

From Satmar to Settler to Secular: What Unifies the Jewish People?

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From Satmar to Settler...

1. Shemot 19:5-8 (Judaica Press translation)

וְעַתָּה, אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי, וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי--וְהֵייתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים, כִּי-לִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ; וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת פְּהַנִּים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ: אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקְרָא לְזִקְנֵי הָעָם; וַיָּשֶׁם לִפְנֵיהֶם אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ ה': וַיַּעֲנוּ כָל-הָעָם יַחְדָּו וַיֹּאמְרוּ, כָּל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה; וַיָּשָׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶת-דְּבָרֵי הָעָם אֶל-ה'.

"And now, if you obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be to Me a treasure out of all peoples, for Mine is the entire earth. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of princes and a holy nation." These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel. Moses came and summoned the elders of Israel and placed before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. And all the people replied in unison and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we shall do!" and Moses took the words of the people back to the Lord.

2. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, “Centrist Orthodoxy: A Spiritual Accounting,”

<https://www.etzion.org.il/en/centrist-orthodoxy-spiritual-accounting>

When all is said and done, we should recognize and realize that what we share with the Rightist community far, far outweighs whatever divides us—although, in the nature of things, the focus within the community is upon the divisive element. I sometimes have the feeling that, with regard to perceiving that community, we are often somewhat remiss.

Ernst Simon, a professor of education at the Hebrew University, once remarked with reference to the dilemma of a religious professor in Jerusalem (remember, this was years ago), that “The people you can talk to, you can’t *daven* with, and the people with whom you can *daven*, you can’t talk.” For *benei Torah*, of course, the shared universe of Talmudic discourse, of *havayot de-Abbaye ve-Rava*, serves as a great cementing force. But even amongst *benei Torah*, many in our camp no doubt find it easier to talk, perhaps even to work, with an intelligent secular colleague than with a Karliner chassid, forgetting that the pleasantries attendant upon passing the time of day cannot compare with a shared vision of eternity. Surely we need to recognize, and the point can hardly be overemphasized, that our basic affinity is with those—past, present or future—to whom *tzelem E-lokim*, *malkhut Shamayim* and *avodat Hashem* (the divine image, divine sovereignty, and the service of G-d) are the basic categories of human existence.

Nevertheless, important differences clearly do exist, and these relate to substance as well as to style, to strategy no less than to tactics. While an abstract eschatological vision may be common, its specific content may vary, and quite significantly so. While the ideal of “a holy nation” animates us all, its definition is far from agreed. And if we all labor with an eye to certain ultimate questions, we may—and do—differ greatly with regard to the respective weight to be assigned to them.

3. Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, “We Love Satmar Chasidim,” <http://www.ravaviner.com/2018/10/we-love-satmar-chasidim.html>

We love Satmar Chasidim because their philosophy is not based on hatred of Eretz Yisrael but, just the opposite, they love Eretz Yisrael so much that they do not want its holiness to be damaged. It is therefore forbidden to return to it before the proper time. This is similar to Rav Yehuda in the Gemara. On the one hand, he said that anyone who ascends from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael violates a positive Mitzvah (Berachot 24b). On the other hand, he loved Eretz Yisrael so much that he held, unlike others, that a special blessing was made on balsam oil: we bless Hashem "who creates oil of OUR LAND" (ibid. 43a). Rav Yehuda both loved Eretz Yisrael greatly and held that it was not yet time to return there (Kerem Chemed on Berachot 24b. Torat Ha-Temarim Al Ha-Torah U-Moadim p. 141). We obviously do not agree with this position of Satmar, since we received from our Rabbis that the beginning of the Redemption has already arrived...

4. Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, "We Love Satmar Chasidim," <http://www.ravaviner.com/2018/10/we-love-satmar-chasidim.html>

We love Satmar Chasidim because our disagreement with them is about the means, not the goal. There is no essential difference between our goal and theirs. In the end, everyone wants the entire Jewish People to settle in Eretz Yisrael. Everyone wants there to be a Jewish State and a Jewish army. Everyone wants that State to be holy, and everyone wants the Nation that dwells in Zion to be holy. The difference is only over the proper pathway, the proper means to achieve this end and the proper time to do so.

5. Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, Vayoel Moshe, Introduction, pp. 9-10 (True Torah Jews translation)

The same was true of this bitter "calf" of creating a state before the coming of moshiach. The Zionists launched this defiled idea many years ago, and aggressive actions were taken in various ways to facilitate the violation of the Oaths. Due to our many sins, most of the Jewish people, in all the various organizations they belonged to, became the means to assist in the project. Even among the most religious Jews, who fought hard against the Zionists' destruction of Torah, heresy and atheism, R"L, many still approved of the essence of the Zionist ideal - to free ourselves from exile and found a state before the coming of moshiach, which is the poisonous root of the movement. This is because the evil inclination is powerful and blinds people's eyes to this truth. Most people did not think it through, and so they became accessories to the transgression in various ways - some by action and some by the spoken word – and were too blind to see that it might cost them their lives. I do not wish to go on at length about this point and explain it in detail. But one who studies the matter can see the truth.

6. Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, Vayoel Moshe, Introduction, p. 12 (True Torah Jews translation)

And those groups who joined them, claiming that the purpose of their participation was to improve and introduce the path of Torah among the heretics as well, became the intermediaries to draw in good Jews and involve them in this forbidden idea of establishing a state, thinking that there are at least some participants (members of the government) who could improve the situation and campaign for the Torah. Later they fall completely into the net of heresy, via the bridge built by the religious groups who participate in the Zionist government.

7. Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, Vayoel Moshe, Introduction, p. 23 (True Torah Jews translation)

It is clear to me that the primary reason why people mistakenly support Zionism is because they have not properly analyzed the halacha of the Three Oaths, and therefore do not accurately understand the severity of the dreadful prohibition of founding a government before the actual end of exile arrives.

...to Secular

8. Bereishit 17:19 (Judaica Press translation)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶבְרָהָם אֵשֶׁתְּךָ יִלְדֶת לְךָ בֵן וְקָרָאתָ אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יִצְחָק וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתּוֹ לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְזָרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו.

And G-d said, "Indeed, your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac, and I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his seed after him."

9. Shemot 6:7-8 (Judaica Press translation)

וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהִנֵּיתִי לְכֶם גְּאֻלִּים וַיִּדְעֻתֶם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִתַּחַת סְבָלוֹת מִצְרַיִם: וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יְדֵי לָתֵת אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלְיַעֲקֹב וְנִתַּתִּי אֹתָהּ לְכֶם מִרְשָׁה אֲנִי ה'.

And I will take you to Me as a people, and I will be a G-d to you, and you will know that I am the Lord your G-d, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land, concerning which I raised My hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you as a heritage; I am the Lord.

10. Bamidbar 23:9 (Judaica Press translation)

כִּי־מֵרֵאשִׁי, צָרִים אֲרָאֵנּוּ, וּמִגְבְּעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֵנּוּ; הֵן־עַם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן, וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב.

For from their beginning, I see them as mountain peaks, and I behold them as hills; it is a nation that will dwell alone, and will not be reckoned among the nations.

11. Esther 4:13 (Judaica Press translation)

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶרְדֵּכַי לְהִשָּׁיב אֶל־אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־תְּדַמֶּי בְּנַפְשְׁךָ לְהַמְלִיט בַּיַּת־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל־הַיְהוּדִים.
And Mordechai ordered to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine to yourself that you will escape in the king's house from among all the Jews."

12. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Kol Dodi Dofek (Gordon translation), pp. 55-56

First, the awareness of shared fate appears as that of shared experience. We are all in the realm of a shared fate that binds together the different *strata* of the nation and does not discriminate between classes and individuals. Fate does not distinguish between nobility and common folk, between rich and poor, between a prince dressed in royal purple velvet and a poor man who goes begging from door to door, between a pious Jew and an assimilationist. Even though we may speak a mix of different languages, even if we are citizens of different lands, even if we look different (one being short and black, the other tall and blond), even if we live in different economic systems and under different living conditions (the one living in a royal palace, the other in a humble cave), we have but one fate. When the Jew in the cave is attacked, the security of the Jew standing in the courtyard of the king is jeopardized.

Second, the awareness of shared historical experience leads to the experience of shared suffering. A feeling of empathy is a basic fact in the consciousness of shared Jewish fate. The suffering of one segment of the nation is the lot of the entire community.

13. Rabbi Avraham Eliyahu Kaplan, B'Ikvot haYir'ah, pp. 85-91 (VBM translation)

[Theodor Herzl] did not teach us Torah; he did not teach us Halakha or Aggada. He did not teach us any Jewish studies nor Mussar (Jewish ethics), as he was never taught these subjects. He was raised in surroundings where this knowledge did not exist.

However, he taught us two words, words that we never dared to pronounce (*Yona* 1:9): "*Ivri anokhi*," "I am a Hebrew man!" In our *beit midrash* we could make this claim, we could even write it in our newspapers; but there was one place in which we could not, in the international arena...

Herzl taught us what we know today: to stand tall and proud before the world and demand our right to return to our homeland.

