

Understanding the Approach of Agudas Yisrael

1. Rabbi Dr. Shalom Carmy, First Things May 2018, “Soloveitchik the Zionist”

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

2. Rabbi Aharaon Lopiansky, Time Pieces, “Where Do We Stand?”, pg. 281- 284

Dr. Glick concludes his article with a challenge: “The events of the last thirty years cannot be ignored. The Satmar Rebbe, zt”l, believed them to be *ma’aseh Satan*. Mizrahi (i.e., the religious Zionists) believe it to be “*ischalta digeulah*”. Where do we stand?”

It is a powerful question. I would suggest a twofold response: (1) **we don’t know**, and (2) even if we did know, **it wouldn’t make a difference...**

How can one see the beginning of *geulah* in the emergence of the State when it has perpetrated so much spiritual desecration? Consider the Sephardic community, which had been almost one hundred percent religious before coming to Israel- how spiritually depleted it has become, with an increasing number of its members fostering drugs, prostitution, and murder. Consider its intellectual elite, vehemently anti-religious! Yet, how can we ignore the overwhelming *Hashgachah* (Providence) and *Nissim* (miracles) that G-d has bestowed upon us? The ability for the vulnerable sheep to exist among seventy vicious wolves?...

Thus, our guideline for action is the *Shulchan Aruch*. Neither the term “*ma’aseh Satan*” nor “*ischalta digeulah*” is meaningful in a halachic sense. Under those circumstances wherein the *din* requires us to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael, **we must do so-** even if the Satan is the prime minister and the cabinet members are demons. We must obey the *halacha*.

Conversely, even if the prime minister would wear a *shtreimel* and all the Knesset members would study *daf yomi* together, if the *halachah* determines that an individual should not go to Eretz Yisrael- such as when there is a spiritual advantage to remaining in *chutz la’aretz-* **he should not go.**

3. Rabbi Aharaon Lopiansky, Time Pieces, “Where Do We Stand?”, pg. 281- 284

On the other hand, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai was even willing to surrender the capital city of Jerusalem to spare Jewish lives once he was assured of the continuity of the Torah in Yavneh with no fatal loss to Jewish nationhood. Torah guarantees Israel’s integrity; the conventional trappings of nationhood do not.

Pursuing this line of thought, one would not question why 5 Iyar, Israel’s Independence Day, passed unmarked in Agudas Yisrael and most yeshivah circles. **For the State of Israel is neither sacred nor profane, but rather mundane.** Just as a person is enjoined to make a normal and reasonable effort to secure a job, a house, clothing etc., so too should the *medinah* defend itself against enemies, promote industry and commerce, retain reasonable relations with other groups or nations, and generally secure its communal or national interests. Furthermore, by

virtue of its mundane status, the State can become sanctified when used as a means for furthering Jewish spiritual welfare. On the other hand, it can become degraded when used as a hindrance to it, or even in opposition to it, *chas v'shalom*. However, statehood is never an end or a goal in itself. It is only a means for further accomplishment.

אתחלתא דגאולה - Confidence that Medinat Yisrael is the Beginning of Our Redemption

4. Rabbi Dr. Avraham Steinberg, (2012). Prayers for the welfare of the state and for the welfare of the state of Israel: sources and halakhot. Jerusalem: Yad haRav Herzog Institute, ibid. pg. 61-62

There are those who say that the events linked to the establishment of the State of Israel are fully in keeping with the definition of the First Flowering of Redemption. This view regards the sequence of events which occurred in the last two centuries as signals by God which herald the coming of our final and complete redemption:

- The historical era is in keeping with the Redemption;
- Negative events- the birth-pangs of the Messiah;
- Positive events- signs of the end of the exile and signs which are harbingers of complete Redemption which should come speedily in our days.

5. Talmud, Sanhendrin 97a (Davidson Edition Translation)

תנא דבי אליהו ששת אלפים שנה הוי עלמא שני אלפים תוהו שני אלפים תורה שני אלפים ימות המשיח

The school of Eliyahu taught: Six thousand years is the duration of the world. Two thousand of the six thousand years are characterized by **chaos; two thousand** years are characterized by **Torah**, from the era of the Patriarchs until the end of the mishnaic period; and **two thousand years** are **the period of the coming of the Messiah**.

6. Talmud, Sanhendrin 98a (Davidson Edition Translation)

אמר ר' יוחנן אם ראית דור שמתמעט והולך חכה לו שנאמר (שמואל ב כב, כח) ואת עם עני תושיע וגו' אמר רבי יוחנן אם ראית דור שצרות רבות באות עליו כנהר חכה לו שנאמר (ישעיהו נט, יט) כי יבא כנהר צר (ו) רוח ה' נוססה בו וסמך ליה ובא לציון גואל
Rabbi Yoḥanan says: If you saw a generation whose wisdom and Torah study is steadily diminishing, await the coming of the Messiah, as it is stated: “And the afflicted people You will redeem” (II Samuel 22:28). Rabbi Yoḥanan says: If you saw a generation whose troubles inundate it like a river, await the coming of the Messiah, as it is stated: “When distress will come like a river that the breath of the Lord drives” (Isaiah 59:19). And juxtaposed to it is the verse: “And a redeemer will come to Zion” (Isaiah 59:20).

