

Restorative Utopias: The Settlers and the Bible

Liran Shia Gordon and David Ohana

In memory of Michael Feige

The settlers are metaphorically returning to the land of Canaan, to that ancient land as the forefathers of the nation saw it when they first arrived there, and their activities are a symbolic reconstruction of the conquest of the land. In their view, they are not coming to a land of Arab villages, refugee camps and army camps; they are coming to Hebron and Shechem just as their forefathers did, and to Jericho, Ai and Givon as Joshua did.

Michael Feige, *Al Da'at Hamakom*¹

The connection between the Bible and the Land of the Bible – the realms of memory of Judea and Samaria – is the most important matter in the settlers' political theology. The attitude to the Bible is a seismograph for scrutinizing the attitude of Zionism, in general, and that of the settlers, in particular, to their ideological and political world view. To where in the Bible are the settlers returning? To the Land of Canaan, to the land of the Patriarchs, or perhaps to the Kingdom of David? And what is the meaning of this return? It is not only the land that is basic to this question, but the relationship of the Land of Israel to the people of Israel. This *credo* is the basis of the settlers' ideal. The early leaders of the Zionist movement and the figures of the Second Aliyah turned to the Bible to establish their claims to the land. They were reluctant to base their right to the land on the divine promise.² Religious Zionism combined the divine promise with Zionist ideology, which is essentially secular. It was only after the Six-Day War in 1967 that the religious settling project made the biblical promise of the land the sole basis of the legitimacy, at once political and theological. *Gush Emunim* [The Bloc of the Faithful], was an Israeli Orthodox Jewish,

We would like to express our gratitude to Avi Sagi, Dov Schwartz, Karma Ben-Johanan, Gilad Sharvit, Aviad Markovitz and Eli Rotenberg for their assistance and intriguing conversations.

¹ Michael Feige, *Al Da'at Hamakom, Israeli Realms of Memory* [In Hebrew] (Midreshet Ben-Gurion: Ben-Gurion University Press, 2017), 161.

² Anita Shapira, "The Bible and Israeli Identity," *AJS review* 28, no. 1 (April 2004).

messianic, right-wing activist movement, which fine-tuned the project and brought it to fruition was the most decisive, methodical political theology in the seventy years of the existence of the State of Israel.

For broad circles of religious Zionism, the State of Israel is a stage in the Redemption, about which it was said, in the religious kibbutz movement as well, that it is “the first manifestation of the approach of our redemption.”³ The secular political echelon in the State of Israel would be absorbed into the messianic movement as a *sine qua non*, as an essential stage that cannot be dispensed with. This attitude to the State, as a stage in the process of redemption, permeated the philosophy of history of the followers of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacoen Kook, his son Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, the leaders of *Gush Emunim*, and major rabbis of settler Zionism, for whom the biblical kingdom of Israel is a restorative model destined to take over from the secular political structure.

Gershom Scholem distinguished between a restorative (regenerative) messianism intended to revive a political or social model from the past, as in “renew our days as of old”, and a “utopian messianism” that takes place after an apocalyptic crisis and diverges from historical time, entering a different kind of time. The restorative utopia, in his view, is a redemption that takes place in the future but restores a historical golden age, or as he puts it, “This utopianism seizes upon all the restorative hopes turned toward the past [...]”.⁴ In this sense, the biblical land of secular Zionism is not the settlers' land. Native-born Israelis like Amos Kenan, Haim Guri and other secular figures longed for the biblical homeland, the land of the Bible, but did not put their yearnings to practical effect and did not participate in the settler movement.

³ For the messianic basis in religious Zionism, see Dov Schwartz, *Religious-Zionism: History and Ideology* (Boston, CT: Academic Studies Press, 2009). See also David Ohana, “Nationalizing Land: Gershom Scholem’s Children and the ‘Canaanite Messianism’,” in *Nationalizing Judaism: Zionism as a Theological Ideology* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 95-130.

⁴ Gershom Scholem, “Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1971), 13; Moshe Idel, “Messianic Scholars: On Early Israeli Scholarship, Politics and Messianism,” *Modern Judaism* 32, no. 1 (February 2012). Moshe Idel, *Old Worlds, New Mirrors: On Jewish Mysticism and Twentieth-Century Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). For further reading see: Kenneth Seeskin, *Jewish Messianic Thoughts in an Age of Despair* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Michael L. Morgan and Steven Weitzman (eds.), *Rethinking the Messianic Idea in Judaism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014); Randi Rashkover and Martin Kavka (eds.), *Judaism, Liberalism, and Political Theology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

For this reason, our article will not deal with secular Zionists but only with the biblical land of faith, in which the settlers attempt to create a restorative utopia.⁵ We will examine how the scholars among the settlers reconstructed the locations and names of biblical places as part of the process of the restorative vision. We will present various positions with regard to the claim that there is a linkage between settlers and the Canaanite ideal and the contradictory assertion represented by the settlement movement thinker Yosef Ben-Shlomo that constitutes the foundation of the restorative vision: the future legitimization is bound up with the land of the Bible and not with any state entity. We will describe how the Zionism of faith changed from a national-Zionist enterprise into a religious-messianic enterprise, a notion that puts into practice the restorative ideal, or more precisely, some models of restorative utopias prevalent among the settlers, such as the hyper-statist theocracy of Rabbi Zvi Yisrael Tau; the kabbalistic model of absolute monarchy of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh as opposed to a secular state; and the a-political model of Rabbi Menachem Froman. These models do not encompass the entire range of broad settler faith, or all the streams of settlement in the areas occupied in 1967. In this article, we will mainly address the radical theological facets of the settler movement, not the proponents of Greater Israel, not the prominent settler leaders like Hanan Porat and Yoel Bin Nun, nor the pragmatic faction of *Gush Emunim* (Gershon Shefet, Meir Har-Noy, and others), on whom many studies have been conducted. Our article will focus on the replication of settler theology from the first stage of *Gush Emunim* and the act of settlement, which in the opinion of the settlers is in accord with the continuation and completion of the Zionist project, to a more metaphysical phase, in which the centrality of the act of settlement gives way to Hassidic or kabbalistic thinking. The models which we present, make possible a fresh look at the utopian thinking and radical theology that are nourished by the settler movement and reflect a new, non-homogeneous stage. Of course, the proponents of the messianic-theological program in Judaism do not constitute the whole picture.

The Broader Theological Perspective

⁵ For further reading on Messianism, Redemption and Utopianism in Jewish non-Zionist context, see Pierre Bouretz, *Witnesses for the Future: Philosophy and Messianism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Zachary Braiterman, *The Shape of Revelation: Aesthetics and Modern Jewish Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Vivian Liska, *Giorgio Agambens leerer Messianismus: Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Franz Kafka* (Wien: Schönböcker, 2008); Stéphane Mosès, *The Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Elke Dubbels, *Figuren des Messianischen in Schriften deutsch-jüdischer Intellektueller 1900-1933*, vol. 79 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2011).

Classical Catholic reading holds that the coming of Christ changed the development of sacred history and specifically the relation between God and the Israelites and their relation to the Holy Land. According to Augustine, the Christian Church, as the body of Christ, formed a new covenant that abolished the historical role of the Jews. According to Augustine's *Replacement Theology*, the Jews were kept only as witnesses and lost their unique role in sacred history. With that, their claim to the land of Israel was abolished as well.⁶

An alternative view of the role of the Jews and their relation to the land of Israel was based on the writings of Paul, and had a substantial impact on the development of the Protestant tradition:

God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. [...] all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (*Roman* 11:2, 26-27(KJ))

The vision of the twelve century mystic Joachim of Fiore marked a gradual restoration of the Jews' role in the Christian eschatological scheme of the unfolding of history: "The coming third stage of history would include the return of the Jews to their land. There, they would convert to Christianity and live in brotherhood with a revitalized church".⁷ John Calvin, the most influential theologian in Anglo-American Protestantism, stated that beside the Jews' historical role, they still had a central place in God's plan of salvation: "As the Jews are the first-born, what the Prophet declared must

⁶ On the development of the Catholic attitude toward the Jews in medieval Europe see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982); *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1999). More on the historical development of *Replacement Theology* see Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2004). The *Nostra Aetate* declaration from 1965 marks a new attitude of the Catholic Church toward Judaism and acknowledges the unique relation of God to the Jews: "The Church remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock [...] God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls". However, as opposed to the Protestant reading that was examined above, that designated the Jews with an important eschatological role, the Catholic Church "remembers": The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant". (§4) It is for this reason that the declaration carefully distinguishes between Judaism and the Jews, and the Jewish State, i.e. the State of Israel. The full declaration can be found at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

⁷ Samuel Goldman, *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 23.

be fulfilled"⁸: "God has by no means cast away the whole race of Abraham".⁹ Rumors of a Jewish Messiah (Shabbatai Zevi, 1626-1676) and Jews who were selling their homes and setting out for Jerusalem, together with major theological-political events such as the execution of the English monarch Charles I, were understood as signs of the approach of the last phase of history.¹⁰ This sensitivity to the Jews only emphasized the centrality of the Jews in the Protestant eschatological mind. By the 18th century, the return of Jews to the land of Israel had become part of mainstream American Protestant teachings, as was expressed by Jonathan Edwards, one of the most important American Protestant theologians: "It is the more evident, that the Jews will return to their own land again, because they never have yet possessed one quarter of that land, which was so often promised them, from the Red Sea to the river Euphrates."¹¹

With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, one witnessed a shift from a hypothetical idea to a theological reality. This shift involved a demand for an actual participation in the restoration of Jews and their Land. Wilbur Smith, a professor of English Bible at Fuller Theological Seminary, wrote in 1951, that the establishment of Israel was the "greatest event in Palestine certainly since the destruction of Jerusalem, infinitely more important than the Crusades."¹² John Hagee, one of the most prominent Evangelical pastors, declared that "the birth of the State of Israel confirmed the accuracy of Bible prophecy."¹³ The idea that the establishment of Israel and the return of the Jews to the Land of the Bible was part of sacred history radicalized the commitment of the evangelical movement toward the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, for "I will bless those who bless you" (Gen. 12:3). The Six Day War augmented the theological significance of the historical events which brought together Christianity, the teachings of Judaism, and the return to the Land of Israel and particularly to Jerusalem. A statement published in the *New York Times* by liberal Protestant theologians, led by Reinhold Niebuhr, a month after the war, affirmed:

Judaism has at its center an indissoluble bond between the people of Israel and the land of Israel. For Christians, to acknowledge the necessity of Judaism is to acknowledge that

⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1947), 438.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹⁰ See Goldman, *God's Country*, 140-41.

