

# "The Revealed End": Messianic Religious Zionism

by

**Aviezer Ravitzky**



Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and his son Zvi Yehudah Kook from *Torat Eretz Yisrael: The Teachings of HaRav Tzvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook* by Rabbi Shlomo Chaim HaCohen Aviner, translated by Tzvi Fishman,

Torat Eretz Yisrael Publications, Jerusalem, 1991

from the book

## **Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism**

1996

pages 79-144

Translated by

Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman

University of Chicago Press

Originally published as

***Kets ha-meguleh u-medinat ha-Yehudim.***

Am Oved Publishers, Tel Aviv, 1993

***Also available from Amazon.com***

The [Table of Contents](#) can be found at the end of this document and also by clicking the section headings.

---

### **"A Messianic Reality"**

How is it that the movement for concrete redemption in our time, including the settlement and conquest of the Land [of Israel] and the abandonment and abolition of exilic existence, did not originate with the religious? How is it that some religious spokesmen even withheld their support for Zionism and the movement for redemption? . . . They failed to recognize that it was not that we mortals were forcing the

End, but rather that the Master of the House, the Lord of the Universe, was forcing our hand; that it was not human voices that broke down the wall separating us from our land, but the voice of the living God calling upon us to "Go up!" <sup>1</sup>

**THIS DECLARATION**, made by Rabbi Zvi Yehudah ha-Cohen Kook (1891-1981), mentor of the "redemptionist" religious-Zionist camp during the decades following the establishment of the State of Israel, sums up concisely and eloquently the way this camp reacted to ultra-Orthodox theological criticism of Zionism. For the former, the Zionist undertaking did not stem from a merely human initiative or breakthrough, from nationalistic arrogance or self-assertion. Rather, it sprang from a divine thrust toward redemption, a compelling higher call to which the people of Israel responded with historic fidelity. Zionism, "the movement for concrete redemption in our time," is thus part of a new phase of Jewish history in which the people are released from their age-old, enforced passivity and freed entirely of their fear of the three oaths.<sup>2</sup> Zionism actively assaults "the wall separating us from our land" and goes on to build on the strength of a new religious imperative not heard in previous generations. "No, it is not we who are forcing the End," Kook would say to his disciples, "but the End that is forcing us!" <sup>3</sup>

It is true, the rabbi and his followers would say, that many God-fearing Jews have not heard the voice charging them with "the divine historic imperative of ending the Exile." They have not discerned the signs of the new era, with its urgent messianic tidings. It is also true that many Zionists, including some of the most devoted pioneers, have not seen fit to acknowledge the divine origin of the call. They are not aware of the religious meaning of their undertaking and at times even deny it vehemently. Yet on a deeper level, both groups, religious and secular alike, are moving in unison toward the fulfillment of a single, well-laid-out messianic purpose. In their subjectively different ways they all fit into one objective plan. Whether they are aware of it or not, it is Divine Providence that grips them,<sup>4</sup> guiding them inexorably toward the final redemption of Israel.

Kook, yeshivah dean, ideologue, and educator, wielded considerable public influence, far beyond the circle of his students and immediate disciples. In the period following the Six-Day War, he was even able to impose the stamp of his personality and outlook on social developments in Israel as a whole. His public statements provided the impetus for energetic, wide-ranging political activity. To this day, more than a decade

after his death, his ideas remain a beacon for many in the Zionist yeshivot, and even more so for the leadership of Gush Emunim and the movement for the settlement of Jews in Judea and Samaria.

The nationalist ideology of Rabbi Kook and his followers views the history of Zionism as an inevitable and decidedly messianic process, leading to the realization of prophetic predictions: "the State of Israel as the fulfillment of the biblical vision of redemption."<sup>5</sup> Messianism is no longer to be seen as the antithesis of concrete reality. It is no longer merely a critique of what is, nor is it addressed only to the future. Rather, messianic redemption springs from present events; it is embodied and realized in them. "Our reality is one of *teshuvah* [return to God, repentance], and it is a messianic one,"<sup>6</sup> writes Kook. In other words, the traditional religious categories of holiness, redemption, and repentance have now assumed concrete form in the Zionist endeavor itself. They are given living, dynamic expression as part of the process of the return to Zion and the Jewish national revival. This is indeed "the true redemption, as revealed in the full realization of [Jewish] settlement of the land and the resurrection of the Jewish people here, in the ongoing ingathering of the exiles . . . It appears when we fully inherit the land and achieve complete sovereignty over it, when our public life is thoroughly infused with the holiness of its concreteness."<sup>7</sup>

To be sure, this is "messianism" without a messiah, a redemptive process that takes place in the absence of a living human redeemer. In these circles, as distinct from those of the present generation of Lubavitcher Hasidim (see below), immediate religious expectation does not center on a personal messiah. Without abandoning traditional beliefs, attention is focused in a new way on the realm of collective history. One seeks the signs of Divine Providence amidst contemporary events in the life of the nation. "It is this divine dynamic that is the messianic process," writes Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, rabbi of Beit-El and dean of the [Ateret Kohanim Yeshivah](#) in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem. "The messianic process is a concrete, divine reality, the action upon history of a powerful redeemer [God], the Rock of Israel, who lives within history." He continues with undisguised irony:

If someone whispers in your ear that he has "not seen the Messiah lately, either in the fields of the Golan or in the expanses of the Sinai" [territories seized by Israel in the Six-Day War—Trans.], he may be an honest man . . . But if he goes a step further and says, "Since I have not seen it, it does not exist," his words are words of falsehood and seduction. Say to him, "You may not have seen it, but others have" . . . We declare the absolute certainty of our imminent redemption . . . All the troubles, delays, and complications we have endured are merely momentary and

cannot obscure this mighty overall trend, this Messiah, whose power has been concealed since ancient times in the treasure house of history and who is now being revealed in actuality.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, the messiah referred to here is merely a metaphor for the messianic idea and the messianic age. A personal messiah will certainly come but, contrary to the common conception among the ultra-Orthodox, it is not he who will bring about the historic turn, nor will he, with his own hands, set in motion the redemptive process. On the contrary, this turn and this process will give birth to him. The Messiah is not involved in the *at-halta de-ge'lah*, the beginning of redemption; he is not responsible for the planting and growth of the fruit, but rather for its ripening. The concrete, historical Beginning we are witnessing today has not come about through a personal redeemer, but through our collective activity and the changes that have taken place in our character as a people.

In one sense this approach is not new, of course. Were there not Kabbalistic teachers who taught that messianic redemption was the collective responsibility of the fellowship or of the community as a whole?

<sup>9</sup> And had not even these mystics concluded centuries earlier that the Messiah would not bring about the process, but mark its culmination? "This is why the purification and refining were necessary, to set everything aright . . . and until all is set aright, the King Messiah cannot come" (Meir Ibn-Gabbai, sixteenth century).<sup>10</sup> True enough, yet we see here an interesting departure (along the lines of the new tack already taken by the Harbingers of Zionism). Unlike the traditional Kabbalistic sages, who saw redemption as hinging entirely on spiritual rectification and the fulfillment of a mystical, cosmic mission, this activist school gives precedence to perfecting this world and achieving historical, political fulfillment. For them, it is the Zionist undertaking, in all its concreteness, that embodies the needed collective rectification and truly reflects the Jewish people's response to the divine call. And it is Zionism that, in the last analysis, prepares the way for universal personal redemption as well. Thus Kook wrote, "The End is being revealed before our very eyes, and there can be no doubt or question that would detract from our joy and gratitude to the Redeemer of Israel . . . The End is here!"<sup>11</sup>

## A Divine Polity

**THE ESTABLISHMENT** of the State of Israel and the reclaiming of the Land of Israel thus stand at the very heart of a decisively messianic process. This being the case, the Jewish state can no longer be portrayed as a merely historical or social phenomenon; its very existence is fraught with religious meaning, and in the final analysis it appears to embody something quite metaphysical. "Zionism is a heavenly matter," Kook went so far as to say. "The State of Israel is a divine entity, our holy and exalted state!"<sup>12</sup> In other words, the tidings of the redemption of Israel, the consciousness of present messianic realization, have not only toppled "the wall separating us from our land"; they have eliminated at one stroke the formidable barrier between the theological and the political, the heavenly and the earthly.

Indeed, some thirty years prior to the founding of the state, Zvi Yehudah Kook's distinguished father, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the Chief Rabbi of Eretz Israel, already envisioned "our state, the State of Israel, the pedestal of God's throne in this world." But what for the father had been merely a utopian hope was manifest to the son and his followers as a concrete reality. The apparently eschatological laurels bestowed by Rabbi Kook on the future messianic state—"an ideal state, whose only aim should be that the Lord be acknowledged as one and His name one, which is truly the highest happiness"<sup>13</sup>—were now to be bestowed upon a given political-historical entity, in the here and now. The latent holiness that had so long awaited its appointed hour<sup>14</sup> now burst forth into the full light of day, in all its authenticity, in the shape of the state of the redeemed people of Israel. To be sure, the Jewish state is to be judged, not just by its outward appearance, but by its "inner hidden essence." We are asked to strip away its outer shell and, with a spiritual eye, gaze into its metaphysical core. In the words of a eulogy of Zvi Yehudah Kook delivered by one of his principal disciples, Rabbi Hayyim Druckman, dean of the Or Etzion Yeshivah and former member of the Knesset: "He was one of the few in his generation—I dare say the only one—to grasp fully the messianic revelation the State of Israel represents, to see the light of the Messiah shining forth from the State of Israel . . . He was the only one who taught us how to embrace wholeheartedly the truth that this state, with all its problems, is a divine one."<sup>15</sup> The point was made even more strongly by Rabbi Eliezer Waldman, dean of the Kiryat Arba Yeshivah, likewise a former Knesset member, in response to a debate that raged in Israel following the Lebanon War: "Our state, the State of Israel, the pedestal of God's throne in this world"—this has, in fact, been the purpose of the Jewish state ever since it was founded. Its purpose is to reveal the unity between the most exalted divine values and their manifestation by Israel in the world."<sup>16</sup> Here we have the image of the Jewish state as an integral theopolitical whole, the very existence of

which aims at the realization of a Jewish "City of God" here on earth. Borrowing for a moment the rhetoric of the sociologists of religion,<sup>17</sup> we may say that in this concept religious faith sanctifies the sociopolitical structure, transferring it to the realm of the absolute and thereby bestowing upon it a transcendent validity.

Inevitably, the concrete actions of the Jewish state too become hallowed. "The holiness of the divine service [*avodah*, literally, work], the service of the Temple, is extended to the work of the state as a whole, both practical and spiritual, both public and private," wrote Zvi Yehudah Kook.<sup>18</sup> By the same token, Israel's wars, too, come to be seen not merely in terms of national survival (in halakhic terms, "rescuing Israel from the enemy")<sup>19</sup> or reclaiming the ancestral land. They are portrayed in ethical and theological terms, as a mighty struggle to uproot evil and achieve universal rectification.

"From the perspective of faith we see the divine hand spread over us, and especially over our wars. It leads us to recognize the righteousness of our actions and our wars and their indispensability, not only for us but for all the nations!" Thus writes Rabbi Zvi Tau, a leading light of this camp in the last two decades. "The wars of Israel are essentially wars against war, for whoever rises up against Israel rises up against the light of God in the world, which is the supernal peace!"<sup>20</sup> A struggle that appears to be over particular national interests is in fact over universal human values. This conclusion is, in fact, a direct consequence of the peremptory identification of the political Israel and the theological one. From this point of view, the State of Israel's enemies are by definition enemies of the God of Israel, "the exaltation of Israel is the exaltation of heaven," military victory is tantamount to spiritual victory, and "the wars of Israel represent the steps of the Messiah, marching toward his own coronation."<sup>21</sup>

Rabbi Waldman fleshes out this idea:

When the [Lebanon] war broke out, there were those who claimed we had not come to impose order on Lebanon but rather to save the Galilee. But we pointed out that it is Israel's task to bring order into the world. This statement incensed many learned Jews . . . but we must not recoil or shrink from this responsibility. It is our duty to establish an order of faith and holiness, an order such as is described in the verses, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" [Isa. 56:7] and "The land shall be filled with devotion to the Lord" [Isa. 11:9], an order in the relations between man and God and between man and man, an order among nations, among countries. Who is going to bring order into the world? Those who submit to evil? The great powers, which are themselves suffused with wickedness or give in to

it? The people of Israel is the only one which is prepared to bring order . . . The situation of crime and injustice . . . will continue until we make order.<sup>22</sup>

All distinctions between the spiritual and the military have been deliberately blurred here. The army of Israel, which is the army of the Lord, is called out of Zion to establish a *pax Judaica* in the Middle East and ultimately in the world as a whole, in preparation for the fulfillment of the vision of the End of Days. To be sure, this is an extreme expression of the kind of political messianism we are discussing. But it emerges from the heart of the camp and is not unrepresentative of trends present there. Rabbi Dov Lior, dean of the Kiryat Arba Yeshivah and a radical spokesman of these groups, said at the time that "the war [in Lebanon] has proven to the whole world that there is in the Middle East only one people militarily strong enough to be considered a real power . . . Rooting out the dens of iniquity [of the terrorists] is but a preliminary to the eventual rooting out of all evil in the world. The present situation proves that the State of Israel is the one power in the world with which all nations are compelled willy-nilly to reckon."<sup>23</sup>

Let us now cast a look back over the entire development. Jewish mysticism always understood "Israel" not only as a collection of individual men and women, but as an overarching idea. "The People of Israel" and "the Congregation of Israel" are anchored in a higher, metaphysical realm of being, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Redemptionist Zionism, which drew amply upon this notion and added to it the modern, European element of the "national spirit," has now applied the concept directly to the State of Israel. The latter, the political embodiment of the Congregation of Israel, is perceived as "a stairway set on the ground, and its top reached to the sky" (Gen. 28: 12). Earthly military exploits are also raised to a metaphysical plane and take on a universal, messianic meaning and validity.<sup>24</sup>

Note that in this instance religion is not lending its sanction to a conservative social structure but to an innovative one (i.e., Jewish political sovereignty), a structure that represents revolutionary change in the life of the people. "Messianism is the dynamism of the Torah,"<sup>25</sup> Zvi Yehudah Kook taught, and it is therefore messianism that makes it possible and, indeed, praiseworthy to sanctify the new.

## **National Revival and the Reconstitution of the Sanhedrin**

**IN THE PRECEDING SECTIONS**, I discussed some of the ideological assumptions underlying the radical-redemptionist interpretation of the history of Zionism and the State of Israel. Of course, we cannot detach these views from the actual social and political phenomena. Ideas shape historical events but are also responsive to them, in ways that are sometimes obvious, sometimes less so. However, our main concern here is with the ideas themselves, both theological and ideological: their development and impact on the course of events.

What were the principal sources of redemptionist Zionism? It will be recalled that by the middle of the nineteenth century there were rabbinical voices—those of the Harbingers of Zionism—calling in messianic terms for Jewish settlement in Palestine and giving concrete, worldly content to the need for collective repentance and rectification. But their vision had only limited influence at the time. In fact, as I stressed in the introduction, religious authorities such as "the Netziv" (Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin), who supported the Lovers of Zion in the 1880s, and even more so rabbis like Reines and Rabinowitz, who joined the leadership of the Zionist movement at the end of the century, sought to suppress the messianic hopes that were being pinned on the new movement. They attempted to draw a sharp distinction between the current practical need to settle in the Land of Israel and the religious redemption expected in the Time to Come. But with the passage of time—the beginnings of real Zionist achievement, the Balfour Declaration—overtly messianic sentiments were once again heard in religious Zionist circles. Thus the national undertaking came to draw upon traditional longings for messianic redemption.

It was only in the writings of Rabbi Abraham Kook (father of Rabbi Zvi Yehudah) in the first third of the twentieth century, however, that the redemptionist position was fully articulated, in a manner laden with historiosophic and mystical overtones. And as I have just illustrated, this view was further sharpened, intellectually and politically, in the ensuing generations, under the impact of the destruction of European Jewry, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the wars fought by Israel.

In fact, more than any of the other religious authorities considered in this work, it is Rabbi Abraham Kook who has been of interest to scholars of Jewish thought. Dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been devoted to his teachings in recent years, and, understandably, there does not appear to be any end in sight. We are thus excused from an overall consideration of Kook's thought. Nonetheless, we may well ask what was the point of departure for Kook's innovative, dialectical notions

of national revival and messianic redemption? What was the inner problematic that gave rise to these ideas and accompanied them throughout? Finally, how are Rabbi Kook's ideas on the national question related to the larger body of his historiosophic and theological thought? These questions, which are of course vital to our inquiry, have not yet been fully dealt with, and so we shall consider them first.

We shall then return and ask, How do the ideas of the father Rabbi Abraham Kook relate to those of the son Rabbi Zvi Yehudah and the latter's disciples? How have these ideas become radicalized over the years, and at the same time, how have they affected the living social and political reality of the State of Israel?

