources when they provided an insight into how we can better serve Hashem.

Rav Lichtenstein did not tolerate the xenophobic sentiments that some in the Religious Zionist communities express. He was very outspoken when Arabs were mistreated. When Libyan Airlines Flight 114 was shot down by Israeli fighter jets in 1973, Rav Lichtenstein and Rav Amital demanded a government inquiry even though many dismissed the "accident" as a necessary causality of a tense pre-

war environment. Every *erev Rosh Hashanah*, Rav Lichtenstein would personally wish a *shanah tova* to every single Palestinian worker in the yeshiva.

Fourth, Rav Lichtenstein was a consummate institutionalist. He believed in institutions and working together with other institutions, even when they had a different agenda. He never marginalized an institution because of their views and sought ways to work with these institutions, especially government institutions like the police or the IDF.

Let's conclude with a conversation between Rav Lichtenstein and Shimon Peres:

In 1978, Shimon Peres visited the Yeshiva. He asked me what the political credo of the Yeshiva was. I told him the Yeshiva has no political credo, but we teach three things:

- 1. Even when sitting in the bet midrash, you have a responsibility to the community;*
 - 2. When addressing these problems, you have to think deeply and not simplistically;*
 - 3. Even when doing what is right, you have to know how to respect other opinions and the people who hold them.*
- This has to be our educational goal. The question is not just what are the particular values we hold, but through which spectacles we view values, through which eyes. A man, said Blake, doesn't see with his eyes but rather through his eyes. What sees is the mind.*



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