¹¹ Jonathan Edwards, "Notes on the Apocalypse," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, vol. 5, *Apocalyptic Writings* (New Haven, CA: Yale University Press, 1957), 133-34.

¹² Wilbur M. Smith, *World Crises and the Prophetic Scriptures* (Chicago, IL: Moddy Press, 1951), 181.

¹³ John Hagee, *Final Dawn over Jerusalem* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 9.

Judaism presupposes inextricable ties with the land of Israel and the City of David [Jerusalem], without which Judaism cannot be truly itself.¹⁴

As we have seen in this section, classical Catholic doctrine, as is expressed for example by Augustine, rejected the future role of the Jews and with that, their claim to the land of Israel. However, an alternative eschatological view based on the writings of Paul gave the Jews and their return to Zion a central role in God's salvation plan. The establishment of the State of Israel profoundly affected evangelical Christianity and radicalized its involvement in the restoration of the Jews in the Holy Land as part of their messianic function. John S. Feinberg articulates this involvement:

If we recognize that the modern state of Israel may well be the fulfillment of OT prophecies about the return of Israel to the land preparatory to the tribulation, we should be careful not to do anything which would contribute to her removal from the land. If God is wrapping up His program with the people of Israel at this time, and if that program demands that Israel be present in the land, who are we to try to stop the accomplishment of His purposes?¹⁵

Christianity, throughout its development, was confronted with the questions of the status and validity of the *Old Testament*, Israel as the elected people and their claim to the land of Israel. This confrontation shaped its identity and eschatological mission. In contrast, Islam's relationship to Judaism is much simpler and is not related to its essence. Islam regards Judaism as an obsolete religion. Jewish minorities living under the rule of Islam were treated as second-class subjects, required to pay a special tax called the *jizya*. Consequently, the Jews' claim to the Land of Israel (also called *al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*) is invalid. Hillel Cohen summarizes this as follows: "Islam [...] which sees itself as a revealed religion which replaces Judaism – would contradict its own principles if it adhered to the doctrine of the election of the people of Israel and its right to the Land of Israel".¹⁶ As a result of the century-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an interesting debate has arisen concerning the status of the Jews in Islam and the Jews' right to the land of Israel.

¹⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr et al., "Jerusalem Should Remain Unified." *New York Times*, July 12, 1967, 12.

¹⁵ John S. Feinberg, "Why Christians Should Support Israel," *Fundamentalist Journal* 1, no. 1 (September 1982).

¹⁶ Hillel Cohen, "Islamic Renovated Traditions on the Return of Israel to its Land in the Zionist-Messianic Discourse" [In Hebrew], *Jama'a* 10 (2003): 183.

Though some scholars claim that in ancient Islamic sources the land was promised to the Jews,¹⁷ most scholars reject this claim.¹⁸ However, despite this fruitful discussion which may be important for the future, it cannot be denied that such a discussion is alien to the historical tradition of Islam and their understanding of the Jews. Consequently, whereas the Christian discussion opened new perspectives in this matter, this is not the case with Islam.¹⁹

Name and Place

Secular Zionist settlement did not locate itself in the land of the Patriarchs, but in the land of the Philistines, not in Judea and Samaria, but largely in the coastal plain. The names it chose, many of which are foreign to the place or are those that express yearning. Zionism secularized the biblical language endowing places with mythical significance. For example, Petach Tikva [Entrance of Hope], Rishon LeZion [First in Zion], did not represent a deep theological connection to the land of the Patriarchs, but rather a secular, modern national vision. This secular use of the ancient language was a major tool in shaping the national community.²⁰

In this way, a two-fold dissociation was created – geographic and linguistic. In contrast to secular Zionism, the settler Zionists, reverting to the cradle of the Bible, displayed a theological return both to the place and to the ancient biblical language, even though a large proportion of the proponents of the Greater Israel movement was secular. It is not surprising that in the settlers' journal *Nekuda*, M. Simon criticizes the irony that is reflected in the secular Zionist yearnings to return to the valley and the coast and their disregard of the land of the Bible:

For whom did our hearts yearn in the two thousand years – for Degania and Netanya, or for Beit-El and Shilo? What was the dream of the Jewish people in the darkness of its exile – Caesarea and Herzliya-Pituach or Nablus and Hebron?²¹

¹⁷ Muhammad Al-Hussaini, "The Qur'an's Covenant with the Jewish People Claims to the Holy Land," *Middle East Quarterly* (Fall 2009).

¹⁸ Robert Spencer, "The Qur'an: Israel Is Not for the Jews Claims to the Holy Land," *Middle East Quarterly* (Fall 2009).

¹⁹ A historical episode that reflects the rights of Judaism, Christianity and Israel to Jerusalem and the Holy Land is the crusaders' encounter with Salah ad-Din. For further reading see Paul M. Cobb, *Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 33-35.

²⁰ David Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology: Neither Canaanites nor Crusaders* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 30.

²¹ M. Simon, "The State of Israel is Estranged from the Land of Israel" [In Hebrew], *Nekuda: The Newspaper of the Settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip* 100 (1986).

The return to Philistia stemmed from historical constraints, since the mountains were settled whereas the swamps and the sand-dunes remained vacant.²² This impediment was made into a secular, technological ideal by the pioneers through redemption of the land by making the wilderness bloom and draining the swamps. Settler Zionism did not return to the wilderness but to the abandoned and destroyed historical sites. While the secular ideal of making the wilderness bloom represented hope for the future arising out of the desolate past, the settler project espoused restoration of a ruined place and an attempt to revive it.²³

In settling the land of the Philistines, secular Zionism did not manage to find a substitute for the places of sacred history preserved in the biblical narrative. The inability to reach the regions mentioned in Genesis which were in eyeshot and accessible reinforced the sense of deprivation felt about those places, just as Moses felt when overlooking the Promised Land from Mount Nebo. In this way, Zionism preserved the unrequited yearning and desire for the Land of the Bible.²⁴ In America, the replication of the name of Jericho in the United States formed a link between the Jericho in that country and the biblical Jericho, but at the same time it emphasized its emptiness and distance from the original place.²⁵ However, the proximity yet inaccessibility of Jericho for secular Zionist settlement only reinforced its “absent presence”, to use Martin Heidegger’s expression.²⁶ A good illustration to the creativity and power of the restorative imagination can be

²² Aharon Kellerman, *Society and Settlement: Jewish Land of Israel in the Twentieth Century* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 33-62. See also Dov Weintraub, Moshe Lissak, and Y. Atzmon, *Moshava, Kibbutz, and Moshav: Patterns of Jewish Rural Settlement and Development in Palestine* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).

²³ Boaz Neumann offers a psychoanalytical analysis of the pioneers’ motivations. See: Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism*, trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 29-34, 111-15.

²⁴ Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 173-84. Gideon Bar, "Reconstructing the Past: The Creation of Jewish Sacred Space in the State of Israel, 1948–1967," *Israel Studies* 13, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 1-21.

²⁵ Yehoshua Arieli, "Interpretations of American Nationalism" [In Hebrew], in *History and Meta-History*, ed. David Ohana (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2003), 306-31.

²⁶ Heidegger locates a *not-yet* which grounds the constitution of our own selves, or the Dasein, which “exists in just such a manner that its ‘not-yet’ belongs to it”. Death. Death is not something that comes at the end of our days, death is something one lives at each moment and through which all things attain meaning: “In death, Dasein has not been fulfilled nor has it simply disappeared; it has not become finished nor is it wholly at one’s disposal as something ready-to-hand. On the contrary, just as Dasein is already its “not-yet,” and is its “not-yet” constantly as long as it is, it is already its end too. The “ending” which we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify Dasein’s Being-at-an-end [Zu-Ende-sein], but a Being-towards-the-end [Sein zum Ende] of this entity. Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is. ‘As soon as man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die’”. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 287 [43], 89 [45]. More on the different senses of the *not-yet* see §§46-48. See also Carol J. White, *Time and Death: Heidegger's Analysis of*

found in the words of Ezra Stiles (1727-1795), the president of Yale College. Stiles spoke of the New Republic of the United States as "God's American Israel". However, the establishment of the new American Israel and the duplication of names did not nullify the old Israel and the old places. On the contrary, "the future prosperity and splendor of the United States [...] will be literally fulfilled; when this branch of the posterity of Abraham shall be nationally collected, and become a very distinguished and glorious people."²⁷

Diaspora Jewry related to the holy places by means of language and prayer, thereby neutralizing their immediate presence. The use of the name Jerusalem, for towns, such as the Jerusalem of Lithuania (Yerushalayim de Lita) or the name of Hebron for yeshivas, created an indirect connection with the sacredness of the name. Similarly, secular Zionism maintained unrequited yearnings for places which were within reach. This inaccessibility amplified the role of the language, replacing their absence with the messianic thrust of the Hebrew language.²⁸ In the early days of the State, three major works were published by Orthodox intellectuals that warned of the danger of the secular yearning for the Land of the Bible, and of combining the political with the theological. The three articles were published in consecutive years: the article by the educational thinker Ernst Akiva Simon, "Are we still Jews?" (1951)²⁹; the article by the literary critic Baruch Kurzweil, "The essence and sources of the Young Hebrew (Canaanite) movement" (1952)³⁰; and the article by the philosopher and scientist Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "After Qibiya" (1953).³¹ In all three, the religiously observant scholars warned against the bear hug of the new Israeli nationalism's appropriation of biblical language; they warned of the radical conclusions of the

Finitude (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 67. Following the line of Martin Heidegger's philosophy, post-modern theologians assert that the presence of God is in his absence. An interesting use of the Heideggerian absence is made by the theologian Louis Marie Chauvet to address the mystery of the Eucharist as a "presence of absence". See, Louis Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 61-63.