I shall begin with the first signs of Rabbi Abraham Kook's Zionist aspirations. In 1898, when political Zionism was in its infancy, a young Latvian rabbi wrote a programmatic pamphlet on the question of Zionism and religion, or more precisely on the proper relation between the Jewish national revival and the laws of the Torah. The rabbi had been greatly impressed by the First Zionist Congress, which had just been held in Basel, where the intention of establishing a "homeland" for the Jewish people in Palestine had been proclaimed. But this writer, unlike the (anti-Zionist) Messianic Religious Zionism "protesting rabbis," developed an original, bold approach to the new national undertaking in terms of its religious significance. On the one hand, he attempted to defend Zionism against its ultra-Orthodox critics, "to remove the fear of some of the leading sages and God-fearers that the Zionist movement will, in the spirit of reform, bring about schisms in our holy Torah."<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, he rejects outright the secular tendencies associated with Zionism, aiming "to purify Zionism of all the filth and mire smeared upon it by reckless writers."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the high hopes the author has for the new Jewish national movement go far beyond the declared goals of the fathers of political Zionism themselves.

The author, then serving as rabbi of the small community of Boisk, is none other than Abraham Kook. The pamphlet is apparently his first work on the question of national revival, yet it has unfortunately been ignored by all Kook scholars. What is more, one of the essay's central features is a daring call for the reconstitution of the Great Sanhedrin (the supreme religious and judicial assembly of sages in ancient Palestine) and a renewal of the historic chain of rabbinic ordination. Yet the work has been overlooked even by those who, after the establishment of the state, fought for this very idea, chief among them being the leader of the Mizrachi movement, Rabbi Judah Leib Maimon. Faced with harsh criticism from various rabbinic quarters, they nevertheless failed to marshal Rabbi Kook's work to their defense.

In fact, it seems likely that the author himself, the young Kook, chose at first to keep the essay out of the public eye, which explains why it was first published more than twenty years after its composition.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, this forgotten pamphlet provides us with an interesting insight into the sources of Kook's later thinking on the national question, his mature redemptionist philosophy, which was clearly formulated only after his immigration to Palestine. The pamphlet also shows us the first signs of the inner problematic that was to characterize Kook's teachings for many years to come.

What distinguishes Kook's position at this time? First, unlike the well-known Zionist rabbis of the day, he continues to elaborate the dream of the Harbingers of Zionism, endowing the Zionist undertaking with a clearly messianic import. Needless to say, his essay takes an activist, worldly stance on the question of national revival: "Nothing in our faith, either in its larger principles or in its details, negates the idea that we can begin to shake off the dust of exile by our own efforts, through natural, historical processes . . . that we have a sacred duty to try to do so by whatever means are at our disposal." He rejects out of hand the commonly held traditional view that, in his words, "we cannot hope for the salvation of Israel except through palpable miracles, such as the coming of Elijah, upon which our own efforts have no bearing."<sup>29</sup> But the young Kook goes further, daring to speak openly of "the generation of the Messiah" and "the roots of the coming of the Messiah" as being embodied in the concrete historical process of the return to Zion. In his view, and in contrast to the common interpretation,<sup>30</sup> even the Talmudic concept of *hilkheta di-meshiha* (messianic law) refers, not to legislation wondrously ordained by a personality of a higher order, but simply to halakhic legislation enacted collectively in the Land of Israel at the time of the Jewish return to Zion. For, as I have already emphasized, the Messiah is not to be understood as the driving force behind the historical process but as its outcome. "The term *meshiha* [Messiah] can also refer to the time when Israel returns to *bitzaron* [literally, stronghold; i.e., Jerusalem (according to Zech. 9: 12)], since this return is the very root of the Coming of the Messiah, even though full redemption has not yet been attained. What is decisive is that this is the generation of the Messiah, who sets his seal upon the superiority and greatness of Israel. There is thus no contradiction between this Talmudic statement [concerning *hilkheta di-meshiha*; BT Sanhedrin 51b; Zevahim 45a] and the obligation to strive for the salvation of our people, just as Nehemiah and his followers strove for it in Second Temple times."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the young Kook expects Zionism to propel the nation, not only to political, but to spiritual revival as well. He charges it with the comprehensive task of bringing about radical change in the life of the Jewish people, of sparking a thoroughgoing renaissance—political, cultural, legal, spiritual

—with untold consequences. Here, too, his views differ significantly from those of his Zionist rabbinical contemporaries who, as we have seen, sought to confine nationalistic activity, for the time being, to the pursuit of material and political goals.<sup>32</sup> Terrified that the new Zionist initiative would trespass into religiously sensitive realms, that it might usurp the spiritual role of Judaism itself, they tried to neutralize it from any involvement in Jewish religion or culture.

It is interesting to note how Kook rationalizes his comprehensive demands. On the one hand, as he could learn from the political philosophy of Maimonides,<sup>33</sup> political freedom for the nation is a necessary precondition for spiritual freedom and cultural efflorescence. Neither the elite of the Jewish people nor the rank and file can find the wellsprings of their spirit or their creative voice "as long as they are not planted in the land of our forefathers, led by rulers who spring from our own midst and are independent of outside control. Only then will our spirit soar."<sup>34</sup> Or, in the terms of the debate over the nature of Zionism that was going on when Kook's pamphlet was published, it is only the full realization of "political Zionism" that can prepare the ground for the realization of "spiritual Zionism."

Yet the reverse is also true: there cannot be a political rebirth without a parallel spiritual one to guide it. As Kook warns us in light of the development of the national idea in Europe, "When nationalism alone"—in the absence of spiritual or moral depth—"takes root among the people, it is as likely to debase and dehumanize their spirit as to elevate it." National reawakening in and of itself is perennially prone to rapid degeneration into a narrow, crude "patriotism" that tramples underfoot the divine image within Humankind. Kook apparently has in mind in particular the sharp decline of the French Revolution into various forms of tyranny, while still wrapped in the mantle of the "general will." To be sure, Kook writes, "our own nationalism is immune to such excesses, but only as long as it is guided by its true nature, which is the spirit of the Lord that is over us and that His prophet adjures us not to let depart from our mouths or the mouths of our offspring until the end of time."<sup>35</sup> It is only the religious spirit, he believes, that can protect the Jewish national revival from the malady of totalitarianism.

Above all these pronouncements hovers Kook's firm faith in the organic connection between the Congregation of Israel and the God of Israel, between the "national idea" and the "divine idea"—to draw upon concepts he develops in his later work. There can be no revival of the one without revival of the other.

Now Kook sees the hoped-for historical turnabout as beginning with frankly institutional measures. Just as the fathers of political Zionism saw

the establishment of a Jewish state as the focus of a national revival, he sees the reestablishment of the Great Sanhedrin, once the supreme authority in the realm of the Oral Law, as the focus of a religious revival. He places utopian hopes in the supreme Jewish religious center that is to be established in Palestine, a center he sees as capable of healing the many spiritual ailments the people suffer because of their exile. First and foremost, this center can restore vitality and stature to the Torah and thereby overcome latter-day tendencies to religious watering-down and outright secularization. The Jerusalem Sanhedrin's aura of antiquity and the great dignity it will derive from the fact that it will bring together the most distinguished rabbinic personalities will, he believes, give the body the authority, enjoyed by the ancient sages: to legislate vigorously, mend breaches in the wall of religion, and teach a single Torah and code of laws to the entire people. Judaism will thus be restored to its former glory as the focus of national identity. Thus in his pamphlet Kook writes:

We who believe in the rebirth of our people . . . know that we shall yet be planted on our land. We shall then build and establish our way of life as befits a living people aspiring to freedom and justice . . . Our first duty will be to establish a religious center . . . and above all a Great Sanhedrin, from which Torah and instruction shall issue forth to all Israel, so as to restore the great pillar, that of the Oral Torah, to its rightful place . . . It is not too wondrous a thing nor is it far off that all the sages of Israel will [come together to] make decisions, when we have been planted on our land with all the appurtenances of statehood, and the great well-being that the restoration of rabbinical ordination will bring the people shall be in evidence. [The Sanhedrin] will examine each ruling and custom, acting in accordance with the Torah. And there is no doubt that even the freethinkers will admit that the people need a religious center . . . Now that the national genius is, with God's help, extending its scope; now that there is increasing recognition of and desire to take pride in the sancta of our people; and given the certainty that these will grow even more as the Zionist movement grows and prospers, God willing, we can be certain that respect for the Torah will increase among the people as a whole, and no one will even think of desecrating it in the slightest way.<sup>36</sup>

Unless we are planted in our ancestral land and live an independent life ruled by our own, we cannot expect to see widespread knowledge of the Torah together with a broadening of wisdom and fear of God. Only then shall our spirits be exalted and our hidden talents revealed in such great measure as befits the shepherds of Israel.<sup>37</sup>

That is, the restoration of a supreme Jewish religious authority, both legislative and judicial, was regarded by Rabbi Kook as a means of bringing about the renewal of the Jewish religious spirit as a source of

inspiration and creativity. Such a development would seem to flow from the very nature of Judaism as a law-oriented religion.

Nevertheless, we can only wonder whether the author took into consideration the serious question of how power would be divided between the religious and the political authorities.<sup>38</sup> Did he intentionally ignore the rebellious spirit of the secular Zionists, or had he perhaps not yet had an opportunity to get to know this spirit and so believed in all innocence that the secularists would submit to religious authority and that "no one will even think of desecrating [the Torah] in the slightest way"?<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, was Kook not aware of the obstacles that would confront any attempt to bring all the great Torah sages together under a single institutional umbrella and a single halakhic regime?<sup>40</sup> Was this then a program or merely an apology for the Zionist movement and its religious-revivalist elements?

We do not have clear answers to these questions. In any case, it is clear that the pamphlet's utopian spirit relieved Kook of the need to tackle questions of the future head on, to devise halakhic instrumentalities and detailed religious responses to the whole range of weighty issues that could be expected to arise when the Jewish people actually returned to its land and regained its political freedom. Kook explicitly declares that "we need not determine [in advance] the laws that will govern practice once our people is resurrected, for then the Sanhedrin will have to be reestablished, and it in turn will rule on all doubtful matters . . . It will examine every issue, every ruling and custom, and act in accordance with the Torah."<sup>41</sup> Rabbi Kook could thus speak definitively about the pattern of a solution, about the framework and its sources of authority, without taking any stand at all as to the concrete content.<sup>42</sup>

Kook eventually retracted his bold idea of reestablishing the Sanhedrin, but did so mainly for tactical reasons, related to the practical difficulties involved. "This is not the right time," he wrote in Palestine in 1910, in response to an inquiry from one of the rabbis. "No one will be willing to listen to this idea; we will be attacked for it from every quarter."<sup>43</sup> Kook spoke in a similar vein some twenty-five years later, in 1935; from a purely halakhic point of view, he said then as well, we could decide to reconstitute the Great Sanhedrin, but "I see no possibility of a meeting of minds of the sages of Israel in our generation, which is afflicted to an unprecedented degree with mutual criticism among the scholars." Consequently, we cannot undertake such an "exalted and holy thing without preparing the ground, both spiritually and practically . . . Still, the way remains open to us, if we proceed gradually."<sup>44</sup>

In fact, as the years went by, Kook ceased making public mention of his

old, forgotten plan. But there is reason to think that when he founded the Palestine Chief Rabbinate in 1921 he saw it as a step toward the great messianic goal of reestablishing the Sanhedrin.<sup>45</sup> "In private," reports Rabbi Maimon, chief advocate of the idea after the establishment of the state, "his great dream was the reconstitution of the Sanhedrin in the Land of Israel as soon as circumstances were right."<sup>46</sup>

It is important to note that this dream had long been associated in Jewish thinking with messianic expectations. Maimonides, for example, teaches that the prophetic vision expressed in the verse "I will restore your magistrates as of old" (Isa. 1:26) is to be fulfilled "before the coming of the Messiah," and his teaching was later interpreted as a direct invitation to messianic activism in the form of the reinstatement of rabbinical ordination. The sages of sixteenth-century Safed, who thought redemption was imminent, even drew practical conclusions from Maimonides' words, while the Jerusalem sages, who advocated passivity on the messianic question, attacked them furiously.<sup>47</sup> The question has been in the air ever since, arising once again in our own time in connection with the national revival.<sup>48</sup> Thus the young Kook did not speak out in vain; he was aware of the real significance of his proposal and foresaw its consequences, however remote.<sup>49</sup> Here, as in other well-known instances, a hope for the future is presented as a hope for the recovery of the past. Israel is called upon to "renew its days as of old," to bring about a renaissance. But this call is based upon an idealization of the past, "restoration" as "utopia."

As I have pointed out, "the time when Israel returns to Jerusalem and its stronghold is the very root of the coming of the Messiah . . . who sets his seal upon the superiority and greatness of Israel." We may say, therefore, that in this forgotten pamphlet Kook laid the cornerstone for the whole history of redemptionist Zionism in Eretz Israel.

In sum, these are the main features of Kook's essay: activism on the messianic question; utopian Zionism; daring, global thinking, short on practical details and concrete solutions; great emphasis on the organic connection between Jewish nationalism and religious sentiment; and rejection a priori of the self-consciousness of the secular Zionists ("Israel lives by its faith"). As we shall see, Kook consistently espoused these views over a period of many years, and they would therefore, at a later stage, have a noticeable effect on radical religious Zionism as well.

On the other hand, the larger corpus of Kook's theological and historiosophical thinking was as yet undeveloped, and would reach maturity only after his immigration to Palestine. Thus he did not yet have at his disposal the full panoply of original dialectical concepts with which he would later grapple with the question of modern Jewish nationalism

and with the hidden religious significance of the Jewish "rebellion " attributed to him by his contemporaries.

## The "Basel Decree"

**KOOK'S ESSAY** on the reconstitution of the Sanhedrin was written under the deep impression of the First Zionist Congress in Basel. But it did not take him long to discover that his religious perspective on the new movement was very far from that of many of the movement's leaders and thinkers. He was soon forced to confront secular nationalism and its freethinking advocates head on.

Moreover, Kook eventually heard rumors that the first Zionist congresses had taken as their motto that "Zionism has nothing to do with religion." The alleged news naturally came as a heavy blow. This was not, as he saw it, merely a pragmatic attempt to sidestep the controversy raging over religion in the Jewish world, but rather a blatant move toward secularization and sacrilege, a deliberate severing of the "national idea" from the "divine idea," and hence from its own spiritual and historical roots. It is no wonder, then, that Kook's reaction to this "decree," which he attributes to the organized Zionist movement, is bitter and condemnatory to a degree unparalleled in the entire vast body of his work. Indeed, he attacks the "decree" with some of the strongest imagery in the lexicon of Jewish historical memory.

The congresses' decree that "Zionism has nothing to do with religion" is harsher than the decrees of Pharaoh and Haman. It spreads the terrible, black wings of death over our tender, lovely, young national sentiment, by cutting it off from the source of its very life and the light of its splendor. The Basel decree . . . that makes religion a separate faction in Jewish life and disconnects it from Jewish nationalism—this abomination, this perverse statement, is the poison within [Zionism] that is destroying it and turning it into an empty vessel . . . filled with a spirit of destructiveness and strife.

This foolish ordinance, the product of the alienation of its authors from Judaism—until this deposit of error is expunged from their hearts, Zionism will languish lifeless, incapable of protecting itself from rot and destruction, so that the worthless are bound to triumph; it shall putrefy and be covered with worms.<sup>50</sup>

In point of fact, the Zionist congresses at Basel never issued such a "perverse statement." Some two months before the first congress, Max Nordau, its vice president, did write a polemical article including the following: "Zionism has nothing to do with theology; and if a desire has been kindled in Jewish hearts to establish a new commonwealth in Zion, it is not the Torah or the Mishnah that inspire them but hard times."<sup>51</sup> But Herzl himself, in his political wisdom, carefully dissociated himself from Nordau's pronouncement, writing on the manuscript: "We must not drive the Zionist rabbis away. Let us not discourage them, even if we have no intention of handing them the leadership."<sup>52</sup> The "Basel Decree," then, was never issued, either at the First Zionist Congress or at those that followed. Yet while Rabbi Kook was mistaken about the details—he may have been misled by press reports of the congresses—he was not far wrong concerning the overall trend. This trend, which was indeed led by Herzl, sought to keep questions of religious belief and law separate from the question of national rebirth.<sup>53</sup> Organized Zionism was certainly far from heeding the rabbinic call that its aspiration to national political revival be linked to the traditional hope for national religious repentance. And for Kook, who saw Judaism as all-encompassing, this refusal indeed represented a serious rent in the fabric.

