

Zionism and Aliyah

Class 15

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1. Tovah Lichtenstein, “Countering Counter-History: Re-Considering Rav Aharon’s Road Not Taken,” *The Lehrhaus*, March 23, 2017

The question, on a personal level, was one that echoed Robert Frost’s poem, that my husband, Rav Aharon, was fond of quoting: “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-I took the one less traveled by,/And that has made all the difference.” Neither he nor I were “sorry I could not travel both” roads, as we saw our move as much more than what Rabbi Eleff describes as being motivated by Rav Aharon’s statement on “the importance of moving to Israel in order to form a viable spiritual community.” Indeed, is that why a religious Jew moves to Israel? One can have viable spiritual community in Teaneck or Los Angeles. Was our move a “Zionist dream” as Rabbi Eleff terms it, or something much more essential and basic? *Eretz Yisrael* was, for us, much more than a place to come for *Yom Tov*, to send our children for a year or two of study and to be laid to rest there. *Eretz Yisrael*, *Torat Yisrael*, and *Am Yisrael* were intertwined and essential to Rav Aharon’s being...

I would like to think that if Rav Aharon had lived in the States he would have raised his voice and taken strong stands on many issues that plagued and still plague the Orthodox community. In Israel, he addressed issues as varied as the excessive bombing of Beirut in the First Lebanon War, Sabra and Shatila, conscientious objection by soldiers, making a hero of someone who had murdered Moslems at prayer, relationships to secular Jews, how to understand Jewish history, and intellectual dishonesty, to name just a few of the failings he addressed in his *sihot* and in the written media. The world about him was subject to moral scrutiny based on clear Torah values. I have no reason to think he would have done otherwise in New York...

Rav Aharon’s influence on the American Orthodox community, be it called Centrist or Modern, was *because* he had moved to Israel. He and his Yeshiva sought out and attracted the best and brightest of American young men—and, eventually, young women—to partake of his Torah at Yeshivat Har Etzion and at Migdal Oz. His students were not limited to those who might have chosen to study at Yeshiva University. He was not limited by the particular institutional structure of Yeshiva University, its dynamics and complexity. He distanced himself from the American scene as he immersed himself completely in the task of building an institution that had as its motto not Torah and Mada but Torah and army service. This combination of involvement in a Jewish polity while singlemindedly pursuing Torah learning and values had a far reach and attracted those who would later study in a variety of educational settings. These young people returned to their homes and it is they who saw Rav Aharon as their “gadol.”

2. “Diaspora Religious Zionism: Some Current Reflections,” *Religious Zionism Post Disengagement*, ed. Chaim Waxman, Ktav, 2008, pp. 3-30; *Varieties of Jewish Experience*, Ktav 2011, pp. 291-317.

I very much hope that Diaspora religious Zionism is not in the throes of terminal demise but there is no denying that if this Forum had been convened half or a quarter of a century ago, the context would have been much livelier. Unquestionably, this movement – as a public and as a private phenomenon, institutionally and ideologically, qua political entity and in the form of a shared spiritual commitment – has seen more vibrant days...

As the locus and the object of Zionist fervor, the State of Israel has been the victim of its own successes. Once the threat to its existential security waned, and as the erstwhile David became increasingly perceived as a Goliath, concern for the *yishuv* and for the welfare, physical or spiritual, of its inhabitants, lessened. As an impetus for energizing the Jewish world, no fresh goal could even approach the struggle for the founding of the state and the subsequent nursing of its fledgling body politic and institutions. Moreover, whereas the haredi world has a clearly focused agenda which it has pursued with great intensity, much of the religious Zionist camp has encountered difficulty in the apportionment of effort and resources between religious goals and more general Zionist aims.

In addition, as the dream metamorphosed into reality, a modicum of disillusionment set in, fuelled, moreover, by an erosion in the ethical status of Israeli society and a decline in its general idealism. At the same time,

specific Diaspora issues such as intermarriage and assimilation were becoming exacerbated. Consequently, in many communities, Zionist commitment, even amongst the strongly identified, Jewishly, became jaded, as local and national interests competed for moral and material support...

Unfortunately, this decline is manifest in Israel as well, where a blend of ideological rigor mortis has combined with obsessive concern with territorial issues to paint the *dati-leumi* (national religious) parties – at least, for the time being – into a corner of isolation and political irrelevance...

Moreover, beyond ideology, they are confronted by another issue – halakhic, philosophic, existential, and, perhaps acutely, pragmatic. Over all, looms the prospect of *aliya* (immigrating to Israel). And it looms as a genuine option...

