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Toward the Renewal of the Zionist Idea

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I. Exile and Homeland (*Galut u'Moledet*)

1. Isaiah Horowitz, Sh'LaH, Shnei Luhot Ha-brit, Torah Shebikhtav, Lekh L'kha

The person who lives in Eretz Yisrael must always recall the name Canaan which indicates servitude and submission.

The principle that emerges, in an emphatically contrary way, is that in the land that the Lord God desires, one must be more of a humble servant as was expressed by King David: "I am a stranger in the land" (Psalms 119:19). That is precisely the matter referred to by God when he promised Abraham regarding the Egyptian slavery: "Your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not their own" (Genesis 15:13)...According to our explanation it is understood that you will be strangers in Egypt and that is the simple sense of foreignness, since they will reside in a land not their own as slaves to Pharoah. However, thereafter, they will merit to become strangers in their own land as David said: "I am a stranger in the land" and then "Sing praises, servants of the lord." The principle that is derived is that those who dwell in the land must, as a consequence of their being in a state of submission, act like strangers and not make the main object to settle (the land) in a permanent, steadfast manner...

2. Baruch Kurzweil, "Letter to David Ben Gurion, 9/4/61," *Facing the Spiritual Perplexity of Our Time*, pp. 249-250

We never submitted to history in its normative sense.
This, however, doesn't negate the fact that we are part of a distinctive historical cycle-the journey to salvation determined by Abraham who went on the road in response to a Divine command which removed him/us from the historical cycle of the nations. We are set on an unnatural road. (Recognized by Nietzsche).

"Lech lecha" – leave the natural definitions of nationhood;
"artzecha" – possessions, landedness
"molad't'cha" – birthplace
"beit avicha" – homeland
For a new understanding: in the land you are *ger toshav*.

This imperative, *lech lecha*, transforms this distinction and the unnatural into the determinative qualities of Jewish history. This is then the significance of the patriarchal narratives, of the Exodus, of matan Torah, as if again and again sacred scripture comes to stress the distinctive and the "non-natural" as the unique historical dimension of the distinctive people.

3. **George Steiner, "Our Homeland, the Text," *Salamagundi*, 66 (1985)**

The man or woman at home in the text is, by definition, a conscientious objector: to the vulgar mystique of the flag and the anthem, to the sleep of reason which proclaims "my country, right or wrong", to the pathos and eloquence of collective mendacities on which the nation-state - be it a mass-consumer mercantile technocracy or a totalitarian oligarchy- builds its power and aggressions. The locus of truth is always extraterritorial; its diffusion is made clandestine by the barbed wire and watch-towers of national dogma.

The survival of the Jews has no authentic parallel in history. Ancient ethnic communities and civilizations no less gifted, no less self-conscious, have perished, many without trace. It is, on the most rational, existential level, difficult to believe that this unique phenomenon of unbroken life, in the face of every destructive agency, is unconnected with the exilic circumstance. Judaism has drawn its uncanny vitality from dispersal, from the adaptive demands made on it by mobility. Ironically, the threat of that 'final solution' might prove to be the greatest yet if the Jews were now to be compacted in Israel. But there is a more central intimation. One need be neither a religious fundamentalist nor a mystic to believe that there is some exemplary meaning to the singularity of Judaic endurance, that there is some sense beyond contingent or demographic interest to the interlocking constancy of Jewish pain and of Jewish preservation. The notion that the appalling road of Jewish life and the ever-renewed miracle of survival should have as their end, as their justification, the setting up of a small nation-state in the Middle East, crushed by military burdens, petty and even corrupt in its politics, shrill in its parochialism, is implausible. I cannot shake off the conviction that the torment and the mystery of resilience in Judaism exemplify, enact, an arduous truth: that human beings must learn to be each other's guests on this small planet, even as they must learn to be guests of being itself and of the natural world. This is a truth humbly immediate, to our breath, to our skin, to the passing shadow we cast on a ground inconceivably more ancient than our visitation, and it is also a terribly abstract, morally and psychologically exigent truth. Man will have to learn it or he will be made extinct in suicidal waste and violence. The State of Israel is an endeavor - wholly understandable, in many aspects admirable, perhaps historically inescapable - to normalize the condition, the meaning of Judaism. It would make the Jew level with the common denominator of modern 'belonging'. It is, at the same time, an attempt to eradicate the deeper truth of unhousedness, of an at-homeness in the word, which are the legacy of the Prophets and of the keepers of the text.

3. George Steiner, "Our Homeland, the Text" (1985)

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In Jerusalem today, the visitor is taken to the 'Shrine of the Scrolls' or, as it is also known, 'House of the Sacred Books'. In this exquisite building are kept some of the Dead Sea Scrolls and priceless biblical papyri. It is a place of poignant, if somewhat sepulchral, radiance. One's guide explains the hidden hydraulic mechanism whereby the entire edifice can, in the event of shelling or bombardment, be made to sink safely below ground. Such precautions are indispensable. Because nation-states live by the sword. But such precautions are also a metaphysical and ethical barbarism. Words cannot be broken by artillery, nor thought live in bomb-shelters.