Thus, at this early stage in the development of his thought, and in the absence of the complex dialectical tools he would later employ in his encounter with the secular pioneers, Kook sometimes sounds like one of Jewish nationalism's severest critics. For example, he writes in 1902: "The inner difference between those who are faithful to the Torah and those who have abandoned it is greater than the difference between Israel and the nations. Though we differ from [the other nations] in our religion, we are nevertheless warned to love and respect them. But the wicked among our own people, who cast off the yoke of the Torah, we must hate and spurn."<sup>54</sup> Anyone familiar with Kook's later teaching, particularly his mystical doctrine of the inner power of the "uniqueness of Israel" and the objective stature of "the Assembly of Israel," cannot but be surprised by these sharp words.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, so uncompromising a stance in regard to Jewish identity, excluding the unobservant as it does from the circle of Jewish fellowship, could not but undermine any possibility of cooperation between religious and nonreligious in pursuit of Zionist ends. Yet this position has ample precedent in classical Jewish sources, which Kook uses in mounting his bare-knuckled challenge:

If those who tear off the garment of religion and deny the Torah think they are still Jews, still within the fold of their people and related to it by a national tie, by national brotherhood and national longings . . . [I say,] absolutely not! Those who observe the Torah and the commandments do not and cannot recognize any national solidarity with those

who have washed their hands of the soul of the people and the source of its very life, nor can bonds of race or homeland [provide a substitute].

Jewish religious sentiment militates strongly in favor of excluding from the brotherhood of the nation all heretics and those who cast off the yoke of Torah and faith in a systematic and deliberate way. Be not led astray by the propitiating words of those weaklings, religious people, who fail to confront you with this bitter truth.<sup>56</sup>

Needless to say, such pronouncements were more characteristic of the Lithuanian ultra-Orthodox and German Orthodox of the day than they were of the religious Zionists. From the very beginning, one of the distinctive features of religious Zionism was its new attitude to Jewish peoplehood. In the incisive words of Ehud Luz, "The Assembly of Israel had [in the religious Zionists' view] ceased to be only a community of the 'observant' and now included those previously regarded by the ultra-Orthodox as 'heretics' or 'infidels,' whom it was obligatory to exclude from the Jewish people."<sup>57</sup> By contrast, Kook's statements at this stage of his ideational development seem to shunt aside all the given elements of national identity—historical, sentimental, existential, ethnic—in favor of religious commitment.<sup>58</sup> Even devotion to the return to Zion is not a sufficient basis, in his view, for "a national tie . . . national brotherhood and national longings."

To be sure, some of these strong statements should be seen as rhetorical, aimed at reproof and warning. Nevertheless, they reflect clearly the tension into which the writer was drawn in those early days, when his hopes for national and religious rebirth suddenly ran into the recalcitrant reality of a stubborn secularist insurrection, and he had not yet found the conceptual tools with which to confront and subdue it.<sup>59</sup>

The forum in which Kook chose to disseminate his ideological thinking at this time—the monthly journal *Ha-Peles* (The scale)—is also suggestive. The journal had been edited by one of the most virulent Orthodox opponents of the Zionist movement, Rabbi E. A. Rabinowich of Poltava. The latter had left the movement and turned against it when the Second Zionist Congress rejected his demand that a "rabbinical committee" be established to oversee the movement's cultural activities, and he used *Ha-Peles* as a platform for his struggle against Zionism. Indeed, others had already expressed surprise at Kook's involvement in the movement: "What is a *kohen* [descendant of the priestly caste] doing in the cemetery?"<sup>60</sup> Matters would eventually reach a stage where Kook's son, Zvi Yehudah, would voice the suspicion that his father's writings had been tampered with by the anti-Zionist editor.<sup>61</sup> The charge is implausible, for had it been true, the elder Kook would have had ample

opportunity to protest, and he did not do so. Nevertheless, the fact that such a suspicion arose calls into question the usual harmonistic approach to Kook's thought, which attributes a unity to the whole body of his work, even though some of it was written when he was quite young and some in old age, some before his immigration to Palestine and some after, some for public consumption and some not. This approach overlooks many sources and ends up distorting or sugar-coating them.

We thus see that Rabbi Kook's attitude to the new Zionist movement before he left for Palestine was ambivalent.<sup>62</sup> He preached vigorously against secular nationalism, calling upon the movement to return to its true self and to its God.<sup>63</sup> He had not yet come to the view he was to hold later, namely, that the secular Zionist, and in particular the pioneer in the Land of Israel, represented authentic, positive values, albeit partial ones. These types had not yet come to represent for him a healthy antithesis to exilic Jewish existence, a daring ambition to achieve personal and national freedom, albeit going too far and overstepping the bounds of legitimacy. At this stage, he still saw the new heresy in traditional terms, as an expression of spiritual emptiness and venality. As he wrote then: "Heresy arises as a force for evil, particularly in our leaderless generation. It is out of neither wisdom nor wickedness, but rather empty-headedness and an insufficient desire to consider even what is self-evident." As long as the Zionist leaders cling to these views and "do not draw near in their deeds to the Torah and the commandments, do not glory in the faith of Israel or relate to the Lord God of Israel, this movement will cause much immorality. But we expect matters to be rectified . . . [for if not] the people will become discouraged, heaven forbid, and eventually it will be left without a leg to stand on."<sup>64</sup> There is no mention here of remedial positive value, no partial filling of a need or constructive intent. The spiritual wagon of secular Zionism is empty, to borrow the well-known metaphor coined a half-century later by "the Hazon Ish" (Rabbi Avraham Karelitz).

On the other hand, we must not assume that Kook's deep misgivings concerning Zionist secularism provoked in him parallel, Orthodox qualms about Zionist activism. Never, even at this juncture, did he repent his activist stance regarding national rebirth." If we sincerely desire to prepare our people for redemption, for return from the land of its captivity and exile to the place where it originally dwelled, let us do it, and we shall succeed!" He continued to identify unreservedly with the Zionist initiative and its daring aspiration to work a historic change in Jewish life. In 1903, about a year before he himself left for the Land of Israel, Kook wrote: "Who can refrain from taking part? Who will not lend a hand? Who will oppose those laboring for the common good? . . . Who knows? Perhaps [it is] the secret of divine wisdom that decrees that the beginning of the

growth of the salvation of Israel should come through our own efforts . . .  
 If so, why should we not be the ones to merit this and to act?" <sup>65</sup>  
 However, at this early stage in the development of Kook's thinking, he was not yet able to give a systematic answer to the grave, unprecedented question posed by the new Zionist reality: How are these Jews, who willfully violate the Torah of Israel yet fully devote themselves to the people of Israel, to be judged? <sup>66</sup>

## Messiah Ben Joseph

**IN THE FOREGOING SECTIONS** we have examined Rabbi Kook's earliest teachings on the question of national rebirth, as reflected in his 1898 pamphlet on the reestablishment of the Sanhedrin and the more comprehensive essays published in *Ha-Peles* in 1901-3. I have dwelt at length on these neglected writings because they illuminate many of the basic questions with which Kook was confronted throughout his creative life and contain the seeds of many of the ideas about national redemption he was to develop in later years.

We have noted the chasm that opened between Kook's hopes for a thoroughgoing Jewish political and religious renaissance, on the one hand, and the Zionist "decree" which he saw as threatening to sever Jewish nationhood from its spiritual roots, on the other; between Kook's messianic call for the reconstitution of a Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem as the capstone of renewed Jewish independence in the Land of Israel, and the inroads of secularism among the Zionist leadership and intelligentsia. This was a painful dilemma, for unlike most Zionist thinkers, Kook did not see the national reawakening only in terms of correcting the relationships between individuals or between individual and nation; he also saw it in terms of correcting the Jew's relationship to God and the world as a whole. Would healing on the sociopolitical level need to come at the expense of healing on the metaphysical one? Could there be a more dramatic example of a good end achieved by evil means?

When gaps of such magnitude arise between expectations and reality, and one does not simply try to smooth them over or deny them, diverse reactions can be expected.

One possible reaction is the abandonment of all religious expectations

regarding the concrete, historical phenomenon. This is what E. A. Rabinowich, the editor of *Ha-Peles*, did when he turned against the Zionist movement. (The case of Rabbi Aaron Samuel Tamares, a thinker who abandoned Zionism when it failed to espouse his antipolitical, pacifist views, is similar.) Another possibility is to curtail expectations in the light of circumstances. This was done by many of the Mizrahi leaders, who supported the common enterprise as being limited to earthly political development. But neither of these approaches suited Rabbi Kook, with his comprehensive vision of rebirth, his messianic activism, and his passionate belief in the organic rootedness of the "national idea" in the "divine idea." He chose a different tack, to fight for radical change. And so it was not long before he entered the main arena, the struggle for the soul of the new Jewish community in Palestine.

This move was to have a great, creative impact on Rabbi Kook himself. It would lead to a thorough revision of his views concerning secular Zionists and the revolutionary new life emerging around them.

Rabbi Kook immigrated to Palestine in 1904. He was appointed rabbi of Jaffa and the new farming colonies, which in effect meant responsibility for the religious life of the whole settler population. In Kook's rabbinical circles such a step seemed surprising and unconventional, but it suited his personality and convictions. A few weeks after he arrived, Theodor Herzl died. As one might expect, Kook viewed Herzl with ambivalence: as the founder and hero of the Zionist movement, but also as the author of the "Basel Decree." It was in this spirit that he delivered a fascinating and instructive eulogy of Herzl.<sup>67</sup> The eulogy, given in Jaffa, so angered "certain [ultra-Orthodox] Jerusalemites" that "they heckled and reviled him for it and sought to prevent him from saying it," as the rabbi's son later testified.<sup>68</sup> But what of Kook himself? How did he manage to translate his attitude toward the departed leader into the artful combination of praise and criticism that it turned out to be?

His solution lay in classical Jewish messianic imagery, particularly in the legendary figure of Messiah ben Joseph.<sup>69</sup> In ancient tradition this is a figure fraught with tension and linked in a tragic way to the Davidic Messiah. The first messiah is associated in the sources with the final battle that is to take place on the eve of the age of redemption. Although he helps the people toward worldly salvation, he also embodies the inevitability of crisis and defeat, the suffering that is to accompany the "birth pangs of the Messiah" as redemption approaches. He is condemned to be slain in his battle and thereby pave the way for the utopian appearance of the final redeemer, Messiah ben David. In his eulogy, Kook makes ample use of this paradoxical motif of the doomed redeemer. On the one hand, he does not hesitate to speak of Herzl and, more generally, of "the Zionist vision in our day," in decidedly messianic

terms: "the footsteps of the Messiah," "paving the way for the messianic generation," and the like. On the other hand, he carefully restricts the use of these expressions to "material" messianism, the sort associated with Messiah ben Joseph and therefore with crisis and reversal: "[Therefore] the [Zionist] leader fell victim to trouble and suffering." In short, this imagery does not refer to the ultimate end, but to a path full of setbacks that leads to it. "The quest for physical strength and the general appurtenances of national life are the preparations of Messiah ben Joseph, while the forces making for spirituality are those that prepare the way for Messiah ben David." Nevertheless, Kook continues,

our people cannot achieve its exalted destiny, of raising aloft the name of the Lord by which it is called, without completing both sorts of preparation . . . The separation that obtained in exile made it appear as though the two were indeed distinct, and thus he who took up the fight for material improvement [in the life] of the people became, for our many sins, a foe of the Torah and the fulfillment of the commandments and all the holy ways that are unique to the Jewish people. [On the other hand], he who strove for Jewish [spiritual] uniqueness thereby made himself an enemy of material change. As a result, on the [nationalist] side there was a break [from traditional norms], while on the [religious] side there appeared weakness and discouragement. Now, in our time, like the footsteps of Messiah ben Joseph, comes the Zionist vision, which leans entirely toward the material side of things. Because its preparation is lacking [in the other dimension], the forces are not united . . . until [in the end] the [Zionist] leader fell victim to the reign of evil and sorrow . . . This man, whom we may consider to have been the harbinger of Messiah ben Joseph, in terms of his role in achieving the great aim of national rebirth in the general, material sense.

This emphasis on the material dimension of nationhood may darken [the vision] and prevent spiritual elevation . . . Yet the various forces will all end up submitting to the light of the Torah and the knowledge of God . . . for the basis of the preparation for the generation of the Messiah is in the use of cruder strengths together with the goodness and holiness with which Israel has been crowned.<sup>70</sup>

That is, Zionism heralds the Jewish people's worldly salvation, embodying "the stirring of the desire for a healthy material life that is felt by the whole nation." But this stirring and creative vitality carries with it a base, destructive element as well; it is borne aloft on clipped wings that let it slip to the ground, that "darken [the vision] and prevent spiritual elevation." The untimely death of the Zionist leader is thus a fitting symbol of the failure of this "clipping," of the tragic conclusion of the separation of the earthly and the heavenly, the sociopolitical and the religious, the vision of the "state of the Jews" and the laws of the Torah.

Thus in Kook's eulogy of Herzl we see the first blossoming of his later, more complex, dialectical views on the national question. In the imagery he uses here, healing and destruction are, in the best tradition of dialectical thinking, already bound together in a single entity. The selfsame phenomenon is a mixture of light and darkness. Herzl and his movement, "the footsteps of the Messiah," represent a positive, constructive turn in Jewish history, but they are an antithetical eruption, a severing and lopping off, as well, and for this reason they are doomed to forsake their independent course and be incorporated into a higher, more complete synthesis: "Thus Messiah, son of Joseph, is destined to be killed. When he is, everyone will recognize the distortion; for this generation has not been able to see the value of [mundane] achievement . . . while subordinating it to the loftier side of Jewish destiny, to the messianism of the house of David . . . [Then] all will understand that these forces are not really opposed and that everything should be brought together."<sup>71</sup> Kook thus rejects the accepted generalization that "following Herzl's death the idea took hold among religious Zionist leaders that he had been a great penitent and that had he not died young he would have found his way back to Jewish religion." The fact that "in his eulogy of Herzl Rabbi Kook awarded [him] the title 'Messiah, son of Joseph'" was seen as a clear illustration of this view, that "it was in the religious-Zionist camp that Herzl found his most loyal allies, allies who were prepared to follow him almost blindly."<sup>72</sup> But this was not true of Kook. On the contrary, his estimation of the Zionist leader was much more sophisticated and complex, both in the latter's lifetime and afterward, as demonstrated by his use of the imagery of the fallen redeemer.<sup>73</sup> Nor does Kook hesitate, ten years later, to demand that the Zionist movement broaden "the narrow circle of the late lamented Dr. Herzl's dream, despite all its beauty and strength."<sup>74</sup> Herzl the man, Kook writes to the Mizrachi delegates at the Eleventh Zionist Congress (1913), was able to set the Zionist "body" on its feet, but it has now become urgent to inject a soul into "this sculptured body."

This soul cannot be injected into the [Zionist] movement as long as the forehead of the latter bears that mark of Cain, the [declaration that] "Zionism has nothing to do with religion" . . . This is a base imitation [of European culture], much more shameful than the fanciful imitation [implied by] the transfer of the place of the Temple to "Tel Aviv" [in Herzl's *Altneuland*], against which Ahad Ha-Am rightly raised such a storm.<sup>75</sup>

The passing fancy that a despised people is in need of a secure refuge from its persecutors will not be sufficient to vitalize this earth-shaking movement; rather, it is that a holy people, unique among nations, the lion cub of Judah, is

stirring from its long slumber, returning to its inheritance, to  
 "the pride of Jacob whom He loved" [Ps. 47:5].<sup>76</sup>

There is no clearer or loftier formulation anywhere of the sharp rift, already evident at that time, between Herzlian Zionism, with its vision of the "state of the Jews," and messianic Zionism, with its vision of the "revealed End." Rabbi Kook juxtaposes the two: an ordinary political movement versus an "earth-shaking" one; a mere quest for refuge versus a full-fledged return to "the pride of Jacob"; the Temple and Temple Mount as figments of literary imagination versus religious realities; "Tel Aviv" versus "the banner of Jerusalem"; Messiah ben Joseph versus Messiah ben David. "Thus Messiah, son of Joseph, is destined to be killed . . . [Then] all will understand that these forces are not really opposed and that everything should be brought together." This, as we have seen, was Kook's eulogy of Herzl. "God breaks the vessels He uses," Herzl once said himself.<sup>77</sup>

## Historical Progress

**I HAVE SHOWN ABOVE** that, early in his intellectual development and in his public career, Kook had to confront the fact that "the preparation of the generation of the Messiah" in his own time would not grow out of a conciliatory return to religion but, to the contrary, out of a "spiritual insurrection." We have now seen how, in the eulogy of Herzl Kook gave shortly after his immigration to Palestine, he made his first attempt to conceptualize this development in theological terms, viewing the historical shock of the break with religion as but a phase in the process of messianic redemption.

But it was only later, as he came into contact with the freethinking pioneers in the Land of Israel, that Kook was to expand these ideas into a bold, fully fleshed-out historiosophy. The task he set for himself was to explain on religious grounds, not only the historical crisis that was taking place, but also the motivations of the antireligious rebels. While in his eulogy of Herzl he had confined the role of the revolution to the material plane, he now began to see its creative potential on the level of the spirit as well. In the end, he came to view the secularist pioneer as no less than an unwitting *ba'al teshuvah* (returnee to Judaism), with a central role to play in the process of salvation!