On the one hand, the gates of the Promised Land are open, and, on the other, the pressure to leave current host countries and enter through them has receded...

Beyond the pragmatic, *aliya*, straddling the historical and the eschatological, constitutes a fulfillment of the divinely mandated providential commitment on the one hand... and of the realization of our own collective aspiration on the other...

While even at the public level, *aliya* exacts a toll insofar as it may entail a brain drain, as the exodus of the most highly motivated thins the ranks of Diaspora Zionism, on the whole, the net result is clearly deemed positive...

At least four [spiritual] elements, bonding residence in Eretz Israel with the performance of *mitzvot*, may be identified. The first and most direct is the position of the Ramban, widely trumpeted and popularized by Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook, that the anticipation, at once promise and command, that we are to possess and settle Eretz Israel is to be enumerated amongst *taryag mitzvot* (613 commandments); and this, in two respects. Most fundamentally, this *mitzvah* is realized through the establishment and maintenance of the hegemony of *Knesset Israel* in the promised land, which is not to be left under the aegis of foreign rule, or as wilderness at the disposal of natural forces... Secondly, however, the Ramban also subsumes *yeshivah*, mere physical residence – even in circumstances under which one's absence would in no way endanger national interests – as a personal fulfillment of the *mitzvah*...

A second factor: the status of the country as venue for the performance of many other *mitzvot* – particularly, agriculturally related *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz* (commandments specific to Eretz Israel). This aspect is most sharply delineated in a *gemara* in *Sotah* – strikingly, with respect to Moshe Rabbeinu's aspiration to enter Eretz Israel and his passionate pleas in this connection:

דרש רבי שמלאי מפני מה נתאוה משה רבינו ליכנס לארץ ישראל וכי לאכול מפריה הוא צריך או לשבוע מטובה הוא צריך אלא כך אמר משה הרבה מצות נצטוו ישראל ואין מתקיימין אלא בארץ ישראל אכנס אני לארץ כדי שיתקיימו כולן על ידי אמר לו הקב"ה כלום אתה מבקש אלא לקבל שכר מעלה אני עליך כאילו עשיתם (סוטה יד.)

Rebbi Simlai explicated: For what reason did Moshe Rabbeinu long to enter the Land of Israel? Does he need to eat from its fruit or satiate himself by its abundance?! Rather, this is what Moshe Rabbeinu said: "Am Israel were commanded numerous *mitzvot* that can only be fulfilled in the Land of Israel. Let me enter the land so that I can fulfill them all." The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "What you seek is nothing but to receive the reward; I will consider it as if you have fulfilled them"...

A third factor returns us to the Ramban; and, this time, with reference to a frequently stated – and yet, surprisingly radical – position... that the halakhic regimen in its totality is geared to Eretz Israel which constitutes a metaphysical and yet natural habitat for its realization. Basing himself, in part, upon a comment of the Sifre that the *mitzvot* of *tefillin* and *mezuzah* should be observed even in the Diaspora as a propaedeutic device for maintaining a mindset which should ensure their observance upon return to our native land, he notes that the remark apparently applies even to *hovot haguf*, personal, as opposed to agricultural, obligations; and hence, he boldly draws the inference concerning the intrinsic bond between normative content and geographic context. This is, I repeat, a bold thesis, and one which, despite my enormous admiration and respect for the Ramban, I have great personal difficulty in digesting... In a milder version, the Ramban's position can be readily understood and fully appreciated. Without divesting Diaspora halakhic observance of intrinsic value, one could accept the notion that context and location affect the character and significance of an action, so that the identical *ma'asseh mitzvah* (*mitzvah* performance) could have incremental qualitative value when

performed in *eretz hakodesh* (the Holy Land)... a fourth factor... Eretz Israel is conceived as a plane of paradoxical particular immanence – as a locus to which Hashem attends directly, with which He bonds, and in which, *mutatis mutandis*, He inheres. It is described, Scripturally, as, uniquely,

ארץ אשר ה' אלהיך דרש אתה תמיד עיני ה' אלהיך בה מרשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה (דברים יא:יב)

A land which the Lord your God constantly seeks out, the eyes of the Lord your God are upon it from the beginning to the end of the year. (Deuteronomy 11:12)...

To live in Eretz Israel is, to subsist and suspire in the shade and in the shadow of the Ribbono Shel Olam, over and above the norm prevalent in the Diaspora. To the sensitive religious soul, the implications for service and experience are self-evident...