7. Ramban Vayikra 26:16

וכן מה שאמר בכאן (בפסוק לב) ושממו עליה אויביכם היא בשורה טובה מברשת בכל הגליות שאין ארצנו מקבלת את אויבינו וגם זו ראייה גדולה והבטחה לנו כי לא תמצא בכל הישוב ארץ אשר היא טובה ורחבה ואשר היתה נושבת מעולם והיא חרבה כמוה כי מאז יצאנו ממנה לא קבלה אומה ולשון וכולם משתדלים להושיבה ואין לאל ידם

And also when it says: “Your enemies shall be desolate upon it” it signifies a good news which should spread throughout our exile. Our land will not accept our enemies. This is a great proof and promise to us. For you will not find in all of civilization a land which is good and expensive and was always settle but is now in ruins like [the land of Israel]. For since we have, she has not accepted a nation or tongue. They all try to settle it and are unsuccessful.

8. Rambam, Laws of Kings 11:1 (Translation by Reuven Brauner)

המלך המשיח עתיד לעמוד ולהחזיר מלכות דוד ליושנה לממשלה הראשונה, ובונה המקדש ומקבץ נדחי ישראל, וחוזרין כל המשפטים בימיו כשהיו מקודם, מקריבין קרבנות, ועושין שמטין ויובלות ככל מצותה האמורה בתורה, וכל מי שאינו מאמין בו, או מי שאינו מחכה לביאתו, לא בשאר נביאים בלבד הוא כופר, אלא בתורה ובמשה רבינו

The King Messiah will arise and re-establish the monarchy of David as it was in former times. He will build the Sanctuary and gather in the dispersed of Israel. All the earlier statutes will be restored as they once were. Sacrifices will be offered, the Sabbatical and Jubilee years will be observed, as commanded in the Torah. Anyone who does not believe in him **or one who does not anticipate his coming** not only denies the Prophets, but also the Torah and Moses our Teacher.

9. Rabbi Yissachar Tamar (20th century Israel), Alei Tamar on Yerushalmi Berachot Chapter 1

וכן מצמיח קרן ישועה שמתכוננת הישועה היא שמתפתחת והולכת עד לישועה שלימה כדוגמת הצמיחה.

And such is the meaning of the word “who makes salvation sprout”. For the character of the salvation is that it develops gradually to a complete salvation in the manner of sprouting.

The Call to Action

10. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer (19th Century Germany), Drishat Tzyion 1st Essay

גאולת ישראל אשר אנחנו חוכים מחכים לה אל יחשוב החושב כי פתאום ירד השם יתברך שמו משמים ארץ לאמור לעמו "צאו", או ישלח משיחו כרגע מן שמים לתקוע בשופר גדול על נדחי ישראל ויקבצם ירושליימה ויעשה לה חומת אש ומקדש א-ל ממרומים תרד כאשר הבטיח על ידי עבדיו הנביאים. לא כן קורא המשכיל. וודאי כל ייעודי הנביאים יתקיימו באחרית הימים ולא יפול חס וחלילה דבר ארצה ולא במנוסה נלך ולא בחיפזון יום אחד כי אם מעט מעט תבוא גאולת ישראל לאט לאט תצמיח קרן ישועה עד וישראל יעשה חיל וישגה מאד באחריתו בקיום כל הייעודים והבטחות של הנביאים הקדושים כאשר אברר בעזרת השם מן הכתובים ומדברי רבותינו ז"ל וגם המושכל יסכים לה

The redemption of Israel that we are desperately waiting for, do not think that **suddenly** Hashem will descend from the heavens to the land to say to his people "come out", or send his Messiah from heaven to blow a great shofar on the rejected of Israel and gather them to Jerusalem and make for it a wall of fire, or that the temple of G-d will descent from on high as promised by his servants the prophets. Not so the educated reader. Surely all the predictions of the prophets will be fulfilled in the last days and G-d forbid nothing will fall to the ground, but not in flight will we go not in a hurry in one day. Rather bit by bit the redemption of Israel will come, slowly, slowly the pride of salvation will sprout until Israel takes up force and achieves its end in fulfilling all the predictions and promises from the Scriptures and the words of our late rabbis, and also logic dictates this.

11. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Kol Dodi Dofek, “Missing the Appointed Hour”

If God’s grace, which is given to either an individual or a community, requires certain actions of the beneficiary, even if the gifts (such as wealth, honor, influence, power, etc., which are attained by exhausting effort) are granted to man by natural means, how much more so is it true that Divine gifts given supernaturally, in the form of miracles that transcend the framework of the elementary laws of historical causality, must subject the recipient of the miracles to God. Miraculous grace places upon man an absolute responsibility to fulfill the larger imperative that calls out from the miracle. A transcendental imperative always accompanies miraculous activity. “Command the Children of Israel” (e.g., [Numbers 5:2](#), 28:1, 34:2, 35:2). Woe unto the beneficiary of a miracle who does not

recognize it for what it is, and whose ear is deaf to the echo of the imperative that arises out of this metahistorical event. Pity the one who benefits from the miracles of the Master of the Universe but the spark of faith is not kindled in him, and his conscience is not stirred by the sight of this singular event.

Just A Means To an End?

12. Rabbi Joseph B. Soleveitchik, The Rav Speaks: Five Addresses on Israel, History, and the Jewish People pg. 154 (tr. S.M Lehrman and A. H Rabinowitz

Providence demands from us now, perhaps for the first time in Jewish history to meet the outside world with pride and courage, with the *kippah* on the head and the tractate *Yibamoth* in the hand, and to sanctify it by conquest... Wherever we place our feet- be it in the laboratory or in the business office, in the university campus or in the factory- must be sanctified by is: that the young man who enters these subdue them and does not allow the secular to swallow up the holy.

13. Rabbi Eliezer Melamed (21st century Israel), The Mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel

<https://www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/133>

בעת הכרזת המדינה, זכה עם ישראל אחר אלפיים שנות גלות לחזור ולקיים את מצוות ישוב הארץ. שעל ידי הכרזת המדינה והחלת הריבונות על חלקים מארץ ישראל, התחלנו לקיים את המצווה שהארץ תהיה בידינו ולא ביד אומה אחרת. שכל זמן שארץ ישראל תחת ריבונות של עם זר, אפילו אם יגורו בה יהודים רבים, אף שכל אחד ואחד מקיים בישיבתו בארץ מצווה פרטית, מכל מקום את עיקר המצווה, שהיא מצווה כללית של ישוב הארץ אין מקיימים. ורק על ידי החלת ריבונות ישראלית על ארץ ישראל זוכים אנו לקיים את מצוות ישוב הארץ.

At the time of the declaration of the state, the people of Israel merited after two thousand years of exile to return and keep the commandment to settle the land. That by declaring the state and applying sovereignty to parts of the Land of Israel, we began to keep the mitzvah that the land would be in our hands and not in the hands of another nation. As long as the Land of Israel is under the sovereignty of a foreign people, even if many Jews live in it, even though each and every one observes a private mitzvah in his yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael, in any case the main mitzvah, which is a general mitzvah of settling the land, is not observed. And only by applying Israeli sovereignty over the Land of Israel do we gain the observance of the commandment to return to the land

14. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, Orot, Lights from Darkness, Land of Israel, Chapter 8

בתוך הלב פנימה, בחדרי טהרתו וקדושתו, מתגברת היא השלהבת הישראלית, הדורשת בחזקה את ההתקשרות האמיצה והתדירה של החיים אל מצות ד' כולן, לצקת את רוח ד', רוח ישראל המלא הכללי הממלא את כל חללה של הנשמה, בתוך כל הכלים הרבים המיוחדים לה, להביע את הבטוי הישראלי המלא בהבלטה גמורה, מעשית ואידיאלית. הרשפים מתגברים בלב הצדיקים, יקוד אש קודש יוקד ועולה, ובלב כל האומה הוא בוער מימים ימימה ([ויקרא ו:1](#)) אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תכבה", ובלב כל ריקנים שבישראל ובלב כל פושעי ישראל האש בוער ויוקד בפנימי פנימיות, ובכללות האומה כולה כל חפץ החירות וכל תשוקת החיים, כל תשוקת חיי הכלל והפרט, כל תקוה של גאולה, רק ממקור מעין חיים זה הם נובעים, כדי לחיות את החיים הישראליים במלואם בלא סתירה ובלא הגבלה, וזאת היא תשוקת ארץ ישראל, אדמת הקודש, ארץ ד', שבה המצות כולן מתגלמות ומתבלטות בכל חטיביותן.

Inside the heart, in the rooms of its purity and holiness, the Jewish flame increases, which strongly demands the courageous and frequent attachment of life to the commandments of G-d. To pour the Spirit of G-d, the full Spirit of Israel that fills the whole space of the soul, within all the many vessels that are special to it. To express the full Jewish expression with complete prominence both practically and idealistically. The flames increase in the heart of the righteous, the fire of the sacred fire burns up and rises, and in the heart of the whole nation it burns from time immemorial, "a constant fire kindled on the altar, it shall not be extinguished (Leviticus 6: 6). And in the

heart of all the empty ones in Israel and in the heart of all Israel's criminals the fire burns and burns inwardly. And in the whole nation the whole desire for freedom and all the desire for life- both of the individual and the nation, the hope of redemption, only flow from this fountain of life to live the Jewish life fully without contradiction and without limitation, and this is the desire of the Land of Israel, the Holy Land, the Land of G-d, where the mitzvot are all embodied and stand out in all their divisions.