How did it happen that a rabbinical scholar in the Lithuanian mold, a Kabbalist, and (contrary to his usual image) a not particularly lenient legal authority, came to view the secular nationalist rebellion in the classical terms of traditional religious hopes? How did the Orthodox rabbi of Jaffa come to see the new settlers, whose watchword was "Let us arise and live without a messiah!" (Joseph Hayyim Brenner), as in fact paving the way for the Messiah's advent? Consider the fact that it was Kook who, early in his career, proclaimed that the Torah required "excluding from the brotherhood of the nation all heretics and those who cast off the yoke of the Torah and the faith in a systematic and deliberate way."<sup>78</sup> It was he who later taught that "the brazen ones of this generation, those who are wicked on principle, those who commit crimes out of spite and not out of pleasure, their noses in the air—these are the lights of *Tohu*!" (an allusion to a concept in Lurianic Kabbalah: the "lights of *Tohu*" were heavenly rays that shone downward with such force that they could not be contained by the "vessels" below and so shattered them). Indeed, Kook wrote, these renegades "choose destruction and cause destruction; the world is disrupted by them and they with it; but the source of their courage is in the bit of holiness [that remains in them]," and it is this that "gives them their vigor."<sup>79</sup> Of course, no stamp of approval for sin or rebellion is meant here, yet there is a new understanding for the motives of the sin and the meaning of the rebellion.

As redemption approaches, brazenness increases. A storm gathers, breaches appear everywhere, audacity breeds audacity . . . These fiery spirits assert themselves, refusing to be bound by any limitation. The weak who inhabit the world of order, the moderate and well-mannered, are intimidated by them . . . But the strong know that this show of force comes to rectify the world, to invigorate the nation, humanity, and the world. It is only in the beginning that it appears in the form of chaos; ultimately it is to be taken away from the wicked and given to the righteous, valiant as lions they be . . . These storms will bring abundant rain; these dark clouds will be the vessels of great light.<sup>80</sup>

Rabbi Kook proceeds to explain the creative role of this bursting energy, this thirst for freedom. It represents, in his interpretation, the necessary beat of a dialectical historical rhythm. It belongs organically to a series of vibrant, antithetical thrusts that come together to achieve a greater "harmony" and *teshuvah* of a higher order. In other words, Kook tries to integrate the "breaches" and the "storms" into the messianic drama unfolding in the Land of Israel. Of course, these ideas have a respected Western philosophical tradition behind them, but they also grow directly out of Kook's own understanding of Jewish mysticism.

We cannot fully grasp these notions without taking into account Kook's particular devotion to the idea of progress. He never espoused the static

view of man and his role in history, so common among halakhists and medieval Jewish philosophers: the idea that man's basic, existential situation is unchanging and that time is a neutral element in the spiritual and ethical life. Kook was even further from the regressive, conservative view of history, according to which there is a decline from one generation to the next. The passage of time was not for him inherently a matter of degeneration, in which the human image gradually diminishes as Eden and Sinai, the primordial ideals, recede into the past. The past, for him, does not swallow up the present or the future.

On the contrary, Kook was faithful all his life to the idea of ever-faster human progress, the gradual perfection of human nature, and the strengthening of the human determination to achieve eschatological fulfillment: "There is an essential, inherent good in the world, and it is increasingly being lifted up. It is to be found in human nature and the human will as well. In the past these were wilder than they are now, and in the future they will be more fully developed than they are now. As the human spirit develops, man's intellect and volition aspire more and more to the absolute good, which is the divine good."<sup>81</sup> For Kook the grounds for the optimistic view that history is drawing ever closer to redemption greatly outweigh the grounds for the pessimistic view that history represents a regression from the idyllic past. At least insofar as the nation and humanity as a whole are concerned, as opposed to specific individuals, there is a steady improvement.<sup>82</sup> The later generations are not to be seen merely as dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants, but as standing tall in their own right. In this sense Kook can be seen as a typical figure of the nineteenth century, when the prospects for the human spirit, human achievement, and human freedom were thought to be constantly improving.

Thus we read in his *Orot ha-kodesh* (Lights of holiness): "The cleansing of the world through the passage of the generations and the higher realization of the Divine Presence in Israel in each age, as well as the gradual improvement of social relationships and the broadening of the sciences have greatly refined the human spirit, so that, although it is not yet entirely pure, a considerable part of its thinking and inherent desire are focused on the divine good. And the part that has already been purified inevitably gives way to liberality and anarchy."<sup>83</sup> (The term "anarchy" appears in the manuscript but was deleted by the editor.)<sup>84</sup> It is as if the prophetic prediction, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit into you" (Ezek. 36:26), referred, not to the End of Days, but to events within history itself. The idea of progress makes history as a whole a stage for messianic fulfillment, realization, and repair. Note too that Kook speaks of "the human spirit" in all its aspects. He does not distinguish between science and ethics, knowledge and values, the

cognitive and the conative. The widening of human horizons leads inevitably to an expansion of human autonomy and spontaneous goodwill.<sup>85</sup> Thus the golden age of human freedom lies ahead of us and not behind.<sup>86</sup>

In fact, Kook sees historical progress in a broader, cosmic perspective. He connects it with the traditional Kabbalistic doctrine of the ongoing elevation of all being, the movement of all worlds and all creatures toward their exalted divine source. For him, the improvement of the human race, central as it may be, is but one instance of "the overall aim of nature, which is to refine all things until they reach the peak of perfection."<sup>87</sup> Kook wrote these words in 1901, and he continued to expand upon the idea in later years: "Everything flows onward, bestirs itself and aspires higher . . . reaching upward toward purity and exaltation . . . [This] mighty desire . . . is inherent in all of creation. It is this power that propels all existence . . . It is this that supplies the inner motive force for human culture, widespread among the different nations."

<sup>88</sup> In other words, progress is rooted in an ontological principle. Humankind and the world, history and nature, are gradually driven toward their redemption by a single cosmic will. Kook regards even biological evolution as part of this great cosmic yearning for divine perfection.<sup>89</sup>

It was this metaphysics that made it possible for Kook to embrace the conquering spirit of modernity with its promise and its hope (as opposed to the postmodernist spirit, so laden with disappointment and fear). He gives a new interpretation to the classic Jewish mystical doctrine of the lifting up of the worlds,<sup>90</sup> injecting into this doctrine the modern European notion of historical progress.<sup>91</sup> And of course, the Jewish people is placed at the very heart of the process, as the leavening agent and as the bearer of universal destiny.

The idea of progress developed in modern European thought along two distinct paths.<sup>92</sup> One formulation, prevalent among eighteenth-century French thinkers (Turgot, Comte, et al.), tends to see history as a continuous, linear, almost one-dimensional march from the primitive to the sophisticated, without any significant stumbling or backtracking. In this view, it becomes the story of the continuous triumph of the human race. Setbacks are considered inessential, the accidental result of ignorance or the wickedness of tyrants, and are soon left behind. According to the other view, developed mainly in nineteenth-century Germany (Schelling, Hegel, et al.), crisis and reversal are inherent in the course of historical development. True being and true awareness can only arise out of a dialectic, both destructive and constructive, out of both

elimination and creation of worlds. "Growing pains" are essential to human history, and it is only through them, through mutual negation and the resultant synthesis of opposites, that progress takes place.

Where does Rabbi Kook stand? If we carefully examine the change in his thinking over the years, in which he came to see the secular rebellion as itself part of the process of religious redemption, we find a movement from the one concept of progress to the other, from the "innocent" view that rules out destructive backtracking to the dialectical view that sees revolution as an integral part of the constructive march of events. Let us see how these concepts play themselves out in the context of Jewish history, of "the destiny of Israel."

In his earlier essays, Kook stresses unequivocally the need for measured progress, "according to the gradual pace established by '[He] who announced the generations from the start' [Isa. 41:4]," without breakthroughs or shortcuts. He repeatedly warns his readers against "forcing the hour," even in the intellectual sphere. "A push for rapid progress," he stresses, would lead to a social "shattering of the vessels," to "turmoil and confusion and reversal, [so that] the arrival of the good in the world would be delayed even further."<sup>93</sup> Clearly, he does not yet envision a destructive clearing of the path, the audacious antithesis that constitutes the "footsteps of the Messiah."<sup>94</sup> Only "a return to the mighty fortress of the Torah and the commandments, a return to the Lord, [can bring] a beginning of the healing of the national sickness that plagues our people," he writes at this time. "It was the abandonment of the covenant of the Lord that led to our exile, and it is the return to observance of His covenant that will restore us to our land,"<sup>95</sup> he stresses again and again. For "[Zionism] cannot coexist with religious anarchy." Still living outside Palestine, Rabbi Kook looks forward to steady spiritual and material improvement without any rupture or violent uprooting.

In his later writings, following his immigration to Palestine, Kook gradually comes to see things rather differently.<sup>96</sup> He does not relax his efforts to stem the flight from religion, but now, confronted with the pioneers' "shattering of the vessels," he comes to the daring historiosophical conclusion that "there are times when laws of the Torah must be overridden, but there is no one to show the legitimate way, and so the aim is accomplished by a bursting of bounds . . . When prophecy is blocked, rectification is achieved by a sustained breach, outwardly lamentable but inwardly a source of joy!"<sup>97</sup>

Rabbi Kook now increasingly stresses that "destruction for the sake of construction is itself a kind of construction,"<sup>98</sup> and that "the travail of creation [entails] the destruction of entire worlds."<sup>99</sup> Eliezer Goldman has

recently pointed out the growing role of Kabbalistic ideas in the development of Kook's thought.<sup>100</sup> This process is also evident in his early transition from a "simple" concept of progress to a complex, dialectical one. Here the imagery of the Lurianic Kabbalah—bursts of light, the shattering of vessels, rising sparks, the unification of opposites—acquires a dominant role.<sup>101</sup> I have shown how Kook anchors the modern notion of progress in the classical mystical notion of the elevation of all being toward its divine source. I now add that he joins the idea of progress, in its dialectical version, to the mystical drama of breakage and repair: "That which the Kabbalah conveyed through the myth of the destruction and reconstruction of worlds, Kook in his historiosophy expresses in terms of [human] destruction for the sake of construction, the building up of the sacred by the fresh efforts of secular, heretical forces."<sup>102</sup>

Gershom Scholem claimed that this concept of the "shattering of the vessels" was developed by the Kabbalists in response to the concrete historical experiences of the expulsion from Spain and of exile, which they transfigured into cosmic events. They saw Israel's dispersion among the nations as the reflection of a higher exile, that of all being, and as the symbol of the scattering of the divine sparks, which had fallen captive among the powers of impurity.<sup>103</sup> Other contemporary scholars dispute Scholem's view.<sup>104</sup> Be that as it may, Kook was clearly moving in the opposite direction to that attributed by Scholem to the mystics, bringing the cosmic notions of the Kabbalah down to earth and applying them directly to historical events. The myth of the shattering and restoration of the sparks became, in his mind, a symbol of actual events in the life of the nation and not the other way around.

To be sure, Kook gives the Lurianic ideas a distinct coloring of his own. In his optimistic view, the "shattering of the vessels" is not a cosmic catastrophe but, on the contrary, a positive manifestation, a vital step in the steady movement of all reality toward perfection: "Fragmentary being is crushed by an excess of goodness, by the life force itself; it is shattered by its own aspiration. But the good is not thereby deterred from its striving; it comes back after the break and begins to build anew, and the new construction arises very beautifully, inestimable in its worth."<sup>105</sup> Kook denies the existence of evil as an independent entity. As a result, he does not see the "shattering" as the complete negation of "repair," but rather as an integral part of the restorative process: "It is worth suffering all the pangs of the shattering and the ill effects of the destruction in order to bring forth these perfected worlds, containing such a richness of life that it [would seem to be] beyond their capacity to bear [and thus likely to lead to a bursting apart]."<sup>106</sup> The same is true of the historical

"shattering" that takes place in the life of the nation, the "ill effects of the destruction" now accompanying the Zionist construction.

It is no wonder that in this dialectical perspective all the classical paradoxes of Jewish messianism are softened, the traditional dichotomies broken down and synthesized. For example, Kook writes as follows in a well-known article that appeared two years after his immigration to Palestine: "Ours is an amazing, astonishing generation, practically without parallel in all our history. It is a combination of opposites, a mixture of light and darkness, both degraded and exalted; utterly guilty and utterly innocent . . . Furthermore, 'Impertinence waxes, the son knows no shame before his father, the young humiliate the old' (M Sotah 9:7); but at the same time kindness, honesty, fairness, and mercy are on the rise, and the spirit of knowledge and idealism is ascendant."<sup>107</sup> What we have here is a new interpretation of the ancient texts, based on both experience and ideology. Let us briefly trace its two main elements. First, there appears in the Babylonian Talmud, mainly in the tractate Sanhedrin, a series of paradoxical sayings regarding the coming of the Messiah. Thus "the Son of David will come only in a generation that is either wholly innocent or wholly guilty" (BT Sanhedrin 98a). How does Kook understand this? He makes the wholly innocent and the wholly guilty generations into two aspects of a single historical phenomenon,<sup>108</sup> thereby apparently resolving the dichotomy between them. Consider the fact that ultra-Orthodox writers of his day, by contrast, seek to sharpen the original paradox as much as possible. They hold that messianic redemption is indeed close at hand, but precisely because the present generation is so completely debased that it can fall no lower, so that there is no way out for it but a miraculous, messianic one. Rabbi Kook transforms the paradox and incorporates it into a dialectical pattern.

Second, Kook makes interesting use here of a well-known Mishnaic passage (from the end of the tractate Sotah) concerning the character of the period that is to precede the coming of the Messiah (i.e., the "footsteps of the Messiah"). The picture is a harsh one: it is to be a time of growing brazenness, of mendacity and apostasy, of moral decline and fall, of retribution and physical destruction. Thus the expected transition from "the footsteps of the Messiah" to "the days of the Messiah" had been seen throughout the ages as revolutionary, a leap across a chasm separating opposites. How does Kook handle this paradox? For him, "the footsteps of the Messiah" and "the beginning of redemption" are no longer antithetical concepts, but two sides of one process, a process that is now visibly underway. "Brazenness" and "kindness" are mixed in a single historical phenomenon and nourish each other. Here, too, the ultra-Orthodox literature of the day presents a stark contrast, positing a deep gulf between the curses of "the footsteps of the Messiah" and the

blessings of "the days of the Messiah." The messianic age is completely separate from the historical age and springs out of its ruins (as I shall show in greater detail in the next chapter). Kook, on the other hand, sees redemption growing out of the given historical reality; hence, what is called for is not a paradoxical process but a dialectical one.

With time, Kook's thinking moved further and further in this direction.

The evil and brazenness of the footsteps of the Messiah that vex every heart are the gloomy steps leading to a rarefied, joyous existence. <sup>109</sup>

For a new vineyard to be planted among the House of Israel in a way that allows Israel's essence to reemerge in the true light of prophecy, conventional values must also be erased by the brazenness of the footsteps of the Messiah. From [the latter] shall come a new light, radiant in its splendor, pure as the heavens. <sup>110</sup>

In other words, the transition from exile to redemption requires a radical spiritual turn; many fundamental ideas must be uprooted and others planted in their place, even though the present rooting out and supplanting may seem excessive. Thus Rabbi Kook takes the original Jewish apocalypse, the dread "footsteps of the Messiah," and turns it into the birth pangs of organic growth.