All that has been outlined heretofore could have confronted a prospective *oleh* several centuries ago no less than his contemporary counterpart. The current scene differs, however, markedly... One additional major area which the modern religious Zionist... 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 – particularly, as manifested by the demographic reality, or, as his Shunamite hostess told Elisha (מלכים ב, ד:יג) – “I reside amongst my people” – life as part of an indigenous majority rather than of an alien minority, with all this crucial fact implies for the organic unity of state and society and for the organic unity of personal sensibility.

Finally, we encounter the more narrowly Zionist dimension. I have noted elsewhere, that one of the major cruces dividing Zionist from non-Zionist Orthodoxy, concerns, at its core, a theological issue: the division, as it were, of the historical drama between providential control and human initiative. Abstract and abstruse as the point may seem, the question of the legitimacy and scope of activism bears directly upon the appraisal of the re-entry of Knesset Israel as a national entity upon the universal arena. To the extent that a religious Jew identifies with dynamic activism, he will be attracted to religious Zionism. And he will be drawn to ascending to Eretz Israel, for that is where the action in this vein lies...

The halakhic discourse proper... is multifaceted. The principal issues concern the basic normative obligation of *aliya* – does it exist at all, and, if so, whether *mi'd'oraitha* (biblical) or *mi'd'rabbanan* (rabbinic)? Second, to what extent, if any, can it be mitigated or overridden by circumstance?¹⁷ For the most part, *poskim*, largely following the Ramban, were inclined to affirm a measure of obligation. There were, however, notable exceptions. Thus, Rav Shlomo Kluger in the nineteenth century, and Rav Moshe Feinstein, in the twentieth, both argued that if most observant Jews, including pious and saintly *kedoshim hasidei elyon*, scholarly *talmidei hakhamim* as well as the untutored, remained in the Diaspora, evidently their sojourn there entailed no clear violation...

At the level of personal existential decision, the halakhic debate remains for many inconclusive, and those who desire dispensation may find a basis for it. As formulated in the bottom line of the brief teshuvah of the fifteenth-century *Terumat Hadeshen*:

לכן כל איש ישער בעצמו בהכנת גופו וממונו באוצר, דרך יוכל לעמוד ביראת השם ובשמור מצותיו כי זה כל האדם.

Therefore each person should estimate, on his own, [about] how prepared he is physically and financially, and [whether he can find] a way to maintain his fear of God and abidance to His commandments since “that is the essence of man.”

The statement focuses upon spiritual ramifications, but, on the view of many *poskim*, that material elements bear consideration as well, its differential approach can be readily adapted...

Many Israelis are wont to assume that the primary restraint upon *aliya* among religious Zionists derives from cleavage to the fleshpots of Egypt... however, I believe that other factors, of a less materialistic or hedonistic cast, figure more prominently.

These include the quest for vocational self-fulfillment, with respect to personal development, on the one hand, and potential contribution to *yishuvo shel olam* (the development of the world), on the other. In a parallel vein, many are wary about the educational climate in the *dati-leumi* community in Israel, and bemoan the absence of certain desired options – say, the fusion of positive *haredi* passion for *lomdut* (conceptual Jewish learning) with

serious readiness for secular profession – as well as the presence of radical ideology which brandishes a version of religious Zionism they find narrowly fanatic and excessively aggressive.

For many, more specifically personal elements play a key role... At one terminus, the prospect of being known as a greenhorn is perturbing... Worse yet, many are concerned about a cultural gap piggy-backed on a generational gap, opening a chasm between themselves and their children. At the other terminus, some anticipate parting as not sweet sorrow but just plain sorrow. The problem is most acute vis-à-vis family – especially, of course, parents...

For many prospective olim, the upshot of attempted assessment and decision may be ambivalence, frustration, embattlement, or, simply, dilemma... They may refrain from making the leap, but not without anguish...

Perhaps the most ambivalent about aliya, however, are spiritual protagonists who, externally and adversarially, are not embattled at all but are, rather, torn... On the one hand, they are truly desirous and even anxious to live and work in Eretz Israel – and for all the right reasons. On the other hand, they are concerned by a sense of responsibility to their native community and to the need to minister to its spiritual and educational concerns...

The issues are, in part, general and theoretical: public vs. personal priorities, the value of yishuvo shel olam as opposed to talmud Torah, etc.; and, in part, obviously entail many private variables...