Spiritual unity

14. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Kol Dodi Dofek (Gordon translation), p. 54

A Jew cannot banish the G-d of the Jews from his world. Even if he desecrates his Shabbat, defiles his table and his bed, and tries to deny his identity, he will not escape the dominion of the G-d of the Jews, which follows him like a shadow. So long as a person's physiognomy testifies to his birth, so long as Jewish blood flows in his veins, and so long as his flesh is Jewish, he is compelled to serve the G-d of the Hebrews. There is no counsel or tactic that can oppose Him. Even if the Jew who spurns his people should soar to the farthest heavens, from there the hand of the G-d of the Hebrews shall reach him. Where shall the Jew go to flee the G-d of the Hebrews and where can he escape from His presence?

15. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Tanya, chapter 19 (R' Tzvi Freeman translation)

ולכן נקראת אהבה זו בנפש האלקית, שרצונה וחפצה לדבק בהי חיי החיים ברוך הוא, בשם אהבה מסותרת כי היא מסותרת ומכוסה בלבוש שק דקליפה בפושעי ישראל, וממנה נכנס בהם רוח שטות לחטוא, כמאמר רז"ל: אין אדם חוטא כו'
For this reason, this love of the divine soul, whose desire and wish is to unite with G-d, the blessed fountain-head of all life, is called "hidden love," for it is hidden and veiled, in the case of the transgressors of Israel, in the sackcloth of the *kelipah*, whence there enters into them a spirit of folly to sin, as the Rabbis have said, "A person does not sin unless the spirit of folly has entered into him."

16. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Tanya, chapter 19 (R' Tzvi Freeman translation)

אבל שרש ועיקר של בחי' חכמה שבנפש האלקית הוא במוחין ואינה מתלבשת בלבוש שג' דקליפה שבלב בחלל השמאלי בבחי' גלות ממש. רק שהיא בבחי' שינה ברשעים ואינה פועלת פעולתה בהם כל זמן שעסוקים בדעתם ובינתם בתאות העולם. אך כשבאים לידי נסיון בדבר אמונה שהיא למעלה מהדעת ונגעה עד הנפש לבחי' חכמה שבה אזי היא ניעורה משנתה ופועלת פעולתה בכח ה' המלווה בה. וכמ"ש ויקץ כישן ה' לעמוד בנסיון באמונת ה' בלי שום טעם ודעת ושכל מושג לו להתגבר על הקליפות ותאוות עוה"ז בהיתר ובאיסור שהורגל בהם ולמאוס בהם ולבחור לו ה' לחלקו ולגורלו למסור לו נפשו על קדושת שמו ואף כי הקליפות גברו עליו כל ימיו ולא יכול להם כמארז"ל שהרשעים הם ברשות לבם מ"מ כשבא לידי נסיון בדבר אמונה בה' אחד שיסודתה בהררי קודש היא בחי' חכמה שבנפש האלקית שבה מלווה אור א"ס ב"ה הרי כל הקליפות בטלים ומבוטלים והיו כלא היו ממש לפני ה'.

Yet the root and core of this faculty of the divine soul remains in the brain and does not clothe itself in the sackcloth of the *kelipah* in the left part of the heart, in veritable exile, but it is, as it were, dormant in the case of the wicked, not exercising its influence in them so long as their knowledge and understanding are preoccupied with mundane pleasures. Nevertheless, when they are confronted with a test in a matter of faith, which transcends knowledge, touching the very soul and the faculty of *chochmah* within it, at such time it is aroused from its sleep and it exerts its influence by virtue of the Divine force that is clothed in it, as is written, "Then the Lord awoke as one out of sleep." [On such occasion the sinner is inspired] to withstand the test of faith in G-d, without any reasoning, or knowledge, or intelligence that may be comprehended by him, and to prevail over the *kelipah* and temptations of this world, whether permitted or prohibited, to which he had been accustomed—even to despise them, and to choose G-d as his portion and lot, yielding to Him his soul [to suffer martyrdom] in order to sanctify His Name. For, even though the *kelipot* had prevailed over him all his life and he was impotent against them, as the Rabbis have said that "The wicked are under the control of their heart," yet when he faces a test challenging his faith in the One G-d, [a faith] which has its roots in the uppermost heights of holiness, namely, the faculty of *chochmah* of the divine soul, in which is clothed the light of the blessed *En Sof*, then all the *kelipot* are made null and void, and they vanish, as though they had never been, in the presence of the Lord.

17. Yaffa Eliach, Chassidic Tales of the Holocaust (https://www.ou.org/life/torah/brander_balak_holy_jews)

On the eve of Yom Kippur, at the height of tension a few Hasidim, approached the Rebbe and asked him to approach Schneeweiss and request that on Yom Kippur his group not be assigned to any of the thirty-nine main categories of work, so that their transgression of the law by working on Yom Kippur would not be a major one.