²⁷ Ezra Stiles, *The United States elevated to glory and honor. A sermon given to the Connecticut General Assembly* (New-Haven, CT: Thomas & Samuel Green, 1783), 6.

²⁸ On the secular theological longing for the ancient sites which was reflected in the adoption of their names, see "A confession Regarding Our Language (Gershom Scholem to Franz Rosenzweig, December 26, 1926) in William Cutter, *Ghostly Hebrew, Ghostly Speech: Scholem to Rosenzweig*, *Prooftexts* 10, no. 3 (September 1990): 417-18.

²⁹ Ernst Akiva Simon, "Are We Israelis Still Jews?" *Commentary* 15 (April 1953).

³⁰ Baruch Kurzweil, "Essence and Sources of the 'Young Hebrews' ('Canaanite') Movement" [In Hebrew], in *Our New Literature: Continuation or Revolution* (Tel-Aviv: Schocken Books, 1959).

³¹ Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "After Qibya," [In Hebrew], in *Judaism, the Jewish People, and the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Schocken Books, 1975), 229-34. David Ohana, "Yeshayahu Leibowitz: Radical Intellectual and the criticism of Canaanite Messianism" [In Hebrew], in *Yeshayahu Leibowitz: Between Conservatism and Radicalism - Discussions of his Doctrine*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2007), 155-77.

secular Israeli nationalism that verged on Canaanism, and they expressed their concern at the rise of “national messianism.” These desires burst out when these places were conquered in the Six Day War. Much has been said about the post-war euphoria, but not enough attention has been paid to the emotional facet of secular Zionism which longed to return to Jerusalem's wellspring.

The land of Israel became nearer and more accessible after 1967. While secular Zionism returned to David, Saul, and Samson employing a moderated interpretation of the literal meaning of the Bible, an interpretation whose purpose was to bolster its ideological precepts,³² the settlers’ “homecoming” to the formative locations made them move from a toned-down interpretation of the Bible to an unmediated interpretation – to a messianic reading. For them, the soil became the *ground*, an interpretative foundation anchoring their mystical messianism.³³

Both secular Zionism and the settlement movement harked back to the biblical names, making widespread use of archeology, through which they returned to places of origin. But their purpose was different. Secular Zionists did so for national reasons, with the aim of forging a collective identity and to justify the return to the land; but the motivation among the settlers was to return to the biblical source, to the places and names in the Bible, through which they could draw nearer to the theological ideal central to their outlook. For example, the archeologist Adam Zartal who claimed to have located an altar on Mount Ebal from the time of Joshua, reasoned that this discovery provided confirmation of the Biblical story.³⁴ Zartal was educated in the left-wing *Hashomer Hatzair* youth movement, so that he cannot be accused of being a settler, but the settlers adopted his research discoveries and appropriated them for their own political needs.

Access to the formative places of the Bible brought ancient history closer and made the land of the Bible accessible to the new Israelis. Bible stories were made concrete. The settlers succeeded in replacing the political-security discourse about the territories with a theological discourse. Areas of land that only the day before had been enemy territory became holy sites. Many Israelis rushed, after 1967, to visit Rachel’s tomb in Bethlehem and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

³² Shapira, *The Bible*, 10. See also Tali Tadmor Shimony, "Teaching the Bible as a common culture," *Jewish History*, 21, no. 2, (June 2007): 159-178.

³³ *Ground* or *Grund* in Heideggerian terms is the basic interpretative principle.

³⁴ Adam Zartal, "Go to Mound Ebal" [In Hebrew], *Ha'aretz*, November 12, 1999.

Using philological and archeological tools, Yoel Elitzur, Ze'ev Erlich and other settlers embarked on a project to reconstruct and assign biblical names to the settlements in Judea and Samaria. Elitzur claimed that it is possible to identify (and cross-reference) many of the names mentioned in the Bible with the names of Israeli localities corresponding to their locations, that at times were precisely preserved and at other times underwent changes. In this way, these researchers wished to create a correlation between the ancient occurrence and the new settlements in the territory, and to prove that the latter were not a foreign element but rather a continuation of an existence that had been cut short. In the introduction to his book, Yoel Elitzur wrote:

In the modern age, starting with the journey of Robinson and Smith in 1838, that produced their basic study, *Biblical Researchers in Palestine*, and up to the present, the point of departure of every geographical, historical study of the land of Israel has been a methodical tracking of the names that were preserved by the Arabs. Based on this, the various historical sources are examined and archeological evidence is collected. The large proportion of names that have been preserved in their biblical form or close to it, have been perceived by many as a kind of “cultural miracle” that has enabled us to return after many years to the land of the Bible.³⁵

In accordance with Elitzur's words, it could, for example, be said that while the changing of the name Jerusalem to *Aelia Capitolina* by the Roman conquerors was intended to root out the Jewish foundations of the city and invalidate the Temple, the preservation of the original names by the Arabs forms a bridge to the original places and times. The demand to return to the biblical names of the biblical places is not a simple demand but is intended to legitimize the new settlements and their residents, who, not only are not strangers to the place but are even continuing the original biblical settlement.³⁶ The return to the land of Genesis is not a return to a place that has been defiled by having been settled by foreigners. The act of settlement does not redeem the place from its impurity but expresses the return of members of the family to their home after many years of wandering in exile – years in which others settled in their homestead.³⁷

³⁵ Yoel Elitzur, *Ancient Place Names in the Land of Israel, their Preservation and Metamorphoses* [In Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2009), 1.

³⁶ On the legitimizing the settlement project see Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts : Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories* (Detroit, MI: Wayne University Press, 2009), 247-82.

³⁷ On the legitimization of the return to the land by the early Zionist pioneers versus the Arabs' claim to the land, see Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism*, 83-89.

Secular Zionism, entrenched as it is in European nationalism, distorted the place names in many cases, thereby positioning itself as a foreign intruder. In this sense, preserving the linkage to the place and the name brought the settlers closer to the Arabs than to the secular Zionists, who had come from Christian Europe. Has the Canaanite-indigenous common denominator between the Palestinians and the settlers displaced the foreign, European Crusader nationalism? Did the “Crusaders” who settled this land become “Canaanites”?³⁸ Secular Zionism did indeed return to the land of Israel and reconstruct biblical names, but it did so in a way that was perceived as Canaanite by many, rather than as religious. Ashkelon and Hatzor are not focuses of Jewish sacredness and are not charged with religious sentiment, but are names that belong to the biblical story divested of religious motifs. Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote in 1927 that many American Christians, guided by their restorative imagination, perceived Zionism to be a religious movement, not understanding that the Zionist pioneers were almost entirely secular socialists: “Accustomed to think of Judaism in terms of religion, [American Christians] naturally interpret Zionism in the same terms, and picture pious colonists for the love of their God endeavoring to re-people and reclaim their Holy Land.”³⁹ This discrepancy between the religious anticipation and the secular reality only accentuates the symbiosis of American Evangelists and the Israeli settlers after 1967, when the Biblical Lands of Judaea and Samaria were retaken.

While the place names were effectively preserved by the inhabitants of the land during Hellenistic rule and up to the Ottomans, Elitzur claims that the Zionist project gave new names to many of the localities, thereby harming the chain of transmission of biblical names. Foreign names of Zionist pioneers like Witkin, Sirkin, Warburg and Hess, in memory of whom villages were established and named in the 1930s, created an estrangement between the biblical localities and the Zionist villages. In many cases, historical names were assigned in places that were not in the correct biblical location, such as Massada, Kiryat Sefer, Yavne, Mevo Horon, and even Efrat. An emphasis on the inaccuracy reveals the radicalism (in the sense of *radix*, root) of Elitzur’s claim, which strives to reconstruct the past with precision.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*.

³⁹ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Pilgrimage to Palestine* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1927), 286.

⁴⁰ For further reading see Maoz Azaryahu and Arnon Golan, "(Re)naming the landscape : the formation of the Hebrew map of Israel 1949-1960," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, no. 2 (April 2001); Saul B. Cohen and Nurit Kliot, "Place-Names in Israel's Ideological Struggle over the Administered Territories," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 4 (December 1992).

The present-day nationalist movements, including Zionism, secularized the language that conceptualized metaphysical sanctity replacing it with modern terms that conceived the physical place as having mythical significance.⁴¹ As the scholar of religion, Mircea Eliade, puts it, constructing the sacredness of a place gives meaning to a person in his world.⁴² Sanctifying the space imparts to the chaotic reality an order and organization, thereby elevating the actual place to a transcendent dimension, a place that is more than a place. A person moves from a simple existence in a space without meaning and in time without purpose, to an existence imbued with deep significance in time and space. This mythologizing of the secular space was one of the main instruments for constructing national communities.⁴³

In contrast to secular Zionism that turned the land of the patriarchs into a “modern graveyard”, as Elitzur defiantly puts it, he views the settlers as having been charged with guarding the biblical heritage.⁴⁴ In a similar vein, Ze’ev Erlich thinks that “The Land of Israel preserved place names throughout the vicissitudes of history [...] It is proper that we too be punctilious in preserving the identity of the land and the footsteps of our forefathers in it.”⁴⁵

Perhaps the greatest success that the settlers had in identifying a link between the land of the Bible and the occupied territories is to be found in the naming of Judea and Samaria, a restorative replication of the name in the Bible.⁴⁶ Since the 1970s, and especially after the Likud, the rightist party, came to power in 1977, there was an increase in the use of biblical terms for what had previously been called the West Bank.