Locked materially in a material homeland, the text may, in fact, lose its life-force, and its truth-values may be betrayed. But when the text is the homeland, even when it is rooted only in the exact remembrance and seeking of a handful of wanderers, nomads of the word, it cannot be extinguished. Time is truth's passport and its native ground. What better lodging for the Jew?

II. A Zionism of Power and Restraint

4. Vladimir Jabotinsky, "Man is a Wolf to Man," in Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, p. 164

Sometimes we base too many rosy hopes on the fallacy that a certain people has itself suffered much and will therefore feel the agony of another people and understand it and its conscience will not allow it to inflict on the weaker people what had been earlier inflicted on it. But in reality it appears that these are mere pretty phrases...Only the Bible says "though shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were starngers in the land of Egypt." *Contemporary morality has no place for such childish humanism* [italics added].

5. Vladimir Jabotinsky, "Samson," in Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, pp. 173-4

One day, he was present at a festival at the temple of Gaza. Outside in the square a multitude of young men and girls were gathered for the festive dances. There were several thousand of them, one to each of the flagstones in the square. All were dressed alike in white garments: the young men in short, belted tunics, the girls in dresses with tucked hems that reached to the ground. The girls' dresses fitted close over the hips, and had the usual long sleeves, but in front they were cut away leaving the breasts exposed. The dancers had been arranged in two groups according to height, the young men on the right and the girls on the left.

A beardless priest led the dances. He stood on the topmost step of the temple, holding an ivory baton in his hand. When the music began the vast concourse stood immobile, the dancers on the flagstones and the spectators who looked on from the wooden stands, the roofs of surrounding houses and the unpaved sides of the square. The roar of surf could be heard from the distant quay of Mayim, the harbor of Gaza. Not a fold moved on the dancers' dresses, and scarce a sign of breathing could be seen on the bared breasts o f the girls. The beardless priest turned pale and seemed to submerge his eyes in those of the dancers, which were fixed responsively on his. He grew paler and paler; all the repressed fervor of the crowd seemed to concentrate within his breast till it threatened to choke him. Samson felt the blood stream to his heart; he himself would have choked if the suspense had lasted a few moments longer. Suddenly, with a rapid, almost inconspicuous movement, the priest raised his baton, and all the white figures in the square sank down on their left knew and threw their right arm toward heaven – a single movement, a single, abrupt, murmurous harmony. The tens of thousands of onlookers gave utterance to a moaning sigh. Samson staggered; there was blood on his lips, so fiercely had he bitten them.

The whole dance consisted of similar movements, dictated by the baton of the priest. Sometimes they were sudden, sometimes slow and sweeping. It did not last long, but Samson left the place profoundly thoughtful. He could not have given words to his thought, but he had a feeling that here, in this spectacle of thousands obeying a single will, he had caught a glimpse of the great secrets of the builders of nations.

6. U. Z. Greenberg, "One Truth and Not Two," interpreted from Hebrew by Laurence Cramer

Your Rabbis taught: A land is bought with money
You buy the land and work it with a hoe.
And I say: A land is not bought with money
And with a hoe you also dig and bury the dead.
And I say: A land is conquered with blood.
And only when conquered with blood is hallowed to the people
With the holiness of the blood.
And only one who follows after the cannon in the field,
Thus wins the right to follow after his good plow
On this, the field that was conquered.
And only such a field gives nourishing and healthy bread
And the house which arises on its hill is truly a fortress and a temple,
Because in this field there is honorable blood.
Your Rabbis taught: The messiah will come in future generations:
And Judea will arise without fire and without blood.
It will arise with every tree, with every additional house.
And I say: If your generation will be slow
And will not grasp in its hands and forcibly mold its future
And in fire will not come with the Shield of David
And in blood will not come with its horses saddled -
The Messiah will not come even in a far off generation
Judea will not arise.
And you will be living slaves to every foreign ruler.
Your houses will be straw for the sparks of every wicked one.
And your trees will be cut down with their ripe fruit.
And a man will react the same as a babe
To the sword of the enemy -
And only your ramblings will remain - yours...
And your statue, an eternal curse.
Your Rabbis taught: There is one truth for the nations:
Blood for blood - but it is not a truth for Jews.
And I say: There is one truth and not two.
As there is one sun and as there are not two Jerusalems.
It was written in the Law of Conquest of Moses and Joshua
Until the last of my kings and my traitors have consumed.
And there will be a day when from the river of Egypt until the Euphrates
And from the sea until the mountain passes of Moav my boys will go up
And they will call my enemies and my haters to the last battle.
And the blood will decide: Who is the only ruler here.