There are many ramifications of this idea throughout Kook's work. For example, it is in this way that he interprets the deep rupture in the classical religious worldview caused by scientific revolutions, from Copernicus to Darwin to Einstein. These innovations, which appear to negate both the notion of an absolute cosmic center and the centrality of the human race in the cosmos, threaten to relativize and thus undermine traditional beliefs and values. Yet for Kook these very revolutions also serve as new sources of illumination, leading to an expanded view of the world and a higher religious consciousness. Out of the depths of the crisis created by the new worldview will emerge a new, richer understanding of the boundless divine creativity, "that skips no steps and leaves no gaps." <sup>111</sup> "Seen correctly, the new beliefs about the nature of the universe are much more revealing of the divine light, of its infinite grandeur and splendor, than was the limited cosmology of the early philosophers. The constricted view was better suited to inducing deep faith [at the time] than the expanded perspective would have been had it emerged [then]. But once human beings became more open to the sacred, the great expanses had to be revealed, and only enormous benefit can derive from this disclosure. 'In distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and brought me relief' [Ps. 118:5]." <sup>112</sup> Rabbi Kook tries to understand the social, cultural, and ideological upheavals of his day—nationalism, socialism, anticlericalism, among Jews and non-

Jews alike—in a similar vein.<sup>113</sup> All these phenomena he sees as reactions, destructive as well as constructive, to the weaknesses of the old order. Later, even the Great War and its horrors seem to him merely as birth pangs, a cleansing, shaking up, and purification leading to rebirth, a final "shattering of the vessels" of the culture of the sword. (The war was not seen at the time as merely a "first" world war, of course, but rather as the world war, a final global struggle that would crush and root out all the old evils.) We stand here on the verge of paradox and apocalypse,<sup>114</sup> yet even here the very act of destruction is seen by Kook to be constructive: "'The time of singing [*zimir*] has come,' the time of the cutting down [*zimir*] of the tyrants. The wicked are being destroyed and the world is refined; 'the song of the turtledove is heard in our land' [Song 2: 12] . . . Atonement must come: a general clearing away of all present-day foundations of civilization, with their mendacity and falsehood, their evil pollution and poisonous venom. All culture that takes pride in the ring of its lies must be wiped out, to be replaced by a realm of transcendent holiness. The Light of Israel shall appear, and he shall establish a world made up of peoples informed by a new spirit."<sup>115</sup>

As we shall see, this very pattern is later to be taken up by Kook's son Zvi Yehudah in his attempt to interpret the Second World War and the destruction of European Jewry. Astonishingly enough, he explains even the horrors of the Holocaust as a kind of "heavenly surgery," a "deep, hidden, divine therapy aimed at purging [us] of the impurity of exile."<sup>116</sup> The Holocaust too is a kind of shattering, the destruction of a rotten culture (that of exile) for sake of national rebirth and the fulfillment of the vision of "the revealed End." This calamity, Zvi Yehudah Kook writes, is "the angry blow of the Lord's hand [aimed at] removing us from the nations and their worthless culture!"<sup>117</sup> We shall return to this matter below.

## An Astonishing Generation

**IN 1921** the Gurer Rebbe, Abraham Mordecai Alter, the leading figure of Polish Hasidism and of Agudat Israel, visited Palestine. Although the controversy raging in Orthodox circles surrounding the personality and writings of Rabbi Abraham Kook was then at its height, Alter was not deterred from visiting him and confronting him with current issues.<sup>118</sup> He

did so on subsequent visits to Palestine as well and was unrelenting in his efforts to reconcile the warring camps. For the Jerusalem zealots, the very fact that he visited Kook was enough to condemn Alter to punishment. "He who smiles at the wicked angers God! Avraham [Kook] and Avraham [Alter] are to be treated alike!" screamed a poster that appeared in the streets of Jerusalem following one of these meetings. "It is not for nothing that the starling followed the raven; they are two of a kind [*min*, both guilty of] apostasy [*minut*]" <sup>119</sup> Such opposition might have been expected from the fringes of the ultra-Orthodox camp, but how did the Rebbe of Gur, the spokesman of the ultra-Orthodox mainstream, himself feel? What impression did he have of his interlocutor? "The sage Rabbi Abraham Kook, may heaven preserve him, is a man of many accomplishments," <sup>120</sup> Alter writes to his associates in Poland after their first meeting; <sup>121</sup>

but his love of Zion is so excessive that he deems pure what is impure and treats it favorably [BT Eruvin 136] . . . and this is the source of the strange things he says in his writings. I argued with him at length, for "his intentions are desirable but not his actions," <sup>122</sup> for he is supporting wrongdoers, as long as they persist in their rebellion and blasphemy. As for his claim that in this he is merely imitating God, citing the verse, "You lend a hand to wrongdoers," <sup>123</sup> I say that "their hand is sent forth against the sanctuary" <sup>124</sup> and that, particularly in that case, "construction by mere boys is destruction" [BT Megillah 31b; Nedarim 40a] . . . His approach in regard to "the raising up of the divine sparks" is also a dangerous one; so long as they do not repent their iniquity, the "sparks" are insubstantial. Moreover, he is thereby endangering pure, innocent souls who might be tempted thereby to join forces with the wrongdoers. Our sages, may their memory be a blessing, therefore taught us, "O wise men, guard your words" [see M Avot 1: 1]; and even concerning the wisest of men [Solomon] they said, "They sought to hide the Book of Ecclesiastes," even though later they said, "Solomon [the author of Ecclesiastes] spoke well."

This is a penetrating but measured criticism of Rabbi Kook's defense of the secular Zionists. <sup>125</sup> It also reflects the essence of Kook's challenge to the mainstream ultra-Orthodox of his day, "the strange things he says in his writings."

I shall present the matter one step at a time, proceeding from the least grave to the most. First, Kook distinguishes carefully between the subjective intentions of the individual acting in history and the objective results of his or her actions. One may play an effective role in a sequence of events, helping to move matters along and even struggling toward a certain end, without grasping the inner logic of the events, their

true meaning or real consequences. The latter can turn out to be "bigger" than oneself, far removed from or even opposed to one's individual awareness. This is the convoluted path of what Kook calls "the irony of history" (and of what Hegel calls "the deceptiveness of reason"),<sup>126</sup> and it is impossible to understand the stance of the freethinking Zionists without it. The latter see their nationalistic enterprise as having a purely secular meaning and occasionally even take up the cudgels against religion and messianic hopes. But in the end they will prove to have been actors in a cosmic drama quite different from what they personally aimed for. Unwittingly, it is they who with their own hands are laying the earthly foundations of spiritual rebirth and religious redemption:

The bricks can also be borne by those who do not divine [the religious meaning of the work]. They can even supervise the work. When the time comes, however, the hidden meaning will be revealed.<sup>127</sup>

There are people who do not have the slightest idea what an important role they play in the scheme of Divine Providence. They are called but do not know who is calling them . . . But this terrible concealment will end with a great disclosure of lasting import.<sup>128</sup>

Kook thus interprets the work of the pioneers in extrahalakhic, metaethical terms. He imputes to it a long-range religious and historical significance in terms of its "objective" contribution to the messianic goal, quite apart from the immediate aims of the individual protagonists. The Gurer Rebbe, on the other hand, judges these same pioneers by their avowed intentions and concrete deeds, their values and willful violations of religious norms. He rejects entirely the messianic historiosophy of his interlocutor, warning that "construction by boys is destruction, even in the case of the Holy Temple!"<sup>129</sup> On this level of discourse, many of the secular settlers themselves would probably have felt more at ease with the fulminations of the Rebbe, who took their personalities and ideas at face value, than with the role unwittingly assigned to them by Rabbi Kook in the larger scheme of things. Consider the fact that the latter goes so far as to compare the pioneers to Herod the Great who, by a bitter irony, had the privilege of reconstructing the Second Temple.<sup>130</sup> He also compares them to Cyrus the Great, who fostered the original construction of the Second Temple without realizing the meaning of the project in the divine plan.<sup>131</sup> He compares them elsewhere to the Gentile workers described in I Kings 5:20, who took part in building the First Temple: "Just now, the outwardly visible aspects of the messianic construction are being executed by workers eminently fit for this task, as were the Sidonites, who knew how to hew wood from Lebanon to build the Lord's house."<sup>132</sup> If the pioneers understood these similes, it seems unlikely

they would have relished them.<sup>133</sup>

It is typical of all-embracing historiosophies, however, that they tend to view human beings as mere mortar and bricks in a larger, comprehensive process: "progress," "the march of enlightenment," "the workings of Divine Providence," and so forth. Such attempts are, by their very nature, less concerned with individuals' motivations than with the cumulative historical outcome of their actions. Did not Joseph, the first Hegelian historiosopher, already make this point? "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good," he tells his brothers, explaining the meaning of his having been sold to the Ishmaelites and gone down to Egypt.

But this is only the first stage of Kook's analysis. In addition to having sought to understand the underlying, objective significance of the enterprise in Palestine, he goes on to probe the unconscious spiritual purpose of its heroes, the secular pioneers. "They themselves do not realize what they want," he writes. "The divine spirit informs their strivings in spite of them."<sup>134</sup> In the final analysis, therefore, Kook concludes that the builders themselves, "those who carry the bricks," are not entirely alienated from the foundations of what they are building; they are, in fact, connected with its true purpose. The whole enterprise of the modern return to Zion, the national rebirth, the pioneering, and the social revolution in fact constitute a veiled spiritual movement of return to the source, an unconscious process of *teshuvah*, repentance. "The very reawakening of the people's desire to go back to the land, to its essence and spirit and character, is motivated by the light of *teshuvah*."<sup>135</sup>

How so? Kook understands religious faith as an innate human tendency, not, as other religious thinkers claim, a matter of taming human nature. "It is the most natural thing for a human being to desire to cleave to the Lord," he writes.<sup>136</sup> If this is true of people in general, how much more so is it true of the Assembly of Israel. Kook takes the radical view that Israel is distinguished among the nations by an inherent religious quality. The chosen people draws its very life from an organic connection to the divine, a given, collective link that can never be severed." It is established as a covenant for the Assembly of Israel," Kook writes, "that it will never be utterly defiled. The spirit of the Lord and the spirit of Israel are one!"<sup>137</sup> Thus, even if the voluntary choices made by individuals do not measure up to this hidden spiritual distinction, it is a mere fluke that does not detract from the essential character of the people. So Kook interprets the legacies of Judah Halevi, the Kabbalists, and the Hasidim.

It would appear that this level of involuntary spiritual distinction corresponds to that of the "objective" and "unconscious" that we have seen in previous dichotomies in Kook's thinking, while the level of

"choice" corresponds to the "subjective" and "conscious." And "the [innate] distinction carries incomparably greater weight and is far holier than that which is a matter of choice!"<sup>138</sup> What we have, then, is a series of optimistic, deterministic assumptions about the given, objective nature of religious devotion, in human beings in general and in the people of Israel in particular. Add to this the idea of historical progress, the messianic hope, and the belief in the spiritual bounties of the Land of Israel,<sup>139</sup> and one can only conclude that the modern Zionist awakening, too, springs from a holy source,<sup>140</sup> however hidden or unrecognized. The very fact that Israel is returning to its land, its language, and its collective form of life will ultimately prove to have been a return to its God.<sup>141</sup>

We thus see that, for Kook, the traditional concepts of faith, repentance, and holiness can all apply as well to activities never intended to be "for the sake of heaven" (i.e., for religious purposes)—indeed, to activities that may even have been designed to spurn religion. This is, of course, a bold expansion of the usual criteria of religiosity. Yet Kook goes even further, extending the concepts of Torah and religious meaning to include all endeavors aimed at truth, beauty, or goodness. Is there any pursuit of truth, ethical passion, or authentic creativity alien to the divine? Is there any quest for freedom that does not have a holy source?

We need never lament the lack of mention of the divine in the achievement of social justice, for we know that the aspiration to justice, whatever form it may take, represents in itself the most radiant divine influence. [Consequently,] while [the protagonists] may believe that the good they accomplish is contrary to the Torah, it is in fact of its very essence!<sup>142</sup>

Such ideas were no doubt abetted by the pantheistic elements in Kook's thinking, his tendency to see all reality as permeated with the divine. Given this tendency, even revolutionary aspirations could appear to him grounded in the "lights of holiness."<sup>143</sup>

These are the roots of Kook's radical view that the secular Zionist revolt is a corrective to exilic religious existence. They enable him to broaden traditional religious concepts and norms to encompass the temerity of the pioneers and the "growing pains," to make these integral parts of the messianic progression. To be sure, full redemption will require a change in awareness as well. The "natural" spirituality of the individual will have to rise to the surface and inform his or her voluntary choices on a conscious level. But during the dialectical process leading up to redemption, this change in individual subjectivity is not yet a necessity.

Obviously, this defense of the freethinkers was anathema to the ultra-Orthodox rabbis. Even the Gurer Rebbe attacks Kook for it. More

precisely, Alter's critique is as follows: when Kook reads religious significance into secular activity and rebellion, he is really talking about the mystical effort to "raise up the divine sparks" <sup>144</sup> and rescue them from the captivity of the "husks"; but, the Rebbe warns, so long as the rebels do not repent their evil ways, "the sparks will be insubstantial, and pure, innocent souls will be endangered." <sup>145</sup> He rejects outright Kook's extension of the notions of holiness and repentance to include activities beyond the bounds of the Torah, calling for a simpler, traditional definition of what constitute good and evil deeds, unadulterated by mystical, ideological, or historiosophical thinking. In his sharp formulation, "[Kook] is supporting wrongdoers, as long as they persist in their rebellion and blasphemy . . . [ and] 'their hand is sent forth against the sanctuary.' " <sup>146</sup> Unlike Kook, Rabbi Alter does not recognize a dialectic in which light and shadow, "sinners" and "penitents," are combined, but only heresy pure and simple, the breaking of the covenant and casting off of the yoke. Good deeds are not accomplished by means of evil ones, and the Holy Land cannot be built by profane deeds.

If such are the views of a Hasidic Rebbe, how much more likely are they to be expected from a halakhist such as Rabbi Joseph Hayyim Sonnenfeld, chief rabbi of the Jerusalem Edah Haredit: "[Kook's] way of thinking does not seem right to me . . . What have we to do with their 'inner distinctions'? God sees into the heart, but we mortals can only see what is out in plain view, can only rule according to law and precept . . . We must punish with utmost stringency those who violate religious law, and if the Holy One, blessed be He, has hidden considerations, He will do as He sees fit." <sup>147</sup> Against this background, Kook's boldness in judging the secularists by extra-halakhic criteria becomes all the more salient.

(Indeed, there was a price to be paid for this boldness. Once the bonds of halakhic exclusivity are loosened, there inevitably arises the question of permissible limits. If these historiosophic criteria are to be used to justify those who desecrate the Sabbath and eat forbidden food, may they not be used to justify those who shed blood as well? What guarantee do we have that meta-ethical rationales will not, in the hands of others, be extended to deeds never dreamt of by their authors? For example, in 1984, when the "Jewish underground" was uncovered and charged with murder and conspiracy to blow up the Dome of the Rock, Gush Emunim came to the group's defense, <sup>148</sup> citing a statement of Kook's already quoted above: "There are times when a law of the Torah must be overridden, but there is no one to show the legitimate way, and so the thing is accomplished by a bursting of bounds . . . outwardly lamentable but inwardly a source of joy"!)

In this instance as well, would not Zionist freethinkers be more likely to prefer the outright rejection by the ultra-Orthodox leader to the embrace of Rabbi Kook? "Zionism began among people who rebelled against the dominion of religious law, refused to live in accordance with it," wrote Amos Oz in a 1982 attack on the second generation of Kook's disciples. True, "you can adopt a patronizing, insulting interpretation in which the early pioneers thought they were acting from an idealistic world-view but were really no more than an instrument of God and that the holy sparks flew out of their secular, socialist 'shell' without their intending it. This is trampling the spiritual autonomy of others, and it has always made me feel insulted and bitter."<sup>149</sup> From time to time Israeli intellectuals, in their encounters with Kook's disciples, are heard to make such judgments about his defense of the secular Zionists. For example, both Professor Yirmiyahu Yovel and the writer Ehud Ben-Ezer have spoken in this vein.<sup>150</sup> Even Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, dean of the Alon Shevut Yeshivah, has stated publicly that Kook's defense is in effect based upon "falsification," on a forced misreading of the secularists' declared aims.<sup>151</sup>

Do Kook's personality and teachings (as opposed to those of his disciples) require this judgment?<sup>152</sup> I do not think so. For one thing, it overlooks the degree to which he himself internalized significant aspects of the pioneer ethos. How is one to draw the line between a patronizing portrayal of the spirit of another and an authentic identification with that spirit? May seeing the other in one's own image not result from internalization as well as from superimposition? A close reading of Kook's writings reveals that the "audacity" and "tempestuousness" of those around him were not at all alien to him, and that the quest for "freedom and openness," with its autonomous moral pathos, not only struck a responsive chord in him but, indeed, corresponded to a strong tendency in his own spirit. "The soul that does not roam free, seeking with all its heart the light of truth and goodness, will not suffer spiritual setbacks but will also not achieve or build anything of its own."<sup>153</sup> Moreover, "there is constructive holiness, and there is destructive holiness . . . Destructive holiness produces the great warriors, who bring blessing to the world; it is the quality of the strong-armed Moses, who broke the tablets."<sup>154</sup>

Kook undoubtedly yearned his entire life to bring all the "constructions" and "destructions" together in one great synthesis, in which the frictions and contradictions would be dissolved. Would it be unfair to see this merely as a desire to still his own inner turmoil? I, at least, do not detect in his writings the sense of harmony and reconciliation others see there, but rather, above all, a desire for harmony and a firm belief that conflict will one day be overcome. As he writes to himself: "How great is my inner battle. My soul is constantly struggling upward, seeking to rise

above all lowliness, pettiness, and limitation . . . [But] suddenly a flood of [religious] duties appears, while I have not yet reached the level . . . of sensing the sweetness of all the [halakhic] details . . . I am [thus] full of pain, and I look forward to salvation and light . . . to the dripping of the dew of life even from these narrow [legal] conduits, from which I shall suckle and be satisfied." <sup>155</sup> I therefore tend to agree with the writer Joseph Hayyim Brenner, the spiritual leader of the pioneers, in his portrayal of Kook as "a stormy, wave-battered, yearning" soul (1909), <sup>156</sup> rather than with many of Kook's current followers and critics. Would it not be fairer to Kook to apply his own method in our assessment of his character, drawing from it the hidden "sparks"?

