



Dedicated by Nathan Kirsh in honour and recognition of the 14 years Rabbi Torczyner, as the Rosh Beit Midrash, has engaged and inspired the Jewish community of the GTA with Torah learning and the promotion of Zionism

Dedicated by Shayna & Lazer Friedman in honour and in gratitude to Rabbi Torczyner

Three articles

- *Rav Soloveitchik's Approach to Zionism* (2002), edited by Dr. Aviad haCohen, <https://etzion.org.il/en/philosophy/great-thinkers/rav-soloveitchik/rav-soloveitchik's-approach-zionism>
- *Diaspora Religious Zionism: Some Current Reflections* (2007), Orthodox Forum <http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/730117>
- *The Ideology of Hesder* (1981), Tradition 19:3 <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/philosophy/great-thinkers/harav-aharon-lichtenstein/ideology-hesder>

On Rabbi Soloveitchik's Halachic Zionism

1. Talmud, Ketuvot 111a

ג' שבועות הללו למה אחת שלא יעלו ישראל בחומה ואחת שהשביע הקב"ה את ישראל שלא ימרדו באומות העולם ואחת שהשביע הקב"ה את העובדי כוכבים שלא ישתעבדו בהן בישראל יותר מדאי

What is the purpose of these three oaths? That the Jews should not ascend as a wall, that the Jews should not rebel against the nations, and that the nations should not overly oppress the Jews.

2. *Rav Soloveitchik's Approach to Zionism*

The Rav had no patience for philosophies that glorified passivity and reliance on miracles. At the beginning of the 1960's, a few years after the launch of Sputnik, I had occasion to talk with the Rav about those people who claimed that man should not reach out for the heavens, for "the heavens are the heavens of Gd," and only "the earth is given to human beings." The Rav heaped scorn upon them. One of those present jumped up to protest: "But Rabbi, the Ramban in *Bechukotai* (*Vayikra* 27:11) speaks about how a person should have faith in the Holy One, and not to delve into matters that are too wondrous for him." The Rav replied, "I heard from my father, in the name of my grandfather, that the Ramban never uttered that statement!"

3. *Rav Soloveitchik's Approach to Zionism*

In the Rav's essay "*Ma Dodekh Mi-Dod*," a eulogy for his uncle Rav Yitzchak Zev (Velvel) Soloveitchik, he explains that what was generally understood as R. Velvel's anti-Zionism was not so much opposition to Zionism, as an inability to place it within a halakhic category. He contrasts his uncle's view with that of "some who say," and the latter position seems to represent the Rav's own. Note that the Rav does not present a political doctrine to oppose his uncle's position; rather, he presents a different view of the relationship of the Halakha to the world:

Indeed, there are some who say that the Halakha – which is all-inclusive and all-encompassing and all-penetrating, which is concerned with every detail of existence... – does not remove itself from the [concrete] event, and even rebels against it. Halakha is courageous and full of strength. It knows nothing of disappointment, nor does it accept the mastery of the event. It storms it time and again, and will not cease until it succeeds in establishing the superiority of the Divine ideal over it... Even if the kingdom of secularity is iron-hard and of awesome strength, Halakha does not tremble or despair, but rather besieges it with a mighty flow of volcanic spirit, alive and giving life, until it is subdued...

His Own Zionism: A Blend

4. Explanation of why he was attracted to Yeshivat Har Etzion, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDvaOZANZOE>
It is of course, first and foremost, an institution of Torah learning at a high level, located in the foothills of Hebron on the one side, Jerusalem on the other, and the very thought that here one stands, engaged in the intensive study of Torah, within the very context that the avot, the patriarchs, followed on the one hand, or, that led of old to Jerusalem on the other, is a source to me of continuing inspiration.

5. *Diaspora Religious Zionism: Some Current Reflections*, pg. 12

[O]ne additional major area which the modern religious Zionist – if he is truly that, not just an individual who is committed to both Yahadut and Zionism, but one in whom the two are thoroughly intertwined – will take into account, bears examination. I refer to the sociohistorical reality our prospect will encounter in Israel should he reach its shores. That reality is itself, divisible into three components. There is, first, the vertical historical axis, bonding with the full range of Jewish existence, across the millennia, from our incipient national cradle to the epiphany of our meta-historical vision. Second, we note the horizontal social axis...

6. *Rav Soloveitchik's Approach to Zionism*

In several different contexts, the Rav spoke about the importance and uniqueness of *Eretz Yisrael*. Here, too, if we measure against Rav Kook, the Rav falls short. But he never aspired to be his equal. The Rav does not place such a strong emphasis on the metaphysical aspect of the land. Once he even expressed a criticism, saying that people who speak in that way are talking not in metaphysical but rather in mythological terms.

At the same time, the Rav had a special feeling for both *Eretz Yisrael* and her inhabitants. In "*Ma Dodekh Mi-Dod*" and *Five Addresses*, he explains how he found his way to Religious Zionism, despite the fact that his father and grandfather were no great supporters of Mizrachi. In the beginning, the Rav was a member of Agudat Yisrael, and later he moved to Mizrachi. On many different occasions, the Rav would emphasize and highlight his deep connection to *Eretz Yisrael*, its holiness and significance.