Critics contend that the profession of Zionist ideology in the context of continued residence in Hendon or in Woodmere is not only innocuous but hypocritical. I confess that, in making judgments or drawing conclusions, I myself adhere to a less rigorous standard. For one thing, surprising as it may sound to some, I do not reject all strains of hypocrisy categorically, as I recall an adage Douglas Bush used to cite: “Hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue.” In a more conventional vein, however, there is much to commend the contribution of Diaspora religious Zionism to varied sectors and different levels – national, communal, and personal – of Jewish life...

The mishnah states that Rav Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted an innovation with respect to the mitzvah of *lulav*, and that its rationale was the quest for *zekher lemikdash*... The gemara goes on to query whence do we derive the principle of creating such memorials, and it cites a *pasuk* in *Yirmeyahu*:

מנא לן דעבדינן זכר למקדש א"ר יוחנן דאמר קרא כי אעלה ארוכה לך וממכותיך ארפאך נאם ה' כי נדחה קראו לך ציון
היא דורש אין לה דורש אין לה מכלל דבעיא דרישה (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’être* 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.

Derishat Zion (seeking out Zion), *zekher lemikdash* – this has, traditionally and historically, been the central charge of Diaspora religious Zionism...

Nevertheless, while priority and balance cannot be ignored, our commitment to *derishat Zion* should be neither abandoned nor diminished. And this, for two reasons. First, it should be obvious that apart from attending to dividing the existing cake, the prospect for enlarging it ought to be very real. We are far from exhausting reservoirs of time, energy, and passion to be harnessed in the pursuit of spiritual goals... The second factor relates to the character and substance of *derishat Zion*. Beyond flag-waving and beyond merely exuding emotion, it is all about search and relation; about bonding and linkage; about developing a thirst for Zion and all that it represents and about seeking avenues to quench that thirst – by remembrance and reenactment of things past in conjunction with anticipation of things future. Consequently, properly understood and experienced, *derishat Zion* does not compete with other Torah values, but rather reciprocally reinforces and is reinforced by them...

The choice [for authorship of an article on this topic] of a person who, while residing in the United States grappled, together with his wife, with the option of aliya, who went on subsequently, to carve a niche in Israel,

while retaining ties with his former bailiwick, but who never looked back in regret or reconsideration, possibly signifies the bonding power of *derishat Zion*. Bonding Jew and land, bonding Jew and Jew, it is the charge and prerogative of neither the Diaspora religious community, nor of the indigenous Israeli community. It is part of what links us, vertically and horizontally, with Knesset Israel.

3. “On Aliya: The Uniqueness of Living in Eretz Yisrael,” *Alei Etzion* 12 (2004), pp. 15-22.

The role and significance of *Eretz Yisrael* in one’s personal life, in its historical context, and with its many historical associations – that is certainly something which a Jew, and certainly a *ben Torah*, needs to feel. Even if later on he finds, for one reason or another (and I don’t say that there aren’t valid reasons), that he has to forgo the dream, at least he should have this dream and aspiration...

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 mamonot* (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. This thought, this feeling, is what I want to share with you as well...

Furthermore, there is a *mitzva* of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* (settling the land of Israel) *per se*, but I won’t expand upon this now.

The most striking example of the halakhic significance of *Eretz Yisrael* is the position of the Ramban (*Vayikra* 18:25) that the observance of any *mitzva* in *Eretz Yisrael* is qualitatively different than that outside of Israel. He holds the radical opinion that *mitzva* observance in the Diaspora is only a preparation for coming to *Eretz Yisrael*, where *mitzvot* acquire their full significance. I find this position astounding and alarming, but one can adopt it in a moderate vein. If Rav Hutner *zt”l* would daven on the airplane on his way to *Eretz Yisrael*, he would put on his *tefillin* again upon arrival. He said, “Before, I put on *chutz la-aretz tefillin*, and I am putting on *Eretz Yisrael tefillin*.” Ramban says that this applies to the whole range of one’s religious experience.

Now, all this is true if one is dealing with a relatively narrow view of *mitzva* observance. Beyond that, however, there is so much more. In *Eretz Yisrael* one should have a sense of standing in the presence of the *Shekhina*, of being nestled, as it were, in the *cheik ha-Shekhina*, the bosom of the Divine Presence!...

The epicenter of Jewish life today, that which ultimately is going to determine the nature of our communal existence, is in *Eretz Yisrael*. It’s not in London or New York. There are important communities there, and God forbid that we should adopt the attitude of “*shelilat ha-Gola*,” the denial of the validity and value of Jewish life in the Diaspora. Nevertheless, the vital center is here. If a person wants to be part of the action, here is where it is.