Settlement and Canaanism

⁴¹ Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).

⁴² Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, vol. 42 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). Benjamin Z. Kedar and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (eds.), *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land: Proceedings from the International Conference in Memory of Joshua Praver* (London: Palgrave, 1998).

⁴³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006).

⁴⁴ But it is ironical that several outposts in Judea and Samaria have been named after victims of terrorism.

⁴⁵ Ze’ev Erlich, "House for a Child and not for the Builder" [In Hebrew], *Nekuda: The newspaper of the settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip* 3 (1980): 16.

⁴⁶ In the last decades of the twentieth century, the most commonly used expression for the settlement areas was Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

In Jewish tradition, the land belongs to God and is given to the people temporarily under the conditions of the covenant between God and Abraham, so that it could be taken away from them. The autochthonous (indigenous) myth, the linkage and the correlation between the people and the territory are not unequivocal in the national consciousness, as the case of Uganda demonstrates.⁴⁷ Canaan is indeed the Promised Land, but the territorial validation and the sovereignty is granted by the Holy One Blessed Be He. The biblical narrative is not autochthonous, because the Father of the Nation (Abraham), who was not an indigenous inhabitant, was sentenced to de-territorialization; the framer of the constitution (Moses) transmitted it in the desert, with no locality; and the first settler (Joshua) came to the land from outside. The claim is that although the Hebrews became a nation in the desert on the way to inherit and conquer the land from the indigenous inhabitants living in it, they were only recovering the land for its first, natural owners from the seven peoples who had stolen it.

A different position was expressed by David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister. His biblical-Canaanite perception, whereby he claimed that “the people of Israel or the Hebrew people was born and raised in this land, even before the days of Abraham, as one of the Canaanite people [...],⁴⁸ was not so different from his contribution to the phrasing of the Israel's Declaration of Independence in 1948, in which he stated that “the Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people”. Ben-Gurion, like the Zionist ideologist A. D. Gordon and the first chief rabbi of British Mandatory Palestine, Abraham Isaac Hacoen Kook, wanted to combine the image of the land of Jewish destiny with the image of the homeland.⁴⁹ But there was a discordance in Ben Gurion's social thinking between the idea of destiny and the local-Canaanite conception, and his secular leanings prevented him from sanctifying the land and nurturing messianic Canaanism – a messianism that prioritizes the Land of Israel, a task which religious Zionism took upon itself.

The scholar of Jewish thought, Aviezer Ravitzky, maintained that the Land of Israel fascinated and attracted its sons, especially in exile, and threatened them, frightening them with the metaphysical demand it contained, so that the exiles recoiled at the overwhelming sacredness of the land that

⁴⁷ Moshe Greenberg, *On the Bible and Judaism: A Collection of Articles* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1986).

⁴⁸ David Ben-Gurion, *Studies of the Bible* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), 61.

⁴⁹ Eliezer Schweid, *Homeland and Land of Destiny: The Land of Israel in the Jewish People's Thought* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1979). For the attitude of the *First Aliyah* (immigration) to the land of Israel, see: Yaffa Berlowitz, *Inventing a land, Inventing a Nation: Literary and cultural infrastructures in the creativity of the First Aliya* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1996).

was sometimes taboo, untouchable. Zionism's return to its constitutive place tried to dispel this tension, to banish the fear, and to re-establish the Jew in his Hebrew homeland.⁵⁰

Despite the marginal importance of the Canaanite group as put forward by Yonatan Ratosh, an Israeli poet and the founder of the group, the Canaanite ideal, that emphasized the centrality of the land as its most important component, played a serious role in the Israeli discourse after the conquest of the territories in the Six-Day War. An unholy alliance was formed between Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook and Aharon Amir,⁵¹ in which the head of the Mercaz Ha-Rav Yeshiva offered the Canaanite poet a financial contribution towards the re-establishment of the Canaanite group. Religious Zionism perceived the Torah, the people and the land as a holy trinity in which each of the elements are equal – a people and a land without the Torah are meaningless, just as the Torah alone is not sufficient.⁵² In each era, the order of priorities of these equal elements changes. Scholars who identify *Gush Emunim* as a right-wing iteration of religious neo-Canaanism⁵³ point out that while religious Zionism previously emphasized Torah, people and land, in that order, *Gush Emunim* changed this order to land, people, Torah. So, *Gush Emunim*, in this era, views the land as the key to the entire structure. *Gush Emunim*'s sanctification of the place, combining political theology with the myth of settlement in the boundaries of Greater Israel, dictated its political agenda.

There are those who consider this precedence as a fetishization of the land, an act that provides justification for transgressions related to Torah commandments concerning the preservation of the integrity of the land, an attitude that might lead to the Canaanization of the settlers. Major figures in religious circles warned of messianic and Canaanite tendencies and a potentially disastrous alliance between them. The thinker and religious kibbutz member Eliezer Goldman called Gush Emunim “simplistic messianism”.⁵⁴ Baruch Kurzweil, who at an early stage perceived the Canaanite tendencies of the culture of the Hebrew revival, wrote ironically after the Six-Day War

⁵⁰ See Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, trans. Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁵¹ Author's hearing testimony.

⁵² Gideon Aran, "Return to the Scripture in Modern Israel," in *Les retours aux Écritures: fondamentalismes présents et passés*, ed. Évelyne Patlagean (Louvain and Paris: Peeters, 1993), 111.

⁵³ Uri Avnery, "The Canaanites and Gush Emunim" [In Hebrew], *Ha'Olam Hazeh*, September 22, 1982.

⁵⁴ Aliezer Goldman, "Simplified Messianism" [In Hebrew], *Betfotzot Hagula* (1977): 79-80.

that “the land-based messianism had achieved its goals.”⁵⁵ In 1968, Yeshiyahu Leibowitz expressed a fear that “the State would not be Jewish, but Canaanite.”⁵⁶ Likewise Gershom Scholem, who saw Gush Emunim as a modern version of the Sabbatean movement, said : “I am not interested in a State of Canaan ... what the Canaanites will do, and the Arabs are not Indians.”⁵⁷

According to Boaz Evron, the Canaanites' belief that the absorption of the non-Jewish inhabitants of the occupied territories would destroy the Jewish character of the state made them support the colonization project of the Greater Land of Israel, so creating a right-wing neo-Canaanite-religious synthesis: “The religious Gush Emunim settlement was a dialectical step towards the Hebrew 'Land of Kedem (Old)' which was beyond any ethnic or religious divisions and united the entire population within the framework of a single nation, the Hebrew nation.”⁵⁸ The scholar of Israeli studies, Anita Shapira, described it thus: “There are Canaanite elements in *Gush Emunim*'s ideology that are moderated, to a certain extent, by their religious connection. Like the Canaanites, they too adopted the Land of Israel as a formative factor in shaping their main identity”.⁵⁹ Or, in the words of the Israeli author Haim Be'er, “the people of *Gush Emunim* place their trust in the myth of the Land of Israel. From the trinity in which they were brought up – the Torah of Israel, the people of Israel, and the land of Israel – they select, first and foremost, the land. For them, the land, like myth for the nativists, is the expression of a reality that is more original, more elevated and more important.”⁶⁰ Amnon Rubinstein, the former Israeli minister of education, considered that just as the Canaanites in the Jewish community of the 1940s were a latter-day expression of the Hebrew education of the 1930s, which viewed the negation of the Diaspora as a supreme value, *Gush Emunim* – most of whom were the products of the state-religious education system and graduates of the Bnei Akiva religious youth movement in high-school yeshivas – are the product of the Israeli society of the 1960s.”⁶¹

⁵⁵ Baruch Kurzweil, "Israel and the Diaspora" [In Hebrew], in *Struggle over Jewish Values* (Jerusalem: Schocken Books, 1969), 255.

⁵⁶ Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Judaism, the Jewish People*, 420.

⁵⁷ Ehud ben Ezer, "Zionism - Dialectic of Continuity and Rebellion (Interview)" [In Hebrew], in *Continuity and Rebellion - Gershom Shalom in Statement and Discourse*, ed. Avraham Shapira (Tel-Aviv: Schocken Books, 1994).

⁵⁸ Boaz Evron, *A National Reckoning* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1988), 364.

⁵⁹ Anita Shapira, “The People as Human Beings” [In Hebrew], *Gateway Thoughts* (n.d.), 25.

⁶⁰ Haim Be'er, “Gush Emunim: Canaanites who Wear Phylacteries” [In Hebrew], *Davar*, October 15, 1982.

⁶¹ Amnon Rubinstein, *From Herzl to Rabin and Onward: One Hundred Years of Zionism* [In Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Schocken Books, 1997), 138.

In 1975, the founding of *Gush Emunim* was announced in Kfar Etzion. Kfar Etzion was a religious kibbutz established during the British mandate in 1927, evacuated during the 1948 War of Independence, and re-established as the first settlement after the Six Day War. According to the theology of indigenous inhabitants propounded by Hanan Porat, a resident of Kfar Etzion and one of the founders of *Gush Emunim*, the long-standing biblical time period (*la longue durée*) of the Jewish people linked up with the present settlers' Israeli time. Porat and his colleagues succeeded in instilling in the Israeli national consciousness the idea of Judea and Samaria – the ancient names of the biblical kingdoms that comprise the West Bank – as an intersection in which time and space are integrated: the biblical-historical time of the Jewish people and the holy place of present-day Mount Hebron and Gush Etzion (the area where Kfar Etzion is located).