7. Ahad Ha'am, "Emet Me-Eretz Yisrael" 1891 (translated by Alan Dowty, "Much Ado about Little: Ahad Ha'am's Truth from Eretz Yisrael', Zionism and the Arabs")

But not this alone; in all things it is our custom to learn nothing from the past for the future. There is certainly one thing we could have learned from our *past and present* history: how careful we must be not to arouse the anger of other people against ourselves by reprehensible conduct. How much more, then, should we be careful, in our conduct toward a foreign people among whom we live once again, to walk together in love and respect, and needless to say in justice and righteousness. And what do our brethren in Eretz Israel do? Quite the opposite! They were slaves in their land of exile, and they suddenly find themselves with unlimited freedom, the kind of wild freedom to be found only in a country like Turkey. This sudden change has engendered in them an impulse to despotism, as always happens when "a slave becomes a king;"[8] and behold they walk with the Arabs in hostility and cruelty, unjustly encroaching on them, shamefully beating them for no good reason, and even bragging about what they do, and there is no one to stand in the breach and call a halt to this dangerous and despicable impulse. To be sure our people are correct in saying that the Arab respects only those who demonstrate strength and courage, but this is relevant only when he feels that his rival is acting justly; it is not the case if there is reason to think his rival's actions are oppressive and unjust. Then, even if he restrains himself and remains silent forever, the rage will remain in his heart and he is unrivaled in "taking vengeance and bearing a grudge."[9]

From abroad we are accustomed to believing that the Arabs are all desert savages, like donkeys, who neither see nor understand what goes on around them. But this is a big mistake. The Arab, like all children of Shem, has a sharp intellect and is very cunning. The cities of Syria and Eretz Israel are full of Arab merchants who also know how to exploit the public and to proceed furtively with all those with whom they deal, exactly as in Europe. The Arabs, and especially those in the cities, understand our deeds and our desires in Eretz Israel, but they keep quiet and pretend not to understand, since they do not see our present activities as a threat to their future. Therefore they try to exploit us as well, to extract some benefit from the new visitors as long as they can. Yet they mock us in their hearts. The farmers are happy to have a new Hebrew colony founded in their midst since they receive a good wage for their labor and get wealthier from year to year, as experience shows; and the owners of large properties are also happy with us, since we pay them a huge price—more than they dreamed possible—for stony and sandy land. However, if the time comes when the life of our people in Eretz Israel develops to the point of encroaching upon the native population, they will not easily yield their place. . .

8. Berl Katznelson, *Ketavim*, quoted by Ehud Luz, in *The Moral Price of Sovereignty fn 98, Modern Judaism 7 (1987)*

"Zionism derives its power from moral norms of combat, different from those common among the Arabs. The enemy does not respect the laws of war, and we are forbidden to emulate him. . . . We are a people with a great culture whose basis is a regard for human life, and I doubt that having achieved such respect and appreciation for human life after two thousand years of education, we ought to give them up. Deep down," Katznelson admitted, "we are afraid of blood. This profound trait that has been preserved in us is among the obstacles standing in our way . . . [but] . . . if we want to get rid of this trait, we shall not readily be able to do so, and I also believe that if we do, we shall regret it later."[9] Summing up his argument he said: "We stand up to those who attack us, but we do not want our weapons to be stained with innocent blood. : . . *Self-restraint is both a political and a moral approach, stemming from our history and our present reality, from our character and the conditions of the war in which we are engaged.* If, *instead of being true to ourselves,* we were to take a different approach, we would long since have lost the battle."

III. The Danger of Messianic Zionism

Gershom Scholem,
"Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea"
from THE MESSIANIC IDEA IN JUDAISM