In fact, the question of Kook's "openness" apparently needs to be understood from an entirely different angle. As we have learned from the recent work of Yossi Avneri and Michael Nehorai, Kook's halakhic positions on a number of significant issues in the life of the Yishuv—Jews standing guard, certification of compliance with the dietary laws, women's suffrage, conversion, milking on the Sabbath—were stringent ones, not adopted later by mainstream religious Zionism. <sup>157</sup> Indeed, he found it difficult to apply to the pioneers, in practice, standards in any way different from those applied by his colleagues, the ultra-Orthodox rabbis. To mention one well-known example: in 1914 Rabbi Kook was asked to eulogize members of the Ha-Shomer militia who had been killed in the course of duty. He wrestled mightily with the halakhic question of whether it would be proper to do so for people who had deliberately abandoned the ways of the Torah! When at last he was able to come up with formal grounds for leniency on this question, <sup>158</sup> he still judged them with terrifying harshness, according to their overt behavior and pronouncements rather than any presumed hidden motivations. <sup>159</sup> As a passionate philosopher of history, Kook could see the freethinking pioneers as unwitting penitents, but as a halakhic scholar, acting within history, he was fiercely opposed to their "crude, contemptible heresy" <sup>160</sup> and deliberate transgressions—certainly not "trampling" in the slightest on their "spiritual autonomy" or "falsifying" what they were about.

This should not surprise us. Historiosophy, particularly the messianic variety, tries by its very nature to transcend ideologies and specific actions. It is called upon to interpret and integrate them into an all-embracing framework. The same cannot be said of real life or real leadership, which require taking concrete stands and fighting concrete battles.

This tension is clearly discernible in the life of Rabbi Abraham Kook. On the one hand, on the level of historiosophic principle, he tries to rise above secularists and ultra-Orthodox alike. "There is a great war on, and

each camp has good reason to fight and defend itself. The freethinkers are fighting for the good sparks of the [human] will in their desire to put an end to unnecessary bondage, which is purely negative" at the present stage of historical progress and human emancipation. Meanwhile, "those who are subjugated, who recognize the glory of the past, defend [the principle of] their own subjugation, seeking to ward off the destruction of the noble structure of the world by the evil elements still remaining in [human nature]." They want to prevent the premature loosening of all bonds and the disintegration that would follow. Each camp thus represents a fragmentary truth, "and people of spiritual stature must seek reconciliation between the combatants by showing each his proper sphere."<sup>161</sup> As Benjamin Ish-Shalom puts it, "It is astonishing to see how Rabbi Kook describes and analyzes the two warring camps as if he stood above the fray."<sup>162</sup> His is the perspective with which God Himself, as it were, looks down upon human actions. "[Rabbi Kook] thought he could turn harsh trumpet blasts into a symphony, putting each [protagonist] in his proper place, and thus follow zealously the Guide of History," writes Isaac Breuer, the profound Orthodox thinker, in his eulogy of Kook, mixing admiration and irony.<sup>163</sup>

On the other hand, on the level of everyday practice, Kook puts sublime dialectical syntheses aside and does not merely "seek reconciliation between the combatants." He himself plunges into the fray, as belligerent, plaintiff, and challenger, and not merely as one who "describes and analyzes": as a subject of history and not as "the Guide of History." "I declare openly that we are embarking on a war against [the transgressors]. It is, however, a war against our own brethren and not against [foreign] enemies," he said at a meeting in Jaffa held to protest public desecration of the Sabbath and the festivals by Jewish workers of the Second Aliyah.<sup>164</sup> Nor does he ever desist from this particular struggle. On this second level, then, he is still immersed in conflict and antithesis. Indeed, the gap between these two points of view, that of messianic historiosophy and that of concrete history, would eventually emerge as the central problem in Kook's teachings.

## A Recalcitrant Reality

**DID RABBI KOOK** bequeath his followers effective halakhic or

conceptual tools for bridging the gulf between messianic utopia and recalcitrant reality? On this point we run up against some of the most difficult, perhaps even tragic, themes of his legacy to the present age.

To begin with, Kook makes no allowance whatever for the possibility of an ongoing secular Jewish life. True, the moral and social pathos of the secular Zionists, as well as their authentic search for freedom, were granted a positive, dialectical role in the national rebirth, but there is no grappling on Kook's part with the stubborn persistence of secularism as such. How long can one go on justifying sinfulness as a necessary concomitant of the work of overcoming exilic existence? How to come to terms with a banal Jewish secularism, emptied of its original revolutionary fervor? Are Kibbutz Deganyah and Dizengoff Circle to be measured by the same yardstick? (Deganyah was the first of the kibbutzim; Dizengoff Circle is the heart of Tel Aviv's entertainment district.—Trans.)

Furthermore, Kook's doctrine assigns each of the competing points of view a well-defined historical role as a component of a larger dialectical whole. But what of Kook's doctrine itself? Can it too not be seen as a mere component in some larger historical scheme? As a historiosophy, it would, of course, be exempt from this question, pretending to be above all particular views and to gather them up into a redemptive, harmonistic whole. But as an ideology, it calls for action, for everyday involvement, and indeed, Kook's disciples are no less involved than he was himself in the very heart of passionate controversy. They are religious, even political, protagonists and not merely philosophical onlookers. So they are in danger of mistaking their own part for the whole, their subjective reality for the objective one, their own thesis for the synthesis. In other words, the heirs of Kook's original openness, his attempt to encompass all the competing viewpoints in a single harmonious whole, now run the risk of being closed in on themselves, imagining smugly that they alone represent true integration.<sup>165</sup> In the abstractness of a historiosophy there is room for a variety of stances, but concrete historical reality leaves room to choose only one, to the exclusion of all the others.<sup>166</sup> Avoiding this pitfall calls for nobility of spirit, struggle, and a rare capacity to listen. But, as Eliezer Schweid has put it, "such brilliant intuition is not one of those things that can be passed on."<sup>167</sup>

The two problems I have raised here are clearly interrelated: on the one hand, the stubborn persistence of secular Jewish life in Palestine for the last three or four generations; on the other, the difficulty of acknowledging the positive contribution made by other parties and competitive views. The incorrigibility of secular life reinforces the tendency of religious people to close themselves off spiritually and to deny the potential value of the secular "other."

But the juxtaposition of present-day Israeli reality with Rabbi Kook's vision of redemption raises other questions as well, both halakhic and political. Kook's messianic expectations freed him of the necessity to confront the question of what concrete, pre-messianic Jewish sovereignty would entail. Yet his disciples have been plunged into this reality and must somehow find their way in it.

It will be recalled that Kook's early pamphlet on the reconstitution of the Sanhedrin, the first of his writings on the national question, prefigures this problem. His utopianism there relieves him of the need to provide detailed halakhic solutions to the many difficult questions that the modern return of the Jews to their homeland would entail. As the young rabbi writes in 1898: "We need not determine [in advance] the laws that will govern practice once our people is resurrected, for then the Sanhedrin will have to be reestablished, and it in turn will rule on all doubtful matters . . . It will examine every issue, every ruling and custom, and act in accordance with the Torah." <sup>168</sup> This hallmark of Kook's thinking persists down through the years. In fact, his utopianism is reinforced by the experience of actually living in the Land of Israel. Only now, the expectation that the Sanhedrin will be reconstituted is replaced by that of the renewal of prophecy. The prophetic illumination that is at hand will heal all the people's ills, he foresees, and provide a way out of the present halakhic straits. In short, Kook now begins to stress the charismatic model of leadership associated with First Temple times (the prophet) over the legal model of the Second Temple period (the Sanhedrin). He yearns with all his heart for such prophetic revelation. In a surprising and unusual passage, the daring opening sentences of which were deleted by the editor of *Orot ha-kodesh*, Kook speaks eloquently of this matter.

I listened and heard in the depths of my soul, in the stirrings of my heart, the voice of the Lord calling out. And I trembled greatly: have I sunk so low as to become a false prophet, to say that the Lord sent me, when His word was not revealed to me? I heard the voice of my soul in its yearning: <sup>169</sup> prophecies are blossoming and the sons of the prophets are awakening; the spirit of prophecy is at large in the land, seeking refuge, seeking champions filled with strength and holiness. They shall know how to speak; they shall proclaim the truth, telling how God's word was revealed to them; they shall not lie or flatter but faithfully express their spirit . . . And if the [Jewish religious] heritage, in its many forms, has not revealed its splendid beauty [to the present generation], a prophetic spirit shall come; it shall begin by clarifying what is in its heart, in clear language, and this clarity of language will have a shattering effect, giving strength to the downtrodden . . . The spirit of the Lord, which is upon Jacob, shall begin to fill his neglected offspring, and out of darkness

and gloom the eyes of the blind shall see.<sup>170</sup>

Here we have rather clear testimony to a personal religious experience, as well as a vision of an imminent national spiritual revival. There is other evidence, too, of Kook's fervent desire for a renewal of prophecy as a guide for the revival of Jewish life in the Land of Israel.<sup>171</sup> However profound and sweeping the legacy he leaves his disciples, its utopian character does not encourage them to confront the reality of the modern revival of the Jewish people in concrete, halakhic terms, unless illumined by a prophetic, redeeming transformation.

The same may be said of response in the political sphere. Rabbi Kook's vision seems to have been indifferent to the question of what political structure or government the new commonwealth would have. At a time when he himself was hard at work trying to organize the Flag of Jerusalem movement, he wrote his son: "As for me, my main concern is the spiritual content, grounded in holiness. It is clear to me that, no matter how matters develop on the governmental level, if the spirit is strong it can lead to the desired goals, for with the sublime manifestation of free, shining holiness we shall be able to illuminate all the paths of government."<sup>172</sup> One would be hard put to find in Kook's writing any real consideration of the political questions that might arise in a sovereign Jewish state in an unredeemed world. On the contrary, one gets the impression that for him the political restoration of Israel depends on a moral transformation of global proportions, that the Jewish return to history is conditional on the elimination of all the corruptions of worldly politics. "We left the political arena [and went into exile] under duress but also with a certain inner willingness, until that happy time when a polity could be governed without wickedness or barbarism. The delay has been necessary. We have been disgusted with the terrible iniquities of ruling during the evil age. Now the time has come, is very near, when the world will be refined and we shall be able to prepare ourselves [for our polity] . . . It is not for Jacob to engage in government as long as it entails bloodshed, as long as it requires a knack for wickedness."<sup>173</sup>

This conception is of course directly related to Kook's belief in human progress, in the elevation of human nature and will. Indeed, as Shalom Rosenberg has written, "It was possible during the [First] World War to believe that a new era was dawning . . . The old-new problem of religious thought in our time in this area has arisen from the fact that [such a transformation] did not take place and that reality continues to confront us with the problems of living in a world of contradictions."<sup>174</sup>

In fact, I have serious doubts whether in Kook's view a Jewish return to history and politics, in the world as we know it, is feasible. In other writings he stresses the need for a deep moral transformation, beginning

among the Jews themselves, that would prepare them for a more exalted national existence. Without this, he fears, a premature resumption by them of "social life and political sovereignty will immediately bring out the anomy in their hearts, and the ancient corruptions will be revived." <sup>175</sup> But Kook is convinced that the required moral transformation is in fact at hand. Here is how he portrays public life in Palestine, as he experienced and imagined it. "[Regarding] the colonies in the Land of Israel, the thirty communities," he writes in 1907,

let us examine their moral level in relation to that of the multitude of other peoples that dwell on their own land . . . The serious crimes so common among the multitude—robbery, theft, murder, and the like—are unknown, the integrity of the family is respected, doors can be left open at night without fear. Is this not an oasis of peace; is it not the tent of the upright? The community councils conduct public affairs, and it does not occur to anyone to suspect those ordinary people, preoccupied with life's concerns, of taking bribes or pursuing graft, not even a little . . . The pains of exile have spurred the achievement of cures, and the holiness of Israel has been restored. We are now entitled to take pride in our ability to ensure that, as the Jewish public [here] becomes better defined and its social life and institutions become better developed, its splendor and beauty, its culture and the caliber of its leadership, will be to the greater glory of God and man. <sup>176</sup>

No balanced view of Kook's ideas can ignore such passages, though for some reason they often are ignored. For it is only in light of them that one can understand Kook's expectation, his demand, that "once the Lord's people are established on their land in some definite way, they will turn their attention to the [geo]political realm, to purifying it of its dross, to cleansing the blood from its mouth and the abominations from between its teeth." <sup>177</sup> We have already seen what a utopian role Kook envisioned for the State of Israel, "the sole aim of which shall be that the Lord be acknowledged as one and His name one, which is truly the highest happiness." <sup>178</sup>

The real question, then, is how Kook's ideas will stand up to the obdurate reality of the State of Israel as it confronts these challenges: the unswerving secularism that resists any higher religious synthesis; the intense political and ideological strife that deprives the combatants of the calm and openness needed for historiosophic reflection; the pressing halakhic issues, with "no one to show the way" and with the "blockage of prophecy" not yet over; and the return of the Jewish people to the political arena, to "social life and sovereignty" in a world with norms of its own, where pious, ordinary, and sinful people will have to live together in one framework. <sup>179</sup>

These challenges could be expected to sow the seeds of ideological tension and social polarization. It was also to be expected that, once Kook's doctrines acquired a substantial following, the latter would also be imbued with energy and an acute sense of mission, if not with practical solutions to immediate problems. Indeed, once his conception caught on, it would prompt religious Zionists to shed the traditional Mizrahi image of mere fellow-travelers of the Zionist movement and instead grasp the reins of history. For it would be they, and not the secularists, who understood the true, redemptive meaning of the national revival. Put differently, if the secularists represented the unconscious workings of the Jewish spirit, the religious Zionists, following Kook, would raise this spirit to the level of conscious choice. Consequently, they would no longer need merely to tag along but would be obliged to take the lead.

Once this happened, the younger generation would be able to free itself of the wishy-washy image of the three preceding generations, the image of "middlemen" between the freethinkers and the ultra-Orthodox, devoid of any distinct coloring of their own.<sup>180</sup> As distinct from the "thesis" of the ultra-Orthodox, drawn from the past, and the "antithesis" of the secularists, directed against the past, they, in their redemptive synthesis, would represent the future.

Of course, such a development could only come after Kook's abstruse doctrines underwent considerable popularization and social application. But it would be a vivid example of a theory that turns into a political force, a philosophy of history that wields real social and psychological power.

## Historical Necessity

**RABBI KOOK'S TEACHINGS** did not rapidly win large numbers of adherents in the religious-Zionist camp. Nor did the seeds of radicalization in his doctrine bear fruit until a full generation after his death in 1935. Though his ideas were always in the air and were enthusiastically quoted, few took the trouble to study them in depth or to construct a social or political program around them.<sup>181</sup>

Nevertheless, the central role played by these ideas in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War did not emerge from a vacuum.<sup>182</sup> Kook's son Zvi

Yehudah had labored for more than thirty years to lay the groundwork for this development, and the disciples he had gathered around him had been consciously preparing for it since the 1950S, as Gideon Aran has pointed out.<sup>183</sup> Zvi Yehudah Kook and his school carried the elder Kook's notion of redemption to its logical extreme. They also saw in the new reality of Israel the certain realization of his utopian vision. "The late Rabbi Zvi Yehudah's greatness lay in his translation of the broad, deep teachings of his father into the language of action. Though he himself was not a man of action, he was able to bring his father's exalted ideas into focus in such a way that when, at just the right moment, they encountered a public yearning to act, they turned into a powerful movement."<sup>184</sup> So writes one of Zvi Yehudah's leading disciples, Rabbi Ya'akov Ariel, now chief rabbi of Ramat Gan, on the tenth anniversary of his teacher's death. He continues:

Turning great ideas into practical challenges involves a certain distillation. An exalted, abstract concept can contain opposing elements. In their openness and inclusiveness, the teachings of our master the Rabbi [Abraham Kook], of blessed memory, bring together all that is good and beautiful in the treasure house of Jewish thought throughout the generations, as well as the choicest of universal ideas. But when it comes to focussing these teachings on real life . . . one must frame, sharpen, expand them to a certain degree, and stress what is most important and needed . . . Thus, on the political level, if his father, our master, of blessed memory, was above parties and factions, loving all of them, Rabbi Zvi Yehudah, of blessed memory, had to take a clearer public stand . . . and intervene in key ideological matters.