In this way, the settlement narrative was diverted from the secular time of the War of Independence and the State of Israel to the messianic time of *Gush Emunim* (“the birth of the Messiah together with our region”) and the biblical place, the birthplace of the nation and the Messiah. This development had clear political implications. As the critics of the settlers saw it, the messianism of *Gush Emunim* combined religious-messianic and secular-Canaanite principles. One example of this can be seen in the words of Haim Be'er where he describes the intensive cult worship associated with an oak tree in his classic article, “*Gush Emunim* – Canaanites who wear phylacteries.”

In the wake of the Six Day War, upon their return here, it seemed as though the tree had sunk – like love letters to the beloved one who married you – into the surrounding silence of the hills. But the tree became the center for an intensive cult worship. Experts were brought in who poured concrete into its trunk, so that it wouldn't break during one of the storms. The buildings of the regional school that was established nearby were erected lower than usual, so as not to block the view of the tree even for someone standing at the top of Mount Ora in the Jerusalem Corridor (Would they have behaved like that, with such emotional consideration, if it were a person?). They imprinted its green silhouette on every piece of writing paper, envelope, pamphlet or book they produced. And when the time came to choose a name for the locality, a name that would give expression to the longings for the place, for the land of their forefathers, for nineteen years, they chose a very Canaanite

name, the Oak of Moreh [Elon Moreh], associated with ancient times, when people vested their best feelings in trees and stones.⁶²

Haim Be'er thought that *Gush Emunim* changed the order of priorities of religious Zionism. During the Canaanization process, religious Zionist youth, which had suddenly "woken up", turned to the almost pre-biblical experience of Genesis, to the Land of Israel myth, to the conquest of Canaan. Like Baruch Kurzweil, who maintained that the Canaanites of the 1940s based themselves on the myth of the Land of Israel, in Be'er's opinion the leitmotif of the settlers was the neo-Canaanite myth. Evidence of this can be gleaned from the universal names, Sa'ad [aid], Shluchot [branches], Alumim [youth], or the names of rabbis or intellectuals (Ein Hanatziv [named after Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin], Tirat Zvi [named after Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer], Sde Eliyahu [named after Rabbi Eliyahu Guttmacher], Be'erot Yitzhak [named after Rabbi Yitzhak Nisanboim], Kfar Haroe [named after Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook], Sde Yaakov [named after Yitzchak Yaacov Reines], and Beit Meir [named after Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan] assigned to their settlements by the religious kibbutz movement. *Gush Emunim* in contrast, gave its settlements Canaanite names like Kiryat Arba, Elon Moreh, Kedumim, and Karnei Shomron. The sanctification of the oak tree is a symbol and also a symptom of the process of Canaanization of Kfar Etzion.

Does *Gush Emunim* really have a neo-Canaanite aspect that worships the soil of the land as Haim Be'er, Anita Shapira, Amnon Rubinstein, and others think? In response to these claims Yosef Ben-Shlomo answered that this is a shallow perception bordering on the marginal and does not express the core perception of *Gush Emunim*. He asks, "why is the real, physical, Land of Israel, land of our fathers, important, and why is it the essence of Zionism itself?" and answers that there is no moral sense in preferring Sheikh Munis, where Tel-Aviv resides, to the stony ground of Kedumim. When we do so, he concluded, we exchange the power of right associated with values of historical justification for the right to power given by political facts. Zionism of this type, without Zion and Jerusalem, in his view, changes Zionism into colonialism because it demolishes the moral basis for the people of Israel to settle anywhere in the Land of Israel.⁶³

⁶² Be'er, "Gush Emunim".

⁶³ Yosef Ben-Shlomo, "What is the Highest Value: The Concept of the State or the Concept of the Land? – A Response to David Ohana" [In Hebrew], in *Where Do We Live?*, ed. Yona Hadari (Netanya: Ahiasaf, 2007), 275-82.

Ben-Shlomo claimed that identifying the settlers with the Canaanites ignores the essential difference between them: “Secular neo-Canaanism refuted the unity of the Jewish people in its historic connection to the Land of Israel.” The “Jewish people” were not perceived by him in demographic terms but as an idea. The Jewish people, together with the Land of Israel, are super-political, value-based foundation-stones not subject to political law. On the contrary, it is due to these foundations that the State of Israel enjoys legitimacy: “This idea, that there are super-political values to which the political law is subjugated, originates from the people of Israel.” From this, he extrapolated that in any contest between the State of Israel and the Land of Israel, he chooses to side with the latter:

The highest value in our debate is not the political entity, but rather the historical-moral reality, even if this value is not lawful in the view of the state; and therefore, the right to settle in the Land of Israel is a super-political right. In my struggle over the territory, I am not expelling Arabs. So, I repeat once more that the question is, what is the determining value, the State or the Land?⁶⁴

What makes Ben-Shlomo’s words particularly interesting is their logic, that could serve both right-wing radical settler groups which do not recognize the sovereignty of the State of Israel for religious reasons, and left-wing extremist groups which, in placing their emphasis on democratic values and human rights, are liable to negate the legitimacy of the State of Israel. Here is the rationale expressed in the following words of Ben-Shlomo, intended to justify his loyalty to the Land of Israel over and above the State of Israel:

There are religious, moral or national values that justify deposing a government in order to achieve them. During the French Revolution, freedom and equality were super-political values. In the Second World War, too, De Gaulle left France and declared, “I am France!” while the majority of the French people preferred the Vichy regime headed by Pétain.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ "I have no doubt that we will return to the 47 boundaries'. Interview with Prof. Yosef Ben-Shlomo" [In Hebrew], *Histadrut Hamorim* 6 (July 1998).

⁶⁵ Ben-Shlomo, *ibid.*

This debate between the act of settlement as a neo-Canaanite act, and those who view it as a continuation of the divine promise, leads us to examine the differentiated and contradictory meanings of a political reading of the Bible.

The Rise to Prominence of the Bible in Religious Zionism

The Haskalah (the Jewish enlightenment movement) returned to the Bible as part of its renewal of the Diaspora tradition. The Haskalah was supposed to replicate the link to ancient history, but this was not a classic pilgrimage but a textual journey. Zionism, as an integral part of the building of the nation, dovetailed with nineteenth century European tradition, a tradition that believed in a universal mission, as in Giuseppe Mazzini's dream of a *third Rome*, Johan Gottlieb Fichte's idea of *the first nation*, Poland as the *Christ of the nations*, and even in our own sphere, the proto-Zionist thinker Moses Hess who conceived *Jerusalem* as a national vanguard force.⁶⁶

The Bible became the very core of Zionist ideology because it constituted a super-narrative for the development of the nation, a thread running through the narrative of the Jewish people with its historical birth and its national future. From the time of the Second *Aliyah*, a founding Zionist immigration phase between 1904-1914, the reading of the Bible was transformed from a religious text into a national one. The Torah written in the Hebrew homeland inherited the place held by the oral law in the Diaspora. Socialist values of social justice were inspired by the admonitions of the prophets. The secular society in the Land of Israel secularized the Bible and selected only those elements that suited its values and needs. The author Aharon Megged wrote:

The Bible was studied and read in the Land of Israel not as a religious work, but as a brilliant work of literature, as a compilation replete with treasures, as an historical source, as a geographical and archeological guide, as a spring of wisdom, as a stimulus that awakens the heart to social justice. From the outset and in retrospect, it reinforced the link between the people and the land of the Patriarchs, the cradle of its civilization.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ See J. L. Talmon, *Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1960). See also David Ohana's introduction to J. L. Talmon, *Mission and Testimony: Political Essays, with Epilogue by Isaiah Berlin* (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press 2015).

⁶⁷ Aharon Megged, "Bible Now" [In Hebrew], *Ha'aretz*, July 25, 1986.

Prominent proto-religious Zionist figures in Europe like Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer and Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai understood the redemption of Israel in the historical context of the European national awakening. Since the *Hibbat Zion* (Lovers of Zion) forerunners of Zionism, religious Zionism had not based itself on the Bible but on Talmudic literature. In pointing out that secular Zionism was making the wilderness bloom, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook was returning to the Talmud which stated that "אין לך קץ מגולה מזה": (Sanhedrin 88:62) the time of the redemption will be revealed when the land returns to producing fruit.⁶⁸ The religious Zionists did not come to Israel in order to establish a spiritual Jerusalem (although they did talk of the Temple). They were preoccupied with the real land of Israel, and religious Zionism was an ally and partner of secular Zionism. It was run by pragmatic leaders like Rabbi Yitzhak Yaacov Reines and most of the members of the *Mizrachi*, a moderate religious Zionist organization, who, at a certain stage, accepted the Uganda Scheme – a plan in the early 1900s to give a portion of British East Africa to the Jewish people as a homeland.

Orthodox Judaism displaced the Bible and caused it to be forgotten. Instead, it focused on the Mishnah, the Talmud, Kabbalah, Halakha, and Ethics which dealt with matters of Jewish existence without sovereignty. The Zionist project, that returned to the land and established Jewish sovereignty, challenged Orthodoxy which was now faced with a dilemma which Judaism had not had to cope with for nearly two thousand years. On the one hand, the ultra-Orthodox rejected the Zionist project due to its secularity and shut themselves up within the Jewish cannon. On the other hand, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, with the intervention of his son Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook and his *Gush Emunim* disciples, viewed the Zionist enterprise, despite its secularity, as a dialectical expression of sacredness: "יסוד כסא ה' בעולם" ("the base of the throne of God on earth").⁶⁹ This belief had a fundamental structural importance for their interpretation of the history of redemption (of which Zionism was perceived as an advanced historical stage) and for their understanding of the centrality of the political dimension. For two thousand years, the love of Zion and its yearnings had remained constant. Its renewal and the contribution of the Zionist movement that was joined to a secular political program, led to the establishment of the State of Israel. Rabbi Kook's circle interpreted the revival of Israel as a necessary part of the logic of the history of the redemption.

⁶⁸ Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 58.

⁶⁹ Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, *Light of Israel (Commentary by Rav Ze'ev Soltanowitch)* [In Hebrew] (Har Bracha: Machon Har Bracha, 2008), f-g.