9. One word more, by way of conclusion, should be said about a point which, to my mind, has generally received too little attention in discussions of the Messianic idea. What I have in mind is the price demanded by Messianism, the price which the Jewish people has had to pay out of its own substance for this idea which it handed over to the world. The magnitude of the Messianic idea corresponds to the endless powerlessness in Jewish history during all the centuries of exile, when it was unprepared to come forward onto the plane of world history. There's something preliminary, something provisional about Jewish history; hence its inability to give of itself entirely. For the Messianic idea is not only consolation and hope. Every attempt to realize it tears open the abysses which lead each of its manifestations *ad absurdum*. There is something grand about living in hope, but at the same time there is something profoundly unreal about it. It diminishes the singular worth of the individual, and he can never fulfill himself, because the incompleteness of his endeavors eliminates precisely what constitutes its highest value. Thus in Judaism the Messianic idea has compelled a *life lived in deferment,* in which nothing can be done definitively, nothing can be irrevocably accomplished. One may say, perhaps, the Messianic idea is the real anti-existentialist idea. Precisely understood, there is nothing concrete which can be accomplished by the unredeemed. This makes for the greatness of Messianism, but also for its constitutional weakness. Jewish so-called *Existenz* possesses a tension that never finds true release; it never burns itself out. And when in our history it does discharge, then it is foolishly decried (or, one might say, unmasked) as "pseudo-Messianism." The blazing landscape of redemption (as if it were a point of focus) has concentrated in itself the historical outlook of Judaism. Little wonder that overtones of Messianism have accompanied the modern Jewish readiness for irrevocable action in the concrete realm, when it set out on the utopian return to Zion. It is a readiness which no longer allows itself to be fed on hopes. Born out of the horror and destruction that was Jewish history in our generation, it is bound to history itself and not to meta-history; it has not given itself up totally to Messianism. Whether or not Jewish history will be able to endure this entry into the concrete realm without perishing in the crisis of the Messianic claim which has virtually been conjured up—that is the question which out of his great and dangerous past the Jew of this age poses to his present and to his future.

Zionism cannot satisfy those Jews who care for Judaism: its growth seems to them to be fraught with danger to the object of their own aspiration.

The secret of our people's persistence is—as I have tried to show elsewhere—that at a very early period the Prophets taught it to respect only the power of the spirit and not to worship material power. Therefore, unlike the other nations of antiquity, the Jewish people never reached the point of losing its self-respect in the face of more powerful enemies. As long as we remain faithful to this principle, our existence has a secure basis, and we shall not lose our self-respect, for we are not spiritually inferior to any nation. But a political ideal which is not grounded in our national culture is apt to seduce us from loyalty to our own inner spirit and to beget in us a tendency to find the path of glory in the attainment of material power and political dominion, thus breaking the thread that unites us with the past and undermining our historical foundation. Needless to say, if the political ideal is not attained, it will have disastrous consequences, because we shall have lost the old basis without finding a new one. But even if it is attained under present conditions, when we are a scattered people not only in the physical but also in the spiritual sense—even then, Judaism will be in great danger. Almost all our great men—those, that is, whose education and social position have prepared them to be at the head of a Jewish State—are spiritually far removed from Judaism and have no true conception of its nature and its value. Such men, however loyal to their State and devoted to its interests, will necessarily envisage those interests by the standards of the foreign culture which they themselves have imbibed; and they will endeavor, by moral persuasion or even by force, to implant that culture in the Jewish State, so that in the end the Jewish State will be a State of Germans or Frenchmen of the Jewish race. We have even now a small example of this process in Palestine.

History teaches us that in the days of the Herodian house Palestine was indeed a Jewish State, but the national culture was despised and persecuted. The ruling house did everything in its power to implant Roman culture in the country and frittered away the resources of the nation in the building of heathen temples, amphitheaters, and so forth. Such a Jewish State would spell death and utter degradation for our people. Such a State would never achieve sufficient political power to deserve respect, while it would be estranged from the living inner spiritual force of Judaism. The puny State, being "tossed about like a ball between its powerful neighbors, and maintaining its existence

only by diplomatic shifts and continual truckling to the favored of fortune," would not be able to give us a feeling of national glory; the national culture, in which we might have sought and found our glory, would not have been implanted in our State and would not be the principle of its life. So we should really be then—much more than we are now—"a small and insignificant nation," enslaved in spirit to "the favored of fortune," turning an envious and covetous eye on the armed force of our "powerful neighbors"; our existence in such terms, as a sovereign State would not add a glorious chapter to our national history.

Would it not be better for "an ancient people which was once a beacon to the world" to disappear than to end by reaching such a goal as this? Mr. Lilienblum[16] reminds me that there exist today small States, like Switzerland, which are safeguarded against interference by the other nations and are not forced to "continual truckling." But a comparison between Palestine and small countries like Switzerland overlooks the geographical position of Palestine and its religious importance for all the world. These two facts will make it quite impossible for its "powerful neighbors" (by which expression, of course, I did not mean, as Mr. Lilienblum interprets, "the Druses and the Persians") to leave it alone. Even after it has become a Jewish State, they will all still keep an eye on it, and each power will try to influence its policy in a direction favorable to itself, after the pattern of events in other weak states (like Turkey) in which the great European nations have "interests."