Here we find an incisive attempt within the camp itself to trace the source of the transition from the thought of the father to the activity of the son. Naturally, the "translation . . . into the language of action" and focusing on central points which are described here take a heavy price.<sup>185</sup> They come at the expense of intellectual "depth and breadth," the dialectical quality of Kook's teachings, and the stormy vicissitudes of his personality. They require overcoming tensions and avoiding questions that Kook left open: the national versus the human, freedom versus authority, will and intellect, redemption and repentance, the earthly and the spiritual, the historical and the religious. Moreover, what was a messianic expectation now becomes a political program, holiness comes to be embodied in a given state structure, and historical progress is limited to the Israeli scene. Western science and philosophy also lose much of the importance attributed to them by Kook, and are no longer seen as necessary for the development of Jewish religious thought.

I will not dwell on these changes in detail, especially since they represent

instances of a universal phenomenon, typical of encounters between ideas and social reality. Rather, I will continue to concentrate on the fascinating history of a single question, that of messianism and the Jewish state.

How, then, was Rabbi Kook's vision to be interpreted in the face of the rise of a sovereign Jewish state in the Land of Israel? How was this vision "translated into the language of action" by his heirs and turned into the moving force behind political radicalism? At the beginning of this chapter, I noted the boldness of Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook and his disciples in removing all the barriers between the theological and the political, in attributing a messianic quality to the existing State of Israel in all its symbols, activities, and struggles. I shall now return to this issue, this time in terms of the elder Kook's legacy, and attempt to clarify the strong connection between theology, historical experience, and political activity.

To begin with, among Zvi Yehudah Kook and his followers the elder Kook's optimistic expectation and messianic faith are turned into absolute certainty about the future. In their view, there can be no going back now that the redemption of the Jewish people has begun to unfold. We are caught up in an inexorable process, in which the beginning guarantees a positive outcome. True, we can hasten this process or delay it; we can join it or oppose it; we can remove obstacles from its path or, heaven forbid, obstruct the way that leads to the Lord's house. But these ups and downs are merely momentary digressions that have no bearing on the direction of the process or its ultimate result. The fate of the national rebirth and the building of the State of Israel have been sealed on high, for blessing and not for curse, for life and not for death. As Zvi Yehudah Kook writes: "The divine historical imperative, clearly revealed to us, to put an end to the Exile, cannot be changed or distorted, either by the wickedness and stubborn resistance of the nations or by our own mistakes and un-Jewish deviations. The brief delays all these can occasion do not have the power to reverse the movement, which proceeds onward and upward with utmost certainty."<sup>186</sup>

Many Jewish sources over the centuries, from the apocalyptic to the philosophical literature, promise that, unlike the first redemption (from Egypt), which was cut short, and the Second Commonwealth, which came to an end, "the third redemption will never cease" (*Midrash Tanhuma*),<sup>187</sup> "The first redemption was followed by suffering and subjugation, but the last redemption will not be followed by suffering or subjugation" (*Pesikta Rabbati*, 36),<sup>188</sup> Even in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* we read, "With regard to the permanence of the King, that is, the Messiah, and to Israel's kingdom not being destroyed after that, he

[the prophet] says: 'Thy sun shall no more go down,' etc, [Isa. 60:20]." <sup>189</sup>  
 All these statements are now understood to apply to our own time, to the "the revealed End" that is taking place before our very eyes "with utmost certainty." It is utterly clear, therefore, that the Zionist enterprise will bring about full redemption and full repentance.

Just after the State of Israel was established, Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook began to take a definitive stand on this question. Tirelessly, he stressed again and again the power of "historical necessity" and "cosmological determination " to guide the current national movement toward its destiny, "without wavering or vacillation." No doubt this determinism was intentional. Already at the time of the outbreak of the War of Independence in 1948, he declared:

This special life necessity, following its one certain path with utmost fidelity . . . toward its well-established destination and its perfect, immutable realization—this life necessity is none other than the historical necessity and cosmic determination that come about through the grace of the divine covenant with the Eternal One of Israel, [a covenant] that shall never fail even if "the mountains may move and the hills be shaken" [Isa, 54:10] . . . that through all the vicissitudes of time continues to press onward, conquering and consolidating, with the aim of establishing the "one nation on earth" . . . It is this higher, inner life command that constitutes and clarifies the absolute certainty of the process of our return and recovery here, the building up of our people and our land, our culture and Torah, our military power and sovereignty . . . Here, at the site of our vitality, there appears this absolute imperative in all its forms, and without wavering or vacillation it establishes and marks off and blazes and illumines the one clear and certain path, the path of life and construction, the path of revival and redemption, <sup>190</sup>

Obviously, such deterministic language is not mere rhetoric. The aim is to dispel doubt and hesitation and nip in the bud all possibility of counterargument. What is more, the messianic significance of the modern return to Zion is not confined to the national plane, to the ingathering of the exiles and the recovery of sovereignty over the land; it is part of a cosmic process of universal redemption. Hence "historical necessity" is intertwined with "cosmic determination," and together they guarantee success. This is quite a new version of Kook's idea of progress. <sup>191</sup>

I believe this categorically messianic view of Zionist history bears the deep impress of the Holocaust, then a fresh experience. This may be a surprising claim. After all, hadn't the elder Kook's hope for redemption, so pegged to universal progress, been completely discredited by the Holocaust? Had he lived to see the genocide, could his optimism about

human perfectibility have survived? Could his teachings have continued to attract followers after this great reversal? Would faith not have given way to fear?

Harold Fisch has written that "[Abraham Kook's] reading of Zionism and of the Jewish destiny in the modern era does not provide us with any means of comprehending the nature of the Nazi Holocaust which took place so soon after his death . . . One has the impression sometimes with Kook that evil need not be actively resisted because it has no true reality; it is simply shadow." <sup>192</sup> Yosef Ben-Shlomo makes a similar point: "What would Rabbi Kook have said about the destruction of the Jews in our generation? Could he have found a positive 'spark' even in this extreme manifestation of evil? The Rabbi recognized that there was evil in the world; he also knew about the beginnings of Nazism; but he could not have known where it would lead. His metaphysics would have obliged him to say that the principle of the good was operating here too, for otherwise he would have had to revise his entire doctrine from the ground up." <sup>193</sup>

There is considerable truth in these remarks. But historical development revealed another side to Kook's thinking. It was he, after all, who introduced the notions of crisis and reversal into the debate over the meaning of the events of the day, who spoke of a dialectical process of redemption, replete with contradictions—unlike his predecessors the Harbingers of Zionism, who saw the process as a smooth, organic one. (Kalischer, it will be recalled, saw even the emancipation of the western Jews as a sign of redemption.) Furthermore, as we have seen, Kook viewed the First World War in well-nigh apocalyptic terms. He interpreted this war as the destruction of an old world in order to build a new, messianic one, the uprooting of a civilization of falsehood in order to plant one of truth. Now, barely thirty years later, his son Zvi Yehudah carried these ideas to their logical limits, if not beyond, in explaining the demise of European Jewry.

Can the argument of destruction for the sake of construction really be applied to the hell of the Holocaust? Shall we really look for "a positive 'spark' even in this extreme manifestation of evil" (Ben-Shlomo)? Yes! says Zvi Yehudah Kook, as long as we do not persist in trying to justify what has happened in terms of the accepted categories of sin and punishment, guilt and expiation, but view it rather in terms of the special causalities of exile and redemption.

The Jewish people has been brought here, severed from the depths of exile to come to the State of Israel. The blood of the six million represents a substantial excision from the body of the nation. Our whole people has undergone heavenly surgery at the hands of the destroyers, may their

name be blotted out . . . God's people had clung so determinedly to the impurity of foreign lands that, when the End Time arrived, they had to be cut away, with a great shedding of blood . . . This cruel excision . . . reveals our real life, the rebirth of the nation and the land, the rebirth of the Torah and all that is holy . . . These historical, cosmological, divine facts must be seen as such. Seeing is more than understanding; it is encounter, encounter with the Master of the Universe.<sup>194</sup>

In other words, the destruction and suffering are not to be explained by classical causality, as the result of sin, but teleologically, as aiming toward redemption. Where the elder Kook explains the First World War as the uprooting of a debased gentile culture, the younger Kook explains the Holocaust as the rooting out of a debased Jewish culture, the culture of exile. The catastrophe was, in his words, "a deeply hidden, internal, divine act of purification, [to rid us] of the impurity [of exile] . . . a cruel divine surgery aimed at bringing [the Jews] to the Land of Israel against their will."<sup>195</sup>

From this perspective, only a deterministic, messianic interpretation of the State of Israel can confront the Holocaust and endow it with any religious "meaning." The calamity may have been profound, immeasurable, and unprecedented, but the redemption that followed was also unprecedented and final. However far the satanic destruction may have brought us down, the messianic salvation raised us up. (We see this dynamic in the ancient apocalyptic notions of Gog and Magog, the birth pangs of the Messiah, and "Let him come, but let me not see him in my lifetime" [BT Sanhedrin 98a]). No partial, merely historical explanation can achieve this symmetry between the destruction and the construction. Only an explanation that purports to be absolute, total, and final can balance the demonic loss and justify it.<sup>196</sup> And this in turn requires the elevation and sanctification of the State of Israel as "the pedestal of God's throne in this world."

I do not believe, therefore, that the success of this viewpoint in religious circles can be attributed only to the Six-Day War. This war, with the suspense that preceded it and the relief that followed, is known to have stirred up associations with the Holocaust—the feeling of "a nation that dwells alone," the fear of renewed antisemitism, and so forth—among the Israeli public.<sup>197</sup> Yet the new messianism had also been a direct if unspoken reaction to the earlier mass murder, with its implicit threat to the principles of traditional religious faith.<sup>198</sup> How could we continue to live in a world in which the wicked Haman had triumphed, unless the Messiah were on his way?

It will be recalled that the extreme anti-Zionists gave their own religious

"explanation" for the Holocaust: it had been a collective punishment for the collective sin of Zionism in forcing the End. By the same token, there were redemptionist Zionists, at the other end of the spectrum, who also saw the Holocaust as a collective punishment for a collective sin: ongoing Jewish unfaithfulness to the Land of Israel. (Rabbi Mordecai Atiyah was a leading advocate of this idea.)<sup>199</sup> Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook and his disciples, for their part, avoided this harsh position, but they too theologically related the Holocaust to the Jewish rejection of Zion. Kook writes, "When the End comes and Israel fails to recognize it, there comes a cruel divine operation that removes [the Jewish people] from its exile . . . because of the reality [expressed in the verse,] 'They rejected the desirable land [and put no faith in His promise]' [Ps. 106:24]." <sup>200</sup> In this way, the religious mind could now confront and "explain" the horrors of the Holocaust in terms of a necessary messianic sequence of events.

This deterministic view, promising unconditional redemption, was indeed quite attractive to Rabbi Zvi Yehudah's disciples.<sup>201</sup> As Rabbi Eliyahu Avihayil writes in 1982: "We are living at the end of history. The redemption of Israel no longer depends on Israel's deeds . . . Divine Providence no longer operates, as a rule, according to Israel's actions but according to a cosmic plan . . . None of the redemptive processes currently under way, processes from which there is no backtracking, are dependent upon us." <sup>202</sup> All is foreseen, then, but freedom of choice is not given (an ironic play on Avot 3:15—Trans.). The wheels of history turn according to an unconditional "cosmic plan " laid out in advance. Moreover, it is within man's power to know this plan—not only of its existence, but to know its contents and future course. The Jew need only study well the dramatic events transpiring, on the one hand, and the promises of the prophets, on the other, to grasp the whole. "'How can you be so sure you understand the divine plan?' we are asked.<sup>203</sup> 'Isn't it presumptuous to think you can understand the divine reality?' True, we cannot know precisely what God has in store . . . but when things happen and God acts before our very eyes, one must be blind not to see what is going on. It is not presumption, but keeping one's eyes open " (Rabbi Eliezer Waldman, dean of the Kiryat Arba Yeshivah).<sup>204</sup> As for the predictions of the prophets,

Yes, we have communication [with God]. The Prophets of Israel [had] communication even with regard to the future, and they passed the secret of this communication on to us. (Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, dean of the Ateret Kohanim Yeshivah)<sup>205</sup>

With the help of God, it is being revealed directly to us, and there can no longer be any room for doubt, or grounds for holding back our joy and gratitude to the Redeemer of Israel.

(Rabbi Zefaniah Drori, dean of the Kiryat Shmonah Yeshivah)<sup>206</sup>

A few years ago, I devoted an article to contemporary messianic determinism, both Zionist and anti-Zionist, tracing its sources and motives.<sup>207</sup> There were many responses, direct and indirect. I would now like to return to this issue and consider the questions it raises.

One may well ask, What is so remarkable about this religious determinism? Does not messianic faith imply it by its very nature? Doesn't the expectation of redemption always grasp history as a vector or arrow, the direction of which is set ahead of time by the Great Planner? The answer is that in this instance the believer makes definite claims about a specific, concrete, future course of events, about the destiny of this particular national movement and state, and not merely concerning something hoped for, the course and timetable of which are unknown. The believer foresees a positive outcome for a certain historical manifestation, and not just for humanity or a people in general. This is not just another version of the all-embracing idea of progress, but one that gives priority to a particular time and place in all their concreteness. "Our situation will lead us ineluctably to build the Third Temple," Rabbi Hayyim Druckman, dean of the Or Etzion Yeshivah, has stated. "There will be ups and downs, but there can be no reversing the process."<sup>208</sup> To be sure, Maimonides teaches that the course of events leading to the messianic age will be hidden from us, but "the question is, what if these things happen and you close your eyes, saying, 'There's nothing there; I don't see a thing?'"<sup>209</sup> This way of thinking was naturally given a dramatic boost by the outcome of the Six-Day War.

Another question that arises is how the belief in historical necessity is to be reconciled with the activism of people in the redemptionist camp? If one has faith in the inevitability of historical progress, why not sit and wait for it? Yet the history of modern-day European social and political movements demonstrates that such deterministic beliefs, religious and secular alike,<sup>210</sup> do not go hand in hand with passivity but rather, quite the contrary, serve to galvanize, to spur activism and overcome inhibition. Those who believe they know the future want to be the first to announce it. They want to appear as the avant-garde, leading the march to the drumbeat of history. They want to be a part of the flow and to help it toward its destined goal. Whatever their social or numerical weight, they see themselves as playing a central role in the unfolding of events.<sup>211</sup>

We should not therefore identify the belief in historical necessity with fatalism and passivity. Determinism means that the end result is foreseen, but it is precisely this foreknowledge that motivates the believer

to intensified activity.<sup>212</sup> One who has deciphered the secret, redemptive direction of history has no fear of failure. One feels called upon to step into the breach, to take matters in hand, to press onward, to join the wave of the future.<sup>213</sup>

It is this mentality that characterizes the Jewish messianic activism that has emerged in our generation.

What we want are believers, who, out of faith in God, arise to act . . . It is this faith that accompanies him from the moment he begins to act, that gives him the strength to intervene in historical and political events. The believer knows he has the Lord's blessing at every step of the way.<sup>214</sup>

It's a pity it took a tragedy like the "Bus of Blood" on the Coastal Road [an Arab terrorist attack on an Israeli civilian bus] to get the government to take the correct and necessary steps, to come to its senses and remember its mandate and go into Lebanon. The war should have been declared out of an inner Jewish rhythm and not merely in response to the wickedness of the world and the other nations. It should have been a response to the End that is forcing us! (Hanan Porat)<sup>215</sup>

How does this modern activism relate to traditional Jewish messianism? I will suffice with one instructive example. The tractate Sanhedrin (98b) speaks of two alternatives that can catalyze redemption: Israel's merit, and the arrival of the appointed End Time. Citing Isaiah 60:22—"I the Lord will speed it in due time"—the Talmud says, "It is written, 'in due time,' yet it is also written, 'I . . . will speed it!' [What is meant is,] if they are worthy, 'I will speed it'; if they are not worthy, [it will come only] 'in due time.'" <sup>216</sup> Throughout the ages this passage was understood to mean that, if Israel repented, redemption would come sooner than the appointed time, but if not, it would only come at the appointed End of Days. But Israel would be redeemed in any event.

Interestingly, many who see "the revealed End" in the events of our day tend to interpret the former as having come "in due time" and not before, that is, not as a result of any particular spiritual merit on Israel's part. The greater the stress placed on the inevitability of redemption, the more one might have expected complacency and passivity. What role would remain for human initiative on the historical plane? Yet this has not been the case. As with secular messianisms, the very certainty that redemption is on the way has proven a goad to action. Had Israel merited it, redemption would have come suddenly, in a miraculous fashion ("I will speed it"). Since they have not merited it, redemption has come by natural means,<sup>217</sup> bit by bit, through worldly efforts and the building up of

the Jew.<sup>218</sup> "The revealed End: its beginning is in human hands, its conclusion in the hands of God."<sup>219</sup>

There is a paradox here: the original revolutionary idea of religious Zionism that national rebirth would be brought about by natural means nevertheless comes to be understood in eschatological rather than historical terms. The Zionist undertaking, concrete and worldly as it is, is no longer seen as the return of the Jews to history, but rather as their march toward the End of Days.