From the point of view of religious Zionism, the establishment of the state was not only a political event but was, first and foremost, a redemptive religious one.

The rise to prominence of the Bible among the religious Zionists after the Six Day War did not take place all at once. The yeshiva world continued to focus on Halakha and Talmud which were dominant until the end of the 1970s. Moderate Halakhic scholars like Rabbis Yehuda Amital and Aharon Lichtenstein at the Har Etzion Yeshiva, or Rabbi Haim Yaakov Goldwicht of the Kerem Yavne Yeshiva continued to place the study of Talmud, not the Bible, at the center. The beginning of the shift to the Bible after the Six Day War did not take place in the study halls but in the pilgrimages of youth movements and individuals in the biblical areas. The Bible served as a guide and every site was identified by means of the biblical text. The text was used as a book of pilgrimage to the actual past.

Whereas the scholar Gideon Aran identified the roots of *Gush Emunim* in the *Gahelet* Group, which was active in the 1950s and drew upon the ideas of both the Rabbis Kook,⁷⁰ the scholars Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz maintained that the influence of those rabbis on *Gush Emunim* only became crucial several years after the founding of the movement.⁷¹ They claimed that *Gush Emunim* was first activated by two principles – rehabilitative and romantic. Religious Zionism felt humiliated and inferior in face of the heroism and pioneering of secular Zionism that led to the establishment of the State of Israel. The rehabilitative principle wanted to enable religious Zionism to stand erect and to give it a central place in the shaping of the national identity of the State,⁷² while the romantic principle wanted to turn the Bible into a factor that created a bridge between the religious aspirations and the biblical sites in the West Bank. With the conquest of the territories in 1967, the radical youth of *Gush Emunim* were exposed to a new-old theological space which allowed them to free themselves from the chains of their moderate parents who had been raised in a secular statehood. The propitious time of the return to the hills of Judea and Samaria was a historic opportunity not only to return to the land of the Bible in the territorial or geographic sense,

⁷⁰ Gideon Aran, *Kookism: The Roots of Gush Emunim, Settler Culture, Zionist Theology, Contemporary Messianism* [In Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2013).

⁷¹ Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism and the Six-Day War* [In Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2017).

⁷² See Dov Schwartz, "The Conquest of the Land and the Attitude to the Nations Inhabiting it: Approaches in Religious Zionist Theory" [In Hebrew], *Kathedra* 141 (September 2011): 79.

but also to return to the foundations of Jewish existence. In this sense, the direct reading of the Bible was in practical reading.

Aran noted that *Gush Emunim* did not derive its biblical orientation from a religious heritage that opposed the central role of the Bible. In his view, *Gush Emunim*'s return to the Bible was not an expression of orthodoxy, but of liberation from it, an outcome of its openness towards the modern secular milieu.⁷³ The demand to bring back the Bible into the center of religious life, a demand that was religiously innovative, embodied a retreat from rabbinical Judaism and, in many senses, joined up with Hebrew secularity which had previously adopted the Bible.

Gush Emunim's attraction to the good-looking folk in the Emek (valley) and the hills stemmed from the vitality and self-confidence exuded by the secular native-born Israelis and from the contempt the latter felt for their exilic parents. The inspiration for the members of *Gush Emunim* did not come from the study-halls of the yeshivas but from Hebrew poems like those of the poetess Rachel, from the "religion of labor" advocated by the secular Zionist A. D. Gordon, and from the kibbutz ethos of the model society. This inspiration and proximity also explain the attraction of important entities, such as the *Kibbutz Hameuhad* [United Kibbutz Movement] to the people of *Gush Emunim*, whom they viewed as their dialectical successors.

Sagi and Schwartz maintained that *Gush Emunim* was gradually taken over by the people of Elon Moreh and the Rabbi Kook Institute, settler leaders like Hanan Porat, and later on, Yoel Bin Nun. In this way, the rehabilitative and romantic precepts were shunted aside in favor of "sacred history" (Heilsgeschichte), an organizational precept in the messianic thinking of the school of thought of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook.⁷⁴ Whereas historical thinking in the vein of Greek traditional thought focused on the past, sacred history is directed towards the future, and is aimed at reforming and completing it. The integration of the notion of a sacred history needed a text that would guide the future reform, and the followers of Kook found this in the Bible. The spirit of the Rabbi Kook Institute, characterized by a clear prophetic foundation, embodied specifically in the figure of Rabbi Kook, found that the canonical books were not suited to the power and vitality required to give expression to the notion of sacred history. Conversely, the Bible with its rich prophetic spirit and its connection to the land, offered a powerful future reading for reform and was therefore

⁷³ Aran, *Kookism*, 117.

⁷⁴ Sagi and Schwartz, *Religious Zionism*.

selected as their guiding text. Two ways of understanding the Bible were created: a "lower" one, which was a literary understanding of the text and its comprehension by the believer; and a "higher" one, in which the text served as a channel for divine instructions and their ramifications in contemporary reality. The Bible functioned as a prophetic text for our times.

The *Gush Emunim* avant-garde made the religious Zionists, who had previously been a fifth wheel on the secular carriage or were considered mere “kosher inspectors”, into leaders of a revolutionary process. In their perception, it was secular Zionism that had restored the land to prominence and the Bible to a position of centrality in the life of the nation, but only religious Zionism had brought this move to a conclusive end. The young people of *Gush Emunim*, the revolutionary young generation of religious Zionism, derived a political-theological program from the fundamentalist union between the Bible and the land.⁷⁵

According to the interpretive perception of *Gush Emunim* there were no separate levels of interpretation. The reading of the Bible was undertaken “barefoot”: *Gush Emunim* members read the Book, looked at the stony ground around them and saw the figures of the past as having a current presence. This unmediated reading led to a new simple interpretation that was more profound. It originated in the simplified reading of the Bible but it took it to a new level: “*Gush Emunim* appropriated the attitude to the simplified reading of the Bible from the secular revolutionary version but added to it the legitimacy of an obligatory religious commandment.”⁷⁶ As long as the romantic principle guided the reading of the Bible, the text revealed and actualized the biblical location. But once the sacred history theology became *Gush Emunim*'s organizing principle, the barefoot reading of the Bible changed from one that actualized the place, to one that bolstered the understanding of the Bible. The physical place became a metaphysical place; the physical place became part of the emergence of the sacred history, and in this sense was part of a holy era.

⁷⁵ This trend had already begun during the rebellion of the young people of the National Religious Party at the beginning of the 1960s, prior to the Six Day War. See, Dov Schwartz, "From Growth to Fulfillment: The History of the Religious Zionist Movement and its Ideas" [In Hebrew], in *Religious Zionism: The Age of Transformations, an Anthology of Research in memory of Zvulum Hammer*, ed. Israel Harel and Asher Cohen (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2004), 124-34.

⁷⁶ Anita Shapira, "The Bible in Israeli Experience" [In Hebrew], in *Modern Jewish Time*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), 169.

Religious Zionism, which had grown out of secular Zionism, can be characterized by two contradictory components – one national and the other subversive. This dialectical tension between the institutional law and the ideal aspect that was expressed in the movement for perpetual correction that can never be fully satisfied, produces a failure in the logic of the idea of a sacred history. The transcendent dimension of the Zionism of settlement prevents the fulfillment that can, or is likely to, lead to the end of days. For secular Zionism bringing the project to fruition leads to post-Zionism in the sense that Zionism has completed its task in the very establishment of the State, while bringing the settlement project to fruition leads to a post-Zionism at the end of days, post-days. In this way, the settler theology maintains the non-fulfillment of the project. The ultra-Orthodox (Haredim), in contrast, who reject their messianism, maintain a dialectical tension between the eternal yearnings and prolonging the end, and so are not caught up in the illusion of realization.

The Bible: Privatization and Restoration

For certain groups in secular Israeli society, the estrangement from the Land of the Bible produced estrangement from the Bible too – even resulting in complete alienation from the land and the text. It should be recalled that the Bible had enjoyed consensus for the Zionism project and had bound together the various ideological factions, but with the conquest of the territories during the Six Day War, there developed an increasing estrangement among parts of the secular public towards the biblical spaces.⁷⁷ The Israelis came face to face with the Palestinians living in these territories. The conquest became a toxic element preventing the forging of an emotional connection to the homeland and the constitutive text, and they were perceived as motivations for continuous reprehensible actions. The religious politicization of the land of the Bible, which correlated with friction with the local population, steadily gnawed away at the way the Bible had been adopted earlier, when it had been a constitutive factor in constructing the foundations of the nation. This erosion in the status of the Bible was clearly reflected in the rise of the “Tel-Aviv school of Israeli

⁷⁷ See particularly, Uriel Simon, *The Status of the Bible in Israeli Society: From National Midrash to Existential Simplification* [In Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Arana Hass, 1999).

archeology".⁷⁸ In the view of this discipline that was rejected by the "Jerusalem school", the Bible does not faithfully reflect ancient historical reality but is a later rewriting intended largely to serve subsequent political and religious aims; therefore the correlation between the Bible and the findings uncovered in the field should be treated critically, and greater weight should be given to archeological discoveries. It is not surprising that the settlers' leaders, like Hanan Porat and Yoel Bin Nun, objected strongly to the Tel-Aviv scholars⁷⁹ who doubted the ability of the Bible to serve as a compass, a doubt that unraveled the imaginary (hegemonic) map of Israeli national identity. If it is not clear where we come from, then we also don't know where we are going.

The Bible became a bone of contention in Israeli society, especially among the secular public (the majority of the religious public accepted the settler narrative). In this way, the Bible lost its state position and went back to being a religious text that plays no part in the lives of most secular people. The biblical text was privatized for various attitude in diverse sectors of Israeli society. For example, in recent years "weekly readings" of the Bible became fashionable in secular circles. This selective and sectorial reading is clear evidence of the privatization of the Bible. While the reaction to the settler movement led some of the secular elite to post-Zionist or even anti-Zionist positions, the settler ideology had difficulty in maintaining homogeneity. It became segmented into various approaches, some conservative and others radical in the sense that they did not confine themselves to existing achievements and extended their horizons further and further.