In sum: Hibbat Zion, no less than "Zionism," wants a Jewish State and believes in the possibility of the establishment of a Jewish State in the future. But while "Zionism" looks to the Jewish State to furnish a remedy for poverty and to provide complete tranquillity and national glory, Hibbat Zion knows that our State will not give us all these things until "universal Righteousness is enthroned and holds sway over nations and States"—it looks to a Jewish State to provide only a "secure refuge" for Judaism and a cultural bond to unite our nation. "Zionism," therefore, begins its work with political propaganda; Hibbat Zion begins with national culture, because only *through* the national culture and *for its sake* can a Jewish State be established in such a way as to correspond with the will and the needs of the Jewish people.

generations, the memory of the exodus from Egypt has been handed on as a personal experience and it has therefore retained its original luster. "In every generation every man must regard himself as if he personally had been redeemed from Egypt." There is no higher peak of historic consciousness, and history—among all the civilizations of the world and in all the ages—can find no example of a greater fusion of individual with group than is contained in this ancient pedagogic command. I know no literary creation which can evoke a greater hatred of slavery and love of freedom than the story of the bondage and the exodus from Egypt. I know of no other remembrance of the past that is so entirely a symbol of our present and future as the "memory of the exodus from Egypt."

11. And *Tishah b'Ab.*[6] Many nations are enslaved, and many have even experienced exile. Proud Poland, whose refugees lived in exile for only two or three generations, immediately suffered a great measure of assimilation. Masses of refugees from among the powerful Russian people were scattered abroad after the October Revolution, and they are already bewailing the assimilation and the cultural estrangement of the younger generation and are holding up as an example the Jewish nation which remains unvanquished by two thousand years of dispersion. Yes, indeed, Israel knew how to preserve the day of its mourning, the date of its loss of freedom from oblivion. On this day each generation and each person in Israel felt as if his own world had just been destroyed. On each anniversary burning tears were shed and each generation expressed its pain. National memory associated with this day of wrath many of its bitter experiences, beginning with the destruction of the First and Second Temples through the expulsion from Spain up till our own time, until the outbreak of the World War. Our national memory was able, with these very simple means, *to make every Jewish soul, all over the world, feel heavy mourning at the same day and the same hour.* Each organ that was still at all attached to the nation's body wrapped itself in gloom, immersed itself in sorrow, and let its heart be permeated by the feeling of ruin, bondage, and exile. Each creative generation added something of its own to this feeling of woe, from the mournful chants of Jeremiah, to those of Spain and Germany, to Bialik's "Scroll of Fire."

It is told of Adam Mickiewicz, the great Polish poet—who all his life bewailed Poland's subjection and drew revolutionary plans for its liberation—that on Tishah b'Ab he would go to a Jewish synagogue to join the Jews in their mourning over the loss of their motherland. This non-Jew understood the power and depth of Tishah b'Ab.

I am not setting specific rules as to the form our holidays should assume. Suitable forms will grow from a living feeling within the heart and an upright and independent spirit. However, I want to refute the opinion which asserts: "Certainly, we should not forget Tishah b'Ab, but a nation which is returning to rebuild its home now has to turn the day of mourning into a festive holiday." Our achievements in this country may multiply rapidly, and even after we shall have attained a life of dignity, we shall not say, "we are redeemed," until all of our exile has ended. As long as Israel is dispersed and is prey to persecution and hatred, to contempt and to forced conversion, as in Yemen in Asia, Algiers in Africa, and Germany in Europe—or even though they enjoy emancipation purchased through assimilation in capitalistic France and communistic Russia—I shall never forget, I shall never be able to forget, the most fearful day in our destiny—the day of our destruction.

How will our people behave after its dispersed have assembled, after its complete liberation from bondage—*including its liberation from the oppression of class by class?* Perhaps it will then celebrate this day with dance and song, or perhaps it will desire that each child born in liberty and equality, unacquainted with hunger and material oppression, shall know the sufferings of all preceding generations. This we shall discuss when that day will come.

12. The Israel of Aspiration and Opportunity

David Hartman, "The Third Jewish Commonwealth," *A Living Covenant*

Jewish hope was nurtured by the belief that the third Jewish commonwealth would not in any way share the vulnerabilities of the previous attempts to build a Jewish society in the Holy Land. Rabbinic midrashim taught that the third commonwealth would last forever. It would be free of all the tragic features of human history. It would usher in a historical period in which humanity would be liberated from sin and suffering would be abolished from human life. In that time, the community would no longer be burdened by the haunting and problematic features of freedom, contingency, and the human propensity for evil.

As long as the Judaic hope for the third commonwealth reflected such a longing for certainty, Zionism could not emerge as an effective political movement. Zionism had therefore to define itself as a movement seeking to overthrow the traditional religious sensibility. If the community was to learn to act effectively in history, Jewish historical consciousness had to be radically transformed. And indeed, the quest for normalcy, initiative, and responsibility was in fact pursued through a revolt against Judaic covenantal faith. The house of learning and the synagogue were deemed enemies of the revolution. Prayer was perceived as escapism and as bad faith. Only by a complete overthrow of everything the tradition cherished could the revolution succeed. The pious student of Torah had to be derided, rejected, and replaced by the pioneer. Secular Zionism ushered in a passionate yearning for new anthropological models that celebrated the dignity of human physical power. Jewish historical figures who demonstrated heroism in battle were held in high esteem. The new leadership of the community were those whose eyes were anchored to the everyday and who sought pragmatic solutions to the pressing problems of the third commonwealth.