7. *Diaspora Religious Zionism: Some Current Reflections*, pp. 22-23

In the course of my initial visit to Israel, during the summer of 1962, I went to visit *mori verabbi*, Rav Y. Hutner zt"l, who, prior to his aliya, often spent the summer at Pension Reich in Jerusalem. After reproaching me gently for having left my wife in the United States (אזא כתובה האסטו געשריבען?), he began to question me regarding my impressions – particularly, about what had struck my notice especially. As, at that stage, I had focused upon the Torah world in Israel, I noted a number of phenomena which had struck me favorably, as compared to the American scene: widespread popular talmud Torah, the interaction of the Torah and general communities in the implementation of *Hoshen Mishpat* etc. Every reply was rebutted with the comment that its subject could have been found in Eastern Europe as well, and so was neither endemic nor unique to Eretz Israel. When he sensed that I had exhausted my material, he pressed on, inquiring as to what indeed was special about my visit, and, when it became clear that I could, at best, only respond feebly, the Rosh Yeshiva opened with a volley of sources and dicta – the description of Eretz Israel as ארץ אשר ד' אלקיך דורש אותה (a land that Hashem your G-d cares for), or as that to which Moshe and Aharon had been barred access, which was now open to us... all trumpeting forth the sacral, metaphysical, and historical uniqueness of the land and all causing me to realize, in a flash, that I had missed the boat entirely. As he railed on, as perhaps only he could, against tourists he had met on the plane, acting and talking as if they were en route to vacation in California, the sense of failure cut deeper and deeper. I walked out into the Beit Hakerem evening air like a beaten dog. But I knew I had been beaten justly; and today, almost forty-five years later, I remain deeply grateful to the Rosh Yeshiva for opening my eyes and for opening my heart.

8. *Diaspora Religious Zionism: Some Current Reflections*, pp. 23-24, building on Rosh haShanah 30a

מנא לן דעבדינן זכר למקדש? א"ר יוחנן דאמר קרא "כי אעלה ארוכה לך וממכותיך ארפאך נאם ד', כי נדחה קראו לך, ציון היא, דורש אין לה." 'דורש אין לה', מכלל דבעיא דרישה (ירמ' ל:יז).

From where do we know that we should memorialize the Temple? Raban Yohanan ben Zakai said, 'From the verse "I will bring you healing and cure your wounds," says the Lord, "since they called you dejected, [and said] Zion has no seeker. "Has no seeker" ' indicates that it must be sought out (Jeremiah 30:17).

The source is cited here with respect to a very specific halakhic ordinance, and it presumably serves as the *raison d'etre* for similar ordinances. Unquestionably, however, it serves equally to enunciate a principle whose scope extends beyond the explicitly normative to embrace the realm of consciousness and sensibility. To sustain the memory of mikdash, that whose locus is in Jerusalem and that which coincides with the boundaries of the concentric country, is to vivify it, to rejuvenate it via mental image and soul's yearning.

On Military Service

9. *The Ideology of Hesder*, pp. 201-202

No one responsibly connected with any yeshivat Hesder advocates military service per se. We avoid even the slightest tinge of militarism and we are poles removed from Plato's notion that the discipline of army life is a necessary ingredient of an ideal education. No less than every Jew, the typical Hesdernik yearns for peace, longs for the day on which he can divest himself of uniform and *uzzi* and devote his energies to Torah. In the interim, however, he harbors no illusions and he keeps his powder dry and his musket ready.

In one sense, therefore, insofar as army service is alien to the ideal Jewish vision, Hesder is grounded in necessity rather than choice. It is, if you will, *b'diavad*, a *post facto* response to a political reality imposed upon us by our enemies. In another sense, however, it is very much *l'hathillah*, a freely willed option grounded in moral and halakhic decision. We - at Yeshivat Har Etzion, at any rate - do not advocate Hesder as a second-best alternative for those unable or unwilling to accept the rigors of single-minded Torah study. We advocate it because we are convinced that, given our circumstances - would that they were better - military service is a *mitzvah*, and a most important one at that. Without impugning the patriotism or ethical posture of those who think otherwise, we feel that for the overwhelming majority of *b'nei torah* defense is a moral imperative.

10. *The Ideology of Hesder*, pg. 203

[T]he defense of Israel is an ethical and halakhic imperative - be it because, as we believe, the birth of the state was a momentous historical event and its preservation of great spiritual significance, or because, even failing that, the physical survival of its three million plus Jewish inhabitants is at stake.

11. *The Ideology of Hesder*, pg. 207

The halakhic rationale for Hesder does not, as some mistakenly assume, rest solely upon the *mitzvah* of waging defensive war. If that were the case, one might conceivably argue that, halakhically, sixteen months of army service was too high a price to pay for the performance of this single commandment. The rationale rather rests upon a) the simple need for physical survival and b) the fact that military service is often the fullest manifestation of a far broader value: *gemilut hasadim*, the empathetic concern for others and action on their behalf.