The rabbi was very moved by the request of his Hasidim and despite his fears, for he would have to disclose his identity, went to Schneeweiss. He knew quite well that Schneeweiss did not have much respect for Jewish tradition.

"You probably remember me. I am the Rabbi of Pruchnik, Rabbi Israel Spira." Schneeweiss did not respond. "You are a Jew like myself," the rabbi continued. "Tonight is Kol Nidrei night. There is a small group of young Jews who do not want to transgress any of the thirty-nine main categories of work. It means everything to them. It is the essence of their existence. Can you do something about it? Can you help?"

The rabbi noticed that a hidden shiver went through Schneeweiss as he listened to the rabbi's strange request. The rabbi took Schneeweiss's hand and said, "I promise you, as long as you live, it will be a good life. I beg you to do it for us so that we may still find some dignity in our humiliating existence." The stern face of Schneeweiss changed. For the first time since his arrival at Janowska, there was a human spark in it.

"Tonight I can't do a thing." said Schneeweiss, the first words he had uttered since the rabbi had come to him. "I have no jurisdiction over the night brigade. But tomorrow, on Yom Kippur, I will do for you whatever I can." The rabbi shook Schneeweiss's hand in gratitude and left.

...The next day he (Schneeweiss) took them to the S.S. Quarters in the camp, to a large wooden house. "You fellows will shine the floor without any polish or wax. And you, rabbi, will clean the windows with dry rags so that you will not transgress any of the thirty-nine major categories of work." He left the room abruptly without saying another word.

At about twelve o'clock noon, the door opened wide and into the room stormed two angels of death, S. S. men in their black uniforms, may their names be obliterated. They were followed by a food cart filled to capacity. "Noontime, time to eat bread, soup, and meat," announced one of the two S. S. men. The room was filled with an aroma of freshly cooked food, such food as they had not seen since the German occupation: white bread, steaming hot vegetable soup, and huge portions of meat.

The tall S.S. man commanded in a high-pitched voice, "You must eat immediately, otherwise you will be shot on the spot!" None of them moved. The rabbi remained on the ladder, the Hasidim on the floor. The German repeated the orders. The rabbi and the Hasidim remained glued to their places. The S. S. men called in Schneeweiss. "Schneeweiss, if the dirty dogs refuse to eat, I will kill you along with them." Schneeweiss pulled himself to attention, looked the German directly in the eyes, and said in a very quiet tone, "We Jews do not eat today. Today is Yom Kippur, our most holy day, the Day of Atonement."

...Schneeweiss, composed, his head high, repeated the same answer. "We Jews obey the law of our tradition. Today is Yom Kippur, a day of fasting."

The German took out his revolver from its holster and pointed it at Schneeweiss's temple. Schneeweiss remained calm. He stood still, at attention, his head high. A shot pierced the room. Schneeweiss fell.

The rabbi and the Hasidim stood as if frozen in their places.

They could not believe what their eyes had just witnessed. Schneeweiss, the man who in the past had publicly transgressed against the Jewish tradition, had sanctified G-d's name publicly and died a martyr's death for the sake of Jewish honor. "Only then, on that Yom Kippur day in Janowska," said the rabbi to his Hasidim, "did I understand the meaning of the statement in the Talmud: 'Even the transgressors in Israel are as full of good deeds as a pomegranate is filled with seeds'" (Berachot 57a, Eruvin 19a).

18. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Tanya, chapter 32 (R' Tzvi Freeman translation)

והנה ע"י קיום הדברי הנ"ל להיות גופו נבזה ונמאס בעיניו רק שמחתו תהיה שמחת הנפש לבדה הרי זו דרך ישרה וקלה לבא לידי קיום מצות ואהבת לרעך כמוך לכל נפש מישראל למגדול ועד קטן. כי מאחר שגופו נמאס ומתועב אצלו והנפש והרוח מי יודע גדולתן ומעלתן בשרשן ומקורן באלקי חיים. בשגם שכולן מתאימות ואב א' לכולנה ולכן נקראו כל ישראל אחים ממש מצד שורש נפשם בה' אחד.

Let's say you have accomplished that which we just discussed—you despise the body-self and all you celebrate is the joy of the soul alone. Now you have a direct, easy route to fulfilling the mitzvah of loving another Jew as yourself. And this love will be towards every Jew, great and small. You see, since you despise the body-self, obviously that will not be the critical factor in your relationship with another Jew. That leaves only your soul and spirit—and who can know how great and how high is the soul and the spirit of another Jew in their root and their source in the living G-d? Especially when you consider that all souls are matching and that we all have one Father. That is why all Jews are called brothers—because they literally are brothers at the root of their souls in G-d's oneness.