For many Jews, Israel has become the new substitute for traditional Judaism. Israel is possibly the last haven in the world for Jewish secularism. Israeli "normalcy" enables many to assimilate and be like all the nations of the world without feeling guilty for having abandoned their ancestors. With all the risks that Israel poses to the future of covenantal Judaism, I am nonetheless prepared to build my hopes for Judaism's future on this new reality. For, as the tradition teaches, where there is a potential for desecration, there is also a potential for sanctification.

I live with the guarded hope that out of this complex and vibrant new Jewish reality will emerge new spiritual directions for the way Judaism will be lived in the modern world. Israel expands the possible range of halakhic involvement in human affairs beyond the circumscribed borders of home and synagogue to the public domain. Jews in Israel are given the opportunity to bring economic, social, and political issues into the center of their religious consciousness. The moral quality of the army, social and economic disparities and deprivations, the exercise of power moderated by moral sensitivity—all these are realms that may engage halakhic responsibility. From

this perspective, the fact that Israel enables us to make the whole of life the carrier of the covenant is in itself sufficient to ascribe profound religious significance to the secular revolt that led to Israel's rebirth. I celebrate Israel's Independence Day with the recitation of the Hallel psalms, thus expressing gratitude to God for having been given the opportunity to renew the full scope of the covenantal spirit of Judaism. My religious celebration is not a judgment on God's activity, but only on the opportunity that Israel makes possible. The opportunity may be missed. But that does not in any way detract from the religious possibilities created by the event. The recitation of psalms of thanksgiving on Independence Day does not entail any divine guarantee regarding the successful realization of those opportunities...

It is not a simple task to translate a biblical perception of reality into the conditions of a modern democratic society. The way Joshua entered the land is hardly a paradigm for learning how to tolerate different faith communities and for allowing different groups the freedom to express their own particularity. The separation of church and state and the American appreciation for pluralism are not yet firmly established in the Israeli political imagination. In contrast to the Western Jewish diaspora, Israel does not provide for a neutral or secular political public arena in which to orchestrate the different competing ideologies present in contemporary Jewish living. The diaspora allows different religious groupings to form their own synagogues. Each can have its own "four cubits of the law" in a way that does not impinge upon the life of the total Jewish community. In the diaspora, Jews live their public life under the protective umbrella of the larger non-Jewish political order and express their personal Jewish identity within their respective schools, synagogues, and community centers. The diaspora, in contrast to Israel, does not force the confrontation between religious and secular Jews or between the different ideological branches of Judaism to develop into overt conflict. Pluralism, therefore, does not surface as an urgent issue in the diaspora.

A long and arduous path must be traveled before we can create a healthy bridge between the needs of a modern democratic liberal society and the biblical and talmudic understanding of Jewish politics. On the one hand, Judaism is a repudiation of any spiritual vision that is related exclusively to the private and intimate domains of the personal life. Yet, on the other hand, if Judaism seeks expression in the communal political domain, does it not expose itself to the very corruptions that have characterized theocratic states in history? It will not be easy, therefore, to bring John Stuart Mill's advocacy of civil liberty and Isaiah Berlin's appreciation of pluralism into a serious and fruitful discussion with Maimonides and the talmudic tradition's understanding of how a halakhic polity should conduct its daily life. What makes for the spiritual vitality of our third Jewish commonwealth is the fact that we cannot ignore these new fundamental issues.

The Zionist quest for normalcy should free the Jewish people of any myth about the unique moral and spiritual powers of the Jewish soul. In taking upon ourselves responsibility for a total society, we must allow ourselves to be judged by the same standards as we have judged others. The Torah challenges us to become a holy people. It does not tell us that we are immune from the moral weaknesses and

failures that affect every human being. The Jewish nation is not free from the same potential corruptions that affect any human community that has taken upon itself the bold challenge of living with power. Our newly gained sense of belonging and power enables us to look critically and honestly both at ourselves and at the halakhic tradition without the apologetic stance so characteristic of a community that saw itself as a persecuted and vulnerable minority. A community that feels dignified and secure in its identity and place in the world can allow itself the mature activity of honest critical self-appraisal.

To the degree that we can look at ourselves in a non-apologetic light, to that degree will we demonstrate our liberation from an exilic consciousness that is fundamentally timid, frightened, and outer-directed. We are free now to ask what we think of ourselves without being overly concerned with the way others will listen and respond to our agonizing self-appraisal. Because of our "role" as the suffering stranger in history, many have perceived the Jew as the moral conscience and critic of social and political injustice. In building the third Jewish commonwealth, our role must shift from moral criticism of others to self-judgment. In coming home, the task before us is to clean up our own house.