Also, on a practical level, one is able to lead here, much more than abroad, a more organic and integrated life, as opposed to a choppy kind of existence that one leads in the Diaspora. One’s life here attains a greater sense of wholeness, since there is societal and religious value even to the mundane aspects of one’s daily existence. And, of course, there is the challenge of contributing to the building of the Jewish state...

The Rambam says (*Hilkhot Kiddush Ha-chodesh* 5:13) that although today we determine the new month according to calculation and not according to the testimony of witnesses, it is specifically the calculations of the inhabitants of *Eretz Yisrael* that matter. In his *Sefer Ha-mitzvot* (*aseh* 153), he makes the radical statement that if, heaven forefend, there were to be no Jews in *Eretz Yisrael*, there would be no holidays at all! However, in the same breath he reassures us that this eventuality will never arise, for God has promised that there will

always be a Jewish presence in *Eretz Yisrael*. So there is, at least on some minimal level, a continuous thread of Jewish settlement in the land...

All of this – and I’ve only touched the tip of the iceberg – is something which a *ben Torah* needs to feel. At some point in his future, he may find that for personal or professional reasons he must pitch his tent in “the land of his father’s dwelling,” and some value other than “the land of Canaan” is going to define where is going to live, build a home, and raise a family. Yet, at the very least, a *ben Torah* (and certainly one who has studied in *Eretz Yisrael*) should feel the emotional, axiological and halakhic pull of *Eretz Yisrael*...

This appreciation of *Eretz Yisrael* might make things more difficult, because if you don’t settle here eventually, you may have a sense of an unfulfilled dream, an unrealized aspiration, perhaps a tinge of guilt. However, for a Jew, the significance of having aspirations and dreams is critical. We do not subscribe to the conception that it is better to have minimal aspirations so as to have maximal contentment. The moral life, the spiritual life, the religious life, is one of yearning and aspiration. Therefore, this relationship to *Eretz Yisrael* is part of what a person studying here should take back with him.

I hope that as many of you as possible, except for those who have critical roles to fulfill elsewhere, will eventually make *aliya*, and that the choice between “the land of Canaan” over “the land of your father’s dwelling” will not be too difficult. *Aliya* is certainly not as difficult as it used to be...

To conclude, *aliya* is critically important on both an individual and a communal level. Yet, at the very least, even if one feels that at the moment he must remain in “the land of his father’s dwelling,” he should feel deeply the draw of “the land of Canaan.”

4. Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, "Religion and State: The Case for Interaction" in *Arguments and Doctrines: A Reader of Jewish Thinking in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, ed. by Arthur A. Cohen, New York: Harper and Row, 1970. [excerpted]

Underlying Principles

The quest for a sound Jewish position concerning the basic issues of religion and state can only be undertaken by reference to fundamental principles – principles not only social and political, but moral and religious as well. Given the secularist’s premises – and, hence, his priorities – many of his contentions appear almost irrefutable. However, within a different axiological framework, from a religious and Halakhic rather than secular and nationalistic perspective, we may – nay, we must – reach quite different conclusions.

What is this religious framework? Its basic components – each of which may, in turn, consist of a number of elements – are four:

- 1) Man was created by God as a spiritual being, a singular and unique personality, endowed with freedom and vouchsafed a personal relation to God. Metaphysically, he is, therefore, a responsible moral and religious agent, capable of responding to an ethical norm or to a divine imperative.
- 2) The individual realizes himself and fulfills the purpose of his life only insofar as he adheres to God – whether this be understood in conative or contemplative terms – and freely gives himself to Him. Society attains its end to the extent that it becomes a vehicle for, and a manifestation of, personal and collective beatitude.
- 3) Although He is, in essence, wholly transcendent, God has chosen to reveal Himself to created beings and to relate to them – through the very act of their creation, though the indirect expression of His will as manifested in nature and in history, through direct communication with man, and through an ongoing dialectical encounter with him.
- 4) Through the interaction of divine will and human aspiration, a single people, Israel, entered into a covenant with God and thus assumed a unique position in history. As a result of both grace and merit, it became a holy nation, a community committed, individually and collectively, to God and His Torah, and hence invested with a special character and unique responsibilities.