Upon the death of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook in 1982, Rabbi Avraham Elkana Kahana Shapira was appointed head of the Rabbi Kook Institute. Fifteen years later, Rabbi Yisrael Tau left the yeshiva

⁷⁸ This school became known among the general public following the publication of the article by Ze'ev Herzog, "The Bible: There are no Findings in the Field" [In Hebrew], *Ha'aretz*, October 29, 1999. See also Israel Finkelstein, *The Beginnings of Israel: Archeology, Bible, and Historical Memory* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 2003). An important representative of the Jerusalem School, that opposes Finkelstein and the Tel-Aviv School, is Yosef Garfinkel who claims that his studies of Khirbet Qeiyafa refutes the latter claims. See Yosef Garfinkel, Saar Ganor, and Michael Hasel, "Khirbet Qeiyafa," ed. Daniel M. Master, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁹ Yoel Bin Nun, for example, turns the critical demands of the "Tel-Aviv School" against themselves, in the sense of demanding that they live up to their own principles: "It is our duty to determine that this situation of biblical research...[reflect] the limitations of the research itself, that has reached a dead end and has not been able to forge ahead. It is not reasonable to base oneself on the Bible wherever an archeological-historical basis has been found, while wherever nothing has been found, there is a rush on the Bible that is changed into a later legend or it is ignored completely." Yoel Bin Nun, "'Ba El Halth': A new solution for identifying Ai" [In Hebrew] (paper presented at the Research in Judea and Samaria, 1992).

together with his senior students and founded the *Har Hamor* yeshiva.⁸⁰ His resignation was related to a dispute apparently connected to the possible establishment of a teaching institute attached to the yeshiva, that would include academic studies. In practice, the cause of the dispute went much deeper, because Rabbi Tau did not accept the subordination of the yeshiva to state institutions (Ministry of Education) and particularly the possibility that it would be subject to academic supervision. The polemics changed from a didactic disagreement into a theological-political dispute.⁸¹ Rabbi Tau, who was deeply ingrained in the Rabbi Kook Institute's mindset, feared that the academic methods which Rabbi Shapira wanted to inculcate, would promote a "Christian reading". This reading, he explained, distant as it is from the Jewish tradition, interprets the events of the Bible in a Christian light, and is therefore unable to appreciate the exalted dimension of biblical figures. While the Rabbi Kook Institute wished to incorporate a wider range in which biblical studies could co-exist with openness to ideas that challenge the state, Rabbi Tau completely sanctified the national state as well as emphasizing the act of settlement.

The discussion on the Bible spread in 2001 to broad segments of religious Zionism and has reverberations in the present. The dispute touched on the question of how the Bible should be read. A tension developed between the reading by the *boundary* yeshivas (that separate between sacred and secular spheres), *Har Hamor* and its offshoots, that attempt to get to a profound, ideal, simplified reading, and the approach of the *Har Etzion* yeshivas and their subsidiaries which read the Bible as it is.

In contrast to the *boundary* yeshivas which interpret biblical figures in a non-personal way, the *Har Etzion* yeshiva and its subsidiaries find independent value in the human qualities of biblical figures, and accept their moral shortcomings as having educational value. Whereas the people of the *Har Etzion* yeshivas and its offshoots do not deny the human characteristics of biblical figures – for example the flaws in the figure of King David – defects that constitute a basis for moral discourse, the *boundary* yeshivas totally deny the possibility that David's personality could be

⁸⁰ Udi Abramowitz, "The Political Theology of Rabbi Zvi Tau and his Circle" [In Hebrew], (Ben-Gurion University, 2014).

⁸¹ Yishai Rosen Zvi, "Metaphysics in the Making: Polemics at the Rabbi Kook Institute – a critical view" [In Hebrew], in *A Hundred Years of Religious Zionism*, ed. Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2003), 421-45.

defective, and assert that what is perceived as a fault is an expression of inadequate interpretive methods.

There is a great deal of similarity between the notion of the profound literal meaning, posited by the dogmatic interpretations of the *boundary* yeshivas – an interpretation that denies the existence of contradictions – and the Christian story of Jesus’ meeting, after his resurrection, with two of his disciples at Emmaus. The disciples, who did not recognize him, thought that their teacher had died at his crucifixion. Heart-broken by the shattering of their hope for salvation, the disciples’ consternation grew when they were told that his body had disappeared from its tomb. Subsequently Jesus explained the events, untangled the contradictions, thereby leading to an understanding of the Holy Scriptures themselves. The climax of this event took place as follows: “When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”⁸²

Even though there is a great difference between the texts, the beliefs and the contexts, it is hard not to see the similarity to the idea of the deep literal meaning. Just as it is Jesus through whom the disciples understand the contradictions and the written words, so the Land of Israel becomes a mediator through whom the meaning of the Torah is revealed. The incarnation of the holy word within the Land of Israel reveals the deep meaning of the word of God. Just as the Jews are unable to see in Jesus anything other than worship of the flesh, and to identify as idolatry the Christian belief in Jesus as the messiah, son of God – in other words, worship of the material – so the opponents of the settlers cannot see in the land its interpretative function and only conceive it as a fetish – a Canaanite form of worship. As opposed to the Canaanite interpretation of the act of settlement, the settlers maintain that the failure to appreciate the centrality of the land attests to a misunderstanding of the theological enterprise. Just as, for the Christians, the role of Jesus serves as a mediator for salvation, and at the same time develops an understanding of the sacred text, so the land of Israel is, for the settlers, an essential factor for achieving the messianic goal and is also an interpretive tool for attaining the deep literal meaning of the holy text. Even if the settlers completely reject that they are neo-Canaanites, it is difficult not to notice, as Yeshayahu Leibowitz

⁸² Luke 24:30-32.

said, their affinity to Christian logic whose internal reasoning mandates a holy mediator in order to achieve salvation.⁸³

The polemics on the Bible in the twenty-first century take place within all shades of religious Zionism, inside and beyond the Green Line (1949 ceasefire line). Despite the fact that they did not deal directly with the question of the justification for the settler project or the significance of a political reading of the Bible, a close look at the hawkish figures in the dispute and the tensions they expressed, reveals an additional element, political in its essence. The readings of the *Har Etzion* yeshiva as a straightforward interpretation were considered by the *Har Hamor* yeshiva to be both a theological and a political threat. Rabbi Tau's method outlined for his students an unconscious interpretative logic in reading the Biblical text, and in line with this logic the theological and the political were intertwined in such a way that the political became theological. Just as King David came to be considered a theological-political epitome of perfection, so Rabbi Tau viewed the State of Israel as an entity that was entirely sacred due to its being an essential component in the history of the redemption. Conversely, the readings of the *Har Etzion* yeshiva, which accept that David's human frailties do not detract from his theological role, allow them to see in the State of Israel not only a theological entity but also a body characterized by ethical dimensions which have an independent existence. Rabbi Tau's approach grants religious validity to the actions of the State, thereby expressing a political theology which could be termed "hyper-statism".⁸⁴

Tau's redemptive rationalization, that legitimates events that under normal circumstances would be considered as unethical, resembles dialectical historical explanations (in the manner of Hegel's 'Cunning of Reason'), that were made to explain how Hitler's Genocide served the divine plan. Harry Rimmer, not to be accused of being an antisemitic, asserted: "All that Hitler has accomplished by his European-wide persecution may be summed up in a sentence: he has accelerated the return of Israel to Palestine, thus apparently hastening his own doom! By driving the 'preserved people' back into the preserved land, Hitler, who does not believe the Bible and who sneers at the Word of God, is helping to fulfill its most outstanding prophecy!"

⁸³ Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Judaism, the Jewish People*, 475.

⁸⁴ Harry Rimmer, *The Shadow of Coming Events* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1946), 63-64.

Resuming to the earlier discussion of King David's ethical behavior, the figure of the biblical David takes off as a political theological paradigm and continues to hold a central position in the polemics of religious Zionism, and particularly that of the settlers. While the Greeks saw the king as a sovereign who organized the natural political order, for Rabbi Tau the king embodies the inwardness and wholeness of the people of Israel. "His heart is the heart of the entire congregation of Israel".⁸⁵ This reading, based on Maimonides' ideas, saw the monarchy and the figure of the king both as a political organizing factor and an internal basis for the soul of the people.⁸⁶

Another critical approach that developed concurrently with Rabbi Tau's position on the figure of King David, is the philosophy of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh.⁸⁷ Ginsburgh, – born into a secular family became religious and a supporter of the *Chabad* Hasidic movement – established, in 1982, the *Od Yosef Hai* yeshiva, an ultra-Orthodox yeshiva with nationalist leanings that was initially located in the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus. He became known to the general public for praising, in his book *Baruch Hagever* [Blessed is the Man], the massacre carried out by Baruch Goldstein in the Tomb of the Patriarchs in 1994 in which he killed 29 Palestinians. Ginsburgh's name was also associated with the book, *Torat Hamelech* [Law of Kings] that permits the killing of non-Jews, a book written by two rabbis closely linked to him. His precepts replace the position of the Bible with Hassidic, kabbalistic and halachic principles, precepts that resound with radical groups among the settlers, especially the "hilltop youth", anarchistic and individualistic groups of teenagers that seek to undermine the settler establishment.

Rabbi Ginsburgh defined his political philosophy and his attitude to the religious Zionist tradition by means of a typology of the monarchies of Saul and David. The monarchy of Saul represents a natural secular political order in which the figure of the king has a proud and emotional disposition. Conversely, the monarchy of David represents a close and tense combination of pride and humility, a combination that facilitates a correct administration of political authority. In Ginsburgh's view,

⁸⁵ Maimonides, "Laws of Kings" [In Hebrew], in *Mishneh Torah*, ed. Yohai Makbili (Haifa: Yeshivat Or Veyeshua, 2006), 3, 6.