If a moral message will emanate from Jerusalem, it will result not from what we say but from what we do. For the covenant to be renewed in its full power and vitality, Jews must be willing to face the serious moral and religious problems that arise when they seek to participate fully in modern society. This challenge faces Jews in both Israel and the diaspora, but it arises in its most acute and total form in Israel. The quality of life that we build in Israel will accordingly be paradigmatic for and influence the manner in which Judaism develops everywhere in the modern world. For wherever Jews live, they must bring the passion of their faith commitment to the moral and political concerns of their society. Torah is not, as Spinoza claimed, merely the political constitution of a nation with its own political sovereignty. Torah is a way of life not circumscribed by geographic boundaries. The rabbis taught in the Talmud that the *mitzvot* must be observed wherever a Jew is called upon to do battle against the false gods of history (Kiddushin 37a). It is the destiny of Jews wherever they may be to say no to all modern forms of idolatry.

The significance of the rebirth of Israel cannot be circumscribed to those who live in Israel. The endless Zionist discussions regarding the relationship of Israel to the diaspora are usually futile. I reject the radical Zionist claim that a vibrant Jewish life is impossible in the diaspora. It is a total evasion of our larger responsibility to the Jewish people if we offer the diaspora only one message: "Come to Israel in order to safe-guard your grandchildren from assimilation." Israel should not be understood merely as a haven for the persecuted and the wandering Jew or as a guarantee against assimilation. It is short-sighted to use the Holocaust as a justification for the need for a Jewish national home. Israel from my perspective provides a new direction for Judaism's confrontation with modernity. It opens up the possibility of renewing the covenantal drama of Sinai in a vital new way. The rebirth of Israel marks the repudiation of the halakhic ghetto as the means for guarding Jewish survival in history. Israel not only argues against the ghettoization of Judaism, but is

also a rejection of the mistaken universalism that characterized the assimilationist tendencies that affected many Jews as a result of the breakdown of the ghetto. The birth of the third Jewish commonwealth teaches all of Jewry that being rooted in a particular history and tradition need not be antithetical to involvement and concern with the larger issues affecting the human world.

It would have been understandable if in response to the tragic suffering of the Jewish people in this century, and their profound disillusionment with Western values, Jews would have restricted their visibility in and concern for history. However, the covenant of Sinai teaches the Jew to trust and be open to the world again. The Sinai covenant does not allow Jews to adopt a spiritual orientation that gives up on history and emphasizes the inner life of the soul. To be a covenantal Jew is to share in Moses' understanding of God's dream for Israel and history. Moses is the paradigm of the way a Jew is to hear the significance of mitzvah in his or her life. Moses knew that he must leave the contemplative spiritual bliss that he discovered on the peak of Mount Sinai and enter into the struggle of history down below. Moses demonstrated that love of God must be found within the context of community. The heavy responsibility of implementing the Sinai covenant in the third Jewish commonwealth can be borne with dignity and joy because Judaism has always taught that in the eyes of God the doors of renewal are never closed.

Ben-Gurion and many Zionists believed that to build a healthy third commonwealth, it was necessary to leap back beyond the talmudic period, go back to the Bible, and reject much that exilic Jewish history gave to the Jewish world. I believe that they were mistaken. Estrangement from the postbiblical history of Judaism deprives the community of the important perspectives and values initiated by Ezra and Nehemiah and developed by rabbinic teachers in the talmudic tradition. Jeremiah and Ezekiel offered the community a Utopian vision, but Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt the community within imperfect historical conditions. They taught the Jewish people that the Sinai covenant could be renewed in spite of the gap between prophetic hope and reality. The rabbinic tradition has taught us to say grace over an incomplete meal. Rabbinic Jews can find spiritual meaning even though all their deepest hungers and longings are not fully gratified. It is to the rabbinic tradition that we must turn to learn how the prosaic details of daily life can be made the carriers of the larger covenantal prophetic vision of history. The third Jewish commonwealth can be enriched by the passionate sobriety of the covenantal tradition that places the hearing of mitzvah at the center of its conception of God and the world.

The Lord spoke to you out of the fire; you heard the sound of words but perceived no shape—nothing but a voice. (Deut. 4:12)

13

ה כָּל שֶׁהֶחֱזִיקוּ עוֹלֵי מִצְרַיִם וְנִתְקַדֵּשׁ קְדֻשָּׁה רִאשׁוֹנָה - כֵּיוָן שֶׁגָּלוּ, בָּטְלָה קְדֻשָּׁתָן; שֶׁקְּדוּשָּׁה רִאשׁוֹנָה, לְפִי שֶׁהָיְתָה מִפְּנֵי הַכִּבּוּשׁ בִּלְבַד, קְדֻשָּׁה לִשְׁעָתָהּ וְלֹא קְדֻשָּׁה לֶעָתִיד לָבוֹא.