Individual/Community

On the one hand, the opposition of personal liberty and social control assumes for the religious thinker a far more complex character than it may have for the secularist. Confronted with the dichotomy of the individual and the community, the secularist can opt for either. The religious thinker, on the other hand, specifically, the

Jew committed to Halachic values and a Torah *Weltanschauung*, has no such latitude. He cannot abandon personal liberty or communal commitment; he cannot regard either the individual Jew of *Knesset Israel* as simply a limit of the other [...] To the Halachah, both poles in the antinomy – the individual and the community, the moral freedom of the Jew and the historic destiny of Israel – are indispensable positive elements.

It should be emphasized, however, that Judaism does not regard the destinies and development of the individual and the community as merely independent desiderata. It sees them as inextricably intertwined, not only supplementary, but complementary. A spiritually oriented society is not only necessary *per se* as a realization of divine purpose and collective destiny. It is an indispensable condition for the fulfillment of the individual Jew – not only in the obvious pragmatic sense that his total personality cannot properly mature in isolation, or that perhaps, as some would have it, the very notion of a wholly nonsocial human existence is inconceivable, but rather in the far deeper sense that his identification with *Knesset Israel* is an integral aspect of the Jew's personal identity.

Religion/State

From a Jewish standpoint, [...] the interaction of religion and state is theologically not only possible but desirable. But there remain formidable practical (I do not mean simply pragmatic) objections grounded upon the potential danger posed by such interaction. To the committed Jew, genuinely concerned with the maximal preservation of both religious values and moral freedom, the danger is twofold. It threatens Judaism, on the one hand, and the Jew, on the other. The state may seek to impose its authority and values upon religion in order to advance its own secular, perhaps even anti-religious ends. Secondly, [there is] an internal threat, the danger that the spiritual quintessence of religion will be diluted, if not perverted, by its official status.

As its marriage to the state thus endangers organized religion, on the one hand, so it threatens the individual citizen spiritually, on the other. The loss of religious liberty diminishes man's spiritual stature. It fractures the *tzelem elohim*, the "human face divine" within him. Man most fully realizes his potential when he acts and exists as a subject and person rather than as an object; and to live as personality means to live freely, in consonance with conscience and on the basis of moral choice. Consequently, the danger of tyranny is not merely political or social. It is religious.

The secularist prescription would avert some diseases but kill the patient. It would preserve Jews – or rather, some of their civil liberties – and destroy Jewry; not only Judaism, but Jewry. For *Knesset Israel* is not just a social and political entity. It is not merely what James Baldwin says he found in Israel, a collection of individuals bound by the Hebrew language and memories of the European Holocaust. *Knesset Israel* is, in its essence, a spiritual community, or, more specifically, a religious community. It does not simply consist of brothers bound by a common past – important as that may be – but of comrades committed to a common future. We are, by definition and constitution, a people of spiritual destiny and commitment. As Rav Saadya Gaon put it, "our nation is a nation only by virtue of its *Torot*."

Advocates of a secular State of Israel are therefore trying to put a square peg in a round hole. It is not only that the approach is wrong, that it will produce deplorable results. Secularization *ought* not take place, and it *cannot* take place – unless, that is, we are ready to dismantle the community of Israel as it has historically evolved and as it presently exists...

In the generally libertarian climate of modern Western society, attempts at coercion are usually not only ineffectual but destructive. Inasmuch as they generate resentment, they do not simply fall short but backfire. In the present context, therefore, coercion, as a technique of stimulating positive religious observance, cannot generally succeed.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me emphasize that I am not suggesting that all religious legislation is now *ipso facto* out of court. Some laws may aid in preserving our public national character even if they do no materially promote individual observance. I simply point out that by and large, coercion is no longer a feasible and justifiable *modus operandi*; and that now more than ever, our main thrust must be educational. This does not mean that we should introduce total separation of religion and state, a step that could entail the gravest consequences. The modern state has many other means at its disposal besides coercion. The schools are no less a part of its apparatus than the courts.

It should be clear that such reservations about the present value of much specific legislation are radically different from the total opposition in principle espoused by secularists. Before a Jewish state institutes religious ordinances, it must evaluate empirically the overall impact of a given law upon the quality of national and individual religious life. It must ascertain whether the game is worth the candle. The possibility that the resistance engendered will outweigh any gain in observance or commitment; that individual personality will be impaired by the impingement upon civil liberties; that the spirituality and the independence of organized religion will be diluted by its increased affiliation with the state – all must be carefully considered, spiritual gain in one sector being balanced against possible loss in another. However, the right of legislation *per se* does exist. We cannot ignore valid objections to religious legislation; but if we are to maintain a viable Jewish society, either can we assume that they must always be decisive.