⁸⁶ For a critique of the theological sources of Rabbi Tau, see: David Sorotzkin, *Orthodoxy and the Regime of Modernity: The Production of Jewish Tradition in Modern Europe* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2012).

⁸⁷ See particularly, Yehiel Harari, "Mysticism as Messianic: Rhetoric in the Works of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh" [In Hebrew], (Tel-Aviv University, 2005); Raphael Sagi, *Messianic Radicalism in the State of Israel: Chapters on the Messianic Amendment in the Philosophy of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Gvanim, 2015). See also, Gideon Aran, "The Rabbi Who Believes that Killing non-Jews is Sanctification of God" [In Hebrew], *Ha'aretz*, March 25, 2016.

the monarchy of David is likely to “propose a person of proper authority, who, on the one hand, knows how to implement his authority, but, on the other hand, does not let it go to his head, but sees himself as the servant of his people.”⁸⁸

We have here a powerful allegory of the way Ginsburgh perceives himself in relation to religious Zionist tradition. For him, the monarchy of Saul is parallel to the secular Zionist nation-state, perceived as an external monarchy that was not able to “incorporate its internal dimension.”⁸⁹ The contradiction between nation and religion was replaced for him by a contradiction between pride and humility, two components in the character of monarchy. Subsequently, he created another equivalence in which the Saul-David duality is duplicated in the Aaron-Moses duality. The accepted Midrashic (hermeneutical) image of Aaron and his gentle leadership of the people represents the religious Zionist tradition, a tradition that attributed religious value to the secular Zionist enterprise. In contrast to this image, the figure of Moses is a paradigmatic case of aggressive theocracy, a position that gives the Torah a commanding presence in political life without consideration of the will of the people.⁹⁰ In this dialectical transition⁹¹ from the period of Saul’s monarchy to that of David, Ginsburgh was pressing religious Zionism to negate its obligation to the secular state and to advance towards the messianic goal.

Tau and Ginsburgh, each in his own way, present radical theocratic perceptions of the state. Their differing interpretations of the Davidic monarchy have essential consequences for the attitudes of their supporters to the State of Israel. While in the Tau model, the State of Israel is perfectly in keeping with the messianic settler project, Ginsburgh’s dialectical logic mandates destroying the secular foundations of the state which are perceived as impure.

In opposition to these trends of radical theocracy propounded by Tau, Ginsburgh and others, the moderate tradition of the *Har Etzion* yeshiva in Alon Shvut stands out – a tradition initiated by its founders, the later Rabbi Yehuda Amital and Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein. Their successor, Rabbi Yaakov Meidan, adopted a moderate settler approach. As a representative of the school of thought

⁸⁸ Yitzchak Ginsburgh, "Renewing the Internal Monarchy" [In Hebrew], *Makor Rishon*, May 8, 2015.

⁸⁹ Yitzchak Ginsburgh, "From the Monarchy of Saul to the Monarchy of David" [in Hebrew], <http://www.pnmi.org.il>

⁹⁰ Haviva Pedaya sees relations of humility and pride among the religious Zionists as a feeling of joy, while for Chabad this is a feeling of sadness. See Haviva Pedaya, "Land, Time, and Place – Apocalypses of End and Apocalypses of Beginning" [In Hebrew], in *The Land of Israel in Twentieth Century Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2005), 560-624.

⁹¹ In Hegelian dialectics, the term *aufheben* indicates negativity and preservation in the midst of elevation.

of the *Har Etzion* yeshiva, Meidan focuses on the *p'shat*, the literal meaning of the Bible, through rigorous study of the text and its sources, especially the *aggadot* (tales)⁹² of the Sages. His commentaries are far from any Kabbalistic or symbolic interpretation. He subscribes to the “barefoot reading” and leads his followers to a situation in which they feel they are standing directly in the place of the biblical figure. Meidan represents a non-radical approach among the settlers, an approach that does not support hastening the arrival of the Messiah but focuses on preparing one for redemption: “I do not want the Temple to be built tomorrow, but in a more distant future. We are not spiritually ready.”⁹³ The researcher, Assaf Harel, claims that the settlers of Alon Shvut deal very little with the messianic question and emphasize the idea of redemption from which they derive their Zionist activity.⁹⁴

Rabbi Menachem Froman was another representative from *Gush Etzion*, an unusual figure in the settler landscape and the former rabbi of Tekoa. The land, he explained, does not belong to men but is the property of the Creator, and he created man out of it.⁹⁵ In God’s declaration that “the Land is mine” (Leviticus, 25, 23), Froman found the legal basis for preventing man from taking control of the land and the subjugation of people to one another.⁹⁶ He viewed conquest as the principle of male control, and the land as the female principle of limitation and inclusion. He inferred from this that we must move from the male movement of conquest towards the female love of the land, “from territorial ownership to territorial affiliation.”⁹⁷ This unique theological outlook brought him to conclusions that deviate from the accepted settler perceptions. Like Yosef Ben-Shlomo, but approaching the matter from a different angle, he believed that dwelling in the homeland took precedence over the political framework – in this case the Israeli one. His friend, the author A.B. Yehoshua, commented sympathetically on his doctrine, saying that “a person residing in his homeland is not in exile, even if he is not living under the sovereignty of his people.”⁹⁸

⁹² Non-legalistic exegetical texts in the classical rabbinic literature of Judaism, particularly as recorded in the Talmud and Midrash.

⁹³ “About the Place” [in Hebrew], interview of Rabbi Meidan by Yoav Sorek, *Makor Rishon*, December 12, 2014.

⁹⁴ Assaf Harel, “Post Gush Emunim: On faith, redemption and messianism in the West Bank settlements” [In Hebrew], *Theory and Criticism* 47 (Winter 2016): 164.

⁹⁵ Menachem Froman, *The Heavens of our Land: Peace, People, Land* [In Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2014), 47.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁹⁷ Harel, “Post Gush Emunim,” 173.

⁹⁸ A.B. Yehoshua, “Afterword,” in Froman, *The Heavens*.

In contrast to the moderate stance of Froman and Meidan of Gush Etzion, Rabbi Dov Lior – one of the leaders of the ultra-Orthodox nationalist stream and head of the *Nir Kiryat Arba hesder* yeshiva, among whose students were prominent settler leaders, represents the nationalist approach that legitimizes violent acts within the framework of the national struggle against the Palestinians. Lior was one of those who granted his approval for the book, *Torat Hamelech*; he viewed with favor the massacre perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein, and supported, in 2015, Meir Kahane's idea of transferring Palestinians out of Judea and Samaria.⁹⁹ In his article, “The Arabs’ hatred is equivalent to Nazism”, he claimed that “anyone who wants to subjugate and destroy the Jewish people is subject to the judgment of Amalek [who ought to be annihilated], with all that entails.”¹⁰⁰ Lior was one of the rabbis who called for disobeying the order to evacuate settlements during the disengagement from Gaza in 2005, saying that “any law of the state [or] the army that is opposed to the laws of the Torah must be disobeyed!”¹⁰¹ Despite this, he perceived the State as an expression of sanctity for which the *Hallel* prayers of praise must be recited on Independence Day.¹⁰²

Back to the Beginning

In this short review of the streams of religious settlers, the messianic or redemptive settler ideology can be identified with God’s biblical promise concerning the people and the land. This notion derives its imagery from Joshua and the Judges’ conquests of the territories of the tribes of Israel and reaches completion in the restoration of the Kingdom of David and the Temple in Jerusalem. However, this promise can be interpreted not only in terms of Joshua’s conquests and the Kingdom of David but in a more primordial sense in terms of the history of the Patriarchs. Abraham’s departure from his birthplace and his journey to the land of Israel is not a tale of conquest or of confrontation but of wandering in the land. Instead of settling the land in a particular place, Abraham spent all his life moving about throughout the length and the breadth of the land.¹⁰³ Even

⁹⁹ Rabbi Meir Kahane was an Israeli ultra-nationalistic politician, one of the cofounders of the *Jewish Defense League*, a member of the Knesset. He was murdered by a Palestinian in 1990.

¹⁰⁰ “The Arabs’ hatred is equivalent to Nazism” [in Hebrew], Channel 7 website, March 9, 2008.

¹⁰¹ Dov Lior, “Disobeying the order on secularity in the Army” [in Hebrew], <http://www.yeshiva.org.il/ask/?cat=373>

¹⁰² Other rabbis joined in Rabbi Shapira’s call, Channel 7 website, October 24, 2004.

¹⁰³ Zali Gurewitz and Gideon Aran state that “the sense of place in Genesis is a constant feeling of moving to the place, within the place and outside the place.” However, Abraham’s move to the Promised Land is not wandering towards a

though the land had been promised to Abraham, there is no evidence of hostility towards the inhabitants of the land. The Patriarchs, even if they did not integrate with these inhabitants, did not seek to evacuate them. In contrast to the patrimony of Joshua, conquered by force and with divine support, the Tomb of the Patriarchs was purchased with money. While the conquest of the tribal lands and the establishment of the kingdom define the boundaries and the model for governance of the land and the Israelite people, during the period of the patriarchs the borders of the land and the political entity remained open and were perceived as a promise for the future.

Although previously it had been an immensely powerful tool for shaping and preserving Israeli identity, the settler movement transformed it into a political factor through which the conquered territories are understood. The restorative visions among the religious public after 1967 represented different interpretations of “sacred history”, expressing a variety of theological and political desires for the future of the State of Israel, the land of Israel and the conquered territories. The Bible’s past still lies ahead.

place but is moving about in the land. See, Zali Gurewitz and Gideon Aran, "Israeli Anthropology" [In Hebrew], *Alpayim* 4 (1992).