כֵּיוָן שֶׁעָלוּ בְּנֵי הַגּוֹלָה וְהֶחֱזִיקוּ בְּמִקְצַת הָאָרֶץ - קִדְּשׁוּהָ קְדֻשָּׁה שְׁנִיָּה הָעוֹמֶדֶת לְעוֹלָם, לִשְׁעָתָהּ וְלֶעָתִיד לָבוֹא, וְהִנִּיחוּ אוֹתָן הַמְּקוֹמוֹת שֶׁהֶחֱזִיקוּ בָּהֶן עוֹלֵי מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא הֶחֱזִיקוּ בָּהֶן עוֹלֵי בָּבֶל כְּשֶׁהָיוּ, וְלֹא פְּטָרוּם מִן הַתְּרוּמָה וְהַמַּעַשְׂרוֹת, כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּסְמְכוּ עֲלֵיהֶן עֲנִיִּים בַּשְּׁבִיעִית. וְרַבֵּנוּ הַקָּדוֹשׁ הִתִּיר בֵּית שְׁאָן מֵאוֹתָן הַמְּקוֹמוֹת שֶׁלֹּא הֶחֱזִיקוּ בָּהֶן עוֹלֵי בָּבֶל. וְהוּא נִמְנֶה עַל אַשְׁקְלוֹן וּפְטָרָהּ מִן הַמַּעַשְׂרוֹת.

2. Whenever the term "Land of Israel" is mentioned, it refers to the lands conquered by an Israelite king or by a prophet with the consent of the majority of Israel. This is the so-called national conquest.

5. All territories seized by the Israelites who had come up from Egypt, and consecrated with the first consecration, have subsequently lost their sanctity when the people were exiled therefrom, inasmuch as the first consecration, due solely to conquest, was effective only for its duration and not for all future time. When the exiles returned and reoccupied part of the Land, they consecrated it a second time with a consecration that is to endure forever, both for its duration and for all future time. The Sages, however, left the places seized by those who had come up from Egypt, but not reoccupied by the returnees from Babylonia, in their former status, and did not exempt them from heave offerings and tithes, in order that poor people might derive sustenance from them during the Sabbatical year.

Our Saintly Rabbi, however, granted a dispensation to Beth-Shan, one of the places not seized by those who had come up from Babylonia, so that it is counted with Ashkelon and is exempt from tithes.

V. Prepared for War and Sacrifice,
Prepared for Peace and Inclusion

14

State of Israel
Temporary Government

Decree
to all the residents of the State of Israel

Citizens,

In a period of extreme test, at a time of wanton enemy attack, the acting government is taking the governance of Israel into its own hands. Our State embodies within it the primary (choicest) vision of generations. Regarding the realization (embodiment) of this vision, we are commanded to defend it with all (our) strength, with all the force of determination.

In our battle position (arrangement) we are not alone. To our right, is the Jewish people in the Diaspora as well as the conscience of Enlightened Humanity. However, the principal burden, the main responsibility is upon us. The Yishuv will stand as a fortified wall in the building of the State and in its defense.

The temporary government calls upon all of the citizens of the State to unite diligently around the mobilization of all forces, all the potential for action, all the ability, devotion and moral strength toward the war effort, toward the effort for victory and for peace. We will maintain law and order. We will preserve our composure. We will shape ourselves in accord with every trial and test. There will not be any shirkers or rebels among us. We will live modestly, we will strengthen production. We will commit all our resources and capital toward the military structure, immigration and the building process. Preparedness for sacrifice and equality in sacrifice will assure our victory.

Without the sacrifices of blood and tears, without giving up property and life, without the hard work and labor of us all, we will not be given the victory. We call the multitudes of the Yishuv to arms. The joy of great days accompanies the grief over those who fall in battle on the fields of the Homeland. May their sacrifice be accepted. Honor to our heroes.

We will restrain the joy in our heart, because the best of our energy and enthusiasm we will invest in efforts to pave the way to the building of our State, to its advancement -- its flowering, for the sake of the ingathering of our Exiles, for the gain and enrichment of all citizens of the State, without distinction of race, nationality or religion.

We have been cast into a cruel war. However, remember: Within the confines of our State, citizens of the Arab people continue to live -- for most of them this war is repugnant (loathsome). Their rights as equal citizens we are commanded to uphold. We look to peace. Our hands are extended to them as partners in building the Homeland.

Citizens:
We will guard the honor of our young State. Everyone is responsible for her (the State) by his conduct, purity of stance and blamelessness. Everyone is responsible for her security and future.

Citizens:
To Arms, To the War Effort, To Building the Homeland.

The Temporary Government

15

5th of Iyar 5708
14th of May 1948