Does this way of thinking broaden or constrict the scope of religious responsibility? Two different answers are possible. On the one hand, such messianic certainty enlarges the realm of "authentic" Jewish activity well beyond traditional limits, for by its lights the appropriate response to the needs of the hour can no longer be confined to the narrowly spiritual. One is now called upon to act on the plane of history in its totality. On the other hand, the notion of "the revealed End" also restricts the human role,<sup>220</sup> for it implies that we are only responsible for the beginning of the process (of return, settlement, and struggle), whereas its successful outcome will be guaranteed by Divine Providence.<sup>221</sup> "Its conclusion is in the hands of God." "The more we commit our bodies and souls to the divine undertaking, using all the natural means at our disposal, the more miracles we shall witness from on high, and these shall combine with our earthly collaboration, natural with supernatural, in a shining unity" (Shlomo Aviner).<sup>222</sup>

## Historical Necessity and Political Radicalism

**THIS MESSIANIC THEOLOGY** has had clear implications for politics, settlement activity, and military affairs. "The Master of the Universe has His own political agenda, according to which politics here below are conducted," Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook teaches. "Part of this redemption is the conquest and settlement of the land. This is dictated by divine politics, and no earthly politics can supersede it."<sup>223</sup> Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook goes so far as to identify the eternal Israel and its transcendent power explicitly with the political and military power of the State of Israel.

The State of Israel is divine . . . Not only can/must there be no retreat from [a single] kilometer of the Land of Israel, God forbid, but on the contrary, we shall conquer and liberate more and more, as much in the spiritual [as in the physical] sense. "The Glory of Israel does not deceive or change His mind" [I Sam. 15:29]. We are stronger than America, stronger than Russia. With all the troubles and delays [we suffer], our position in the world, the world of history, the cosmic world, is stronger and more secure in its timelessness than theirs. There are nations that know this, and there are nations of uncircumcised heart that do not know it, but they shall gradually come to know it! Heaven protect us from weakness and timidity . . . In our divine, world-encompassing undertaking, there is no room for retreat.<sup>224</sup>

As we can see, those scholars who have sought to detach hawkish politics from messianic theology have not fully understood the thinking of the circle of the Merkaz ha-Rav Yeshivah (that of Zvi Yehudah Kook) and the religious teachers. Although it is true that many Israelis, religious and otherwise, take hawkish positions without reference to messianic questions, in the case of the ideological leadership it is otherwise.

In fact, until the time of the return of the Sinai to Egypt, there were young rabbis in these circles who would promise, on theological grounds, a blessed future, not only to the national enterprise in general but to particular political programs. For example, several weeks after the Six-Day War a group of them met with religious members of the cabinet to encourage them in the upcoming struggle against territorial compromise. A spokesman of the group, Rabbi Ya'akov Filber (later, head of the Merkaz ha-Rav Junior Yeshivah), stated that "I believe with perfect faith that if the Holy One, blessed be He, gave us the land in a patently miraculous way, He will never take it away from us. 'The Holy One, blessed be He, does not perform miracles in vain.' It is not for the government of Israel to decide on the integrity of the Land of Israel." Why, then, he said, have I come here? Not to give political guidance, but to give spiritual and educational guidance: "I have come to argue, not for the dignity of the Land of Israel, but for that of religion and the religious community . . . [For] how shall we answer our students when they see that the leaders of the religious party have disassociated themselves from the integrity of the land?"<sup>225</sup>

Filber later reiterated these sentiments even more sharply in writing: "Above and beyond what we do there is a divine power hovering over all and forcing us to advance, in accordance with the divine plan, toward full redemption . . . Since the liberation of the Land of Israel west of the Jordan [in 1967], not a day has passed without an attempt, either through diplomacy or military attrition, to turn the clock back . . . Not a single

country, including . . . Israel, has affirmed that the whole of the Land of Israel must remain in [our] hands. Yet, miraculously, no conditions have been created to force Israel to withdraw, even a little, from the borders that came into being as a result of the Six-Day War." <sup>226</sup> This, then, was the fate of the elder Kook's idea of progress. In the 1970s, before they were confronted with the reality of withdrawal, quite a few other rabbis spoke in the same vein: "All the attempts of the Gentiles to arrest the process of our redemption are futile and will come to nought. All their plans, their idle talk of cutting away the inheritance of our forefathers, of chopping up our holy land, and of harming the Lord's people, are in vain. None of this will ever happen" (Aviner).<sup>227</sup> True, there were those among them who understood such statements simply as an expression of determination or as an educational ploy. "There is [ordinary] innocence, and there is creative innocence," Hanan Porat stated at a 1976 meeting of the executive committee of Gush Emunim. "We must educate ourselves to the fact that there is no such thing as withdrawal, any more than there are such things as ghosts." <sup>228</sup> But later, just before the 1982 evacuation, there were disciples of both schools who stood before the houses of the Israeli city of Yamit on the Sinai coast, who swore openly that God, the guardian of Israel, would forestall the evil decree and never permit any backtracking in the process of redemption. For these young people, this was the clear implication of what they had been taught.

"We proclaimed daily that there would be no withdrawal," Rabbi Ariel, dean of the Yamit Yeshivah, said later, taking stock for the group. "This slogan was a mistake from the point of view of both faith and education. No believing Jew should ever make such absolute pronouncements. 'All is foreseen, but freedom of choice is granted' . . . We should have adopted slogans that would educate people to faith, to an uncompromising will to act; never should we have instilled absolute belief in things that might never be realized." <sup>229</sup>

The ideology of messianic determinism thus grew gradually more extreme, from Rabbi Abraham Kook to his son, to the latter's disciples, to a new generation of youngsters. At the next stage, there were some on the fringes of the movement who went so far as to plot the destruction of the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount. In one sense this was a political move, designed to sabotage the Camp David Accord. But in another sense it was a mystical attempt to cut off the forces of impurity, the "husk of Ishmael," from the source of their vitality on the holy mountain. For some, however, it was also an apocalyptic move to bring about a historic turn, to force the hand of the Master of the Universe by bringing on a catastrophe. By precipitating a great holy war against Israel, they would "oblige" the Redeemer of Israel to wage a great and terrible campaign on their behalf. By forcing the End below, they would

activate the higher powers above.<sup>230</sup>

Was this a logical, organic outgrowth of Rabbi Zvi Yehudah's teachings? On the one hand, the deterministic element was certainly essential to this development (I alluded earlier to the use made of the elder Kook's approach to the crossing of halakhic bounds). Moreover, Rabbi Jacob Moses Harlap, one of the elder Kook's leading disciples, explicitly predicated final salvation on a paradoxical worldwide outburst of hostility toward the Jewish people. "When the age of redemption dawns," he writes, "the other nations will regret having helped the Jews; they will turn into persecutors, paving the way for us to behold the light of redemption."

<sup>231</sup> This notion found a ready response in the radical camp. Yet these elements by themselves were not enough to justify the violent plot. It was only in conjunction with other alien ideas that the notion came into play.

Indeed, some of the leading figures in the redemptionist camp were alarmed by the plot and rushed to condemn it as a perversion. "We are dealing here with a messianic sect seeking to bring about the Jewish people's redemption through force of arms," Rabbi Zvi Tau fulminated. "They have the blatantly idolatrous idea that by blowing up the mosques they will force the Master of the Universe to redeem Israel. This is the thinking of small-minded, superficial students of Kabbalah who, with all their limitations, are led by curiosity into the sacred precincts and cause great destruction."<sup>232</sup>

Since then, or, more accurately, since the evacuation of Yamit, there has been a marked tendency in this camp to moderate its political and even in its theological determinism.<sup>233</sup>

In conclusion, let us now return to our point of departure and ask what role Rabbi Abraham Kook played in the evolution of this ideology. In 1975 this question provoked a vigorous argument at Merkaz ha-Rav Yeshivah. The debate reached such a pitch that when one of the participants suggested reading the elder Kook differently from his son—that is, that for the former, the future of the state depended on the behavior of the Jewish people—Zvi Yehudah Kook dismissed him from his teaching post.<sup>234</sup> It was clear that the attempt to read into Rabbi Abraham Kook's teachings an element of warning—that the predictions and promises were conditional—had struck a sensitive cord, and that the group felt its basic convictions to be threatened.

In fact, the elder Kook's position on this question was complex. On the one hand, he was, as we have seen, a principled optimist who believed firmly in historical progress and the gradual elevation of Humankind and the cosmos. This optimism was even stronger in regard to the revival of the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. There is no doubt that Kook

saw Zionism as a human response to a divine call and that he confidently expected its success as such, looking forward to improvement and illumination rather than the opposite. The events of his day—the Balfour Declaration, the strengthening of the Yishuv, the devotion of the pioneers, and the like—encouraged him to grow "daily in the conviction of speedy salvation, light, and purity from on high."<sup>235</sup>

It is precisely here, however, that the other side of his thesis emerges: complete redemption would depend on a transformation of spirit and mind, not only on outward historical and political reconstruction. Redemption should also be reflected on the level of personal decision, where implicit *teshuvah* would be made explicit. The innate, "objective" distinctiveness of the Jewish people would not be sufficient." Moral character always needs to be developed; it does not grow of its own accord."<sup>236</sup> In Rabbi Kook's view, both the ultra-Orthodox "thesis" and the secularist "antithesis" needed to be elevated in the conscious messianic synthesis. Could such a change be inevitable? Could it have been preordained? Did it not inherently turn upon human freedom of choice?

In the above-mentioned article, I cited a number of passages in Rabbi Kook's writing in which redemption is made dependent upon voluntary human response. Other such passages could be quoted.<sup>237</sup> Some have suggested an alternative interpretation,<sup>238</sup> but no one has thus far succeeded in proving, on the basis of Kook's own words, that individual freedom and personal spirit are crushed under the wheels of divine, historical determination. None of these commentators would impute to Kook a Christian bias, that while we act freely we are also assured that Grace will turn our hearts toward the Redeemer.<sup>239</sup> Nor has anyone proven that Kook's assessment of the future of the Zionist undertaking was unconditional, that for him its success was "not dependent upon our actions," or that he separated redemption from *teshuvah*. These ideas are a more recent development, in the wake of the experiences and achievements of Zionism.

Rabbi David Henshke, writing independently, has tellingly criticized the deterministic reading of the elder Kook: "Rabbi Kook's perfect faith that the revealed End was indeed at hand in no way contradicts the notion that we may, heaven forbid, miss the mark . . . We must act in full awareness of the mighty messianic potential of our era . . . There is, however, a fine line between appropriate faith and false confidence, between true reverence that knows how great is the gulf separating it from its Creator and the arrogant certainty that presumes to know the mind of the Most High . . . We must undergo the difficult test of educating to complexity. And we bear an exalted responsibility to see that the

potential is realized." <sup>240</sup> Kook was a great believer in the power of faith. He meant to lead the people to its destiny by means of messianic observation and an optimistic long-range faith. "The whole people believes that, following the redemption now beginning before our very eyes, there will be no more exile, and this deep faith is itself the secret of [our] existence" (*Orot*, p. 77).

## Idea and Reality

Shortly after the Yom Kippur War, on the twenty-seventh anniversary of Israel's independence (1974), Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook preached to his jubilant students and the hundreds of guests gathered at the yeshivah for the holiday. The elderly rabbi pointed out to his listeners the greatness of the hour and the religious meaning of Jewish national restoration. "There are those who speak of 'the beginning of redemption' in our own time," he said, using the expression accepted by many religious Zionists. But "we must perceive clearly that we are already in the midst of redemption." <sup>241</sup> We are already in the throne room, not just in the antechamber. The 'beginning' took place more than a century ago, when Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel was renewed." <sup>242</sup> True, the society and the state are not yet run in full accord with the Torah. But we must learn to separate the wheat from the chaff, between the precious essence embodied in the very fact of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel and the incidental flaws that have accumulated along its redemptive path. "The principal, overall thing is the state. It is inherently holy and without blemish. It is a supernal, heavenly realization of [the prayer] 'He restores His presence to Zion.' All the rest is details, trivia, [minor] problems and complications. These cannot detract at all from the holiness of the state. The intrinsic value of the state does not depend on whether it has a greater or smaller number of religious people. Naturally we look forward to the time when the whole nation will 'belong' to the Torah and the commandments, but the state is holy in any case!" <sup>243</sup>

The gap between utopian vision and historical reality is thus explained here by drawing a sharp distinction between "essence" and "existence," between the shining idea of the State of Israel and the passing shadows that have accrued to it. The "true" state is to be evaluated according to its inner, a priori, unconditional religious meaning—"its holiness"—not

according to its temporary laws or the everyday behavior of its citizens. The State of Israel was conceived and born in holiness, in a messianic mode, and therefore its pedestals cannot be shaken or found faulty. It is as if a utopia had already been given, outside time and space, so that it could not prove disappointing. As Rabbi Yitzhak Shilat later wrote: "Our teacher Rabbi Zvi Yehudah [Kook], of blessed memory, saw the achievement of actual Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel as a matter of divine command and inherent sanctity, not dependent on either the personalities of the state's leaders, the structure of its institutions, or this or that sin in the way it is run. These are all individual matters, whereas the holiness of the people and its sovereignty are common to all Israel and cannot be diminished by sin." <sup>244</sup>

It will be recalled that it was the elder Kook who distinguished between the subjective choices made by individual Jews and the objective distinction of the people as a whole. Though the visible decisions made by individuals might not measure up to the invisible national standard, this was only a temporary, incidental deviation that did not affect the overall trend. Now what Kook said about the nation, or more precisely the idea of the nation, was said by his son and the latter's disciples about the state and the idea of the state.

The elder Kook wrote: "The great love we bear for our nation should not blind us to its faults, yet however critically we examine it we still find it innocent. 'Every part of you is fair, my darling, there is no blemish in you' [Song 4:7]." <sup>245</sup> His followers later made a similarly essentialistic assessment of the State of Israel, as the political embodiment of the people Israel. As we have seen, they judged the Jewish state in terms of what it ought to be—"the pedestal of God's throne in this world"—and not what it actually was. True, the state's citizens were expected to narrow the gap between the ideal and the real, between essence and existence; yet all their individual actions, however sinful and deviant, could not change the innate character of this state, which was conceived as a metaphysical sanctum. The messianic ideal, in its perfection, thus protected the fragmentary historical reality from its critics, from both the left and the right. "Every part of you is fair, my darling."

What we have here is the inverse of the radical ultra-Orthodox ideology. The Satmar Hasidim and the Neturei Karta also judge the Jewish state and predict its future (albeit negatively) in terms of the inherent theological meaning they attribute to its existence and essence, not in terms of the concrete behavior of its citizens. In their view, the state was conceived and born in impurity. Their opponents take the precisely opposite view, that it was conceived and born in holiness. According to the former, the original sin embodied in its very existence cannot be rectified; it is therefore condemned to destruction. The latter group,

Kook's disciples, for their part, believe the special sanctity inherent in the very existence of the state cannot be destroyed or defiled; it is therefore destined for redemption.

Both camps, then, take a deterministic view of the future of the Zionist undertaking, for it is its essence that will decide its outcome, for good or ill.

We should not be surprised at this parallel between the two radical positions, for both of them take as their point of departure an uncompromising messianism.<sup>246</sup> Both reject out of hand any partial revival of the Jewish people that is not grounded in the promise of ultimate redemption or measured according to the standard of ultimate perfection. According to the former, anti-Zionist view, the present return to Zion and recovery of political sovereignty do not represent a partial recovery of wholeness. They betoken, not a flowering, but a severing and a fragmentation of the whole. But the second, Zionist view, also refuses to recognize any partial realization as valuable in and of itself.<sup>247</sup> Its value derives entirely from the seed of perfection it contains, a seed that is destined to grow organically and inexorably into a pristine, absolute entity. This camp, too, believes there can be no return but the final, messianic one; however, it maintains that that is what the present return in fact is. The partly realized historical entity (*athalta de-ge'ulah*) derives its standing from the fully realized metahistorical one, and is therefore called upon to tailor itself, here and now, to the latter's specifications. "The commandment of redemption is neither a myth nor an 'apocalypse' . . . We cannot be satisfied with any less than the dream of all the generations of the Exile: the establishment of the realm to which all of creation, since the beginning of time, has aspired. Only through the attainment of this perfection, in the light of God's countenance, will there be an end to our tears, our sighs, our social frictions."<sup>248</sup> This is the charge of Rabbi Moshe Zuriel, editor of *Otzrot ha-Reiyah* ("The Treasures of Rabbi Kook"). A similar view was expressed by Rabbi Eliezer Waldman at the time of the Lebanon War: "We are past the point where we can build up the people and the land by halfway measures . . . The Jewish people's task is to establish order in the [entire] world . . . We now aspire to an all-encompassing perfection and greatness."<sup>249</sup> This is, in fact, "the perfection that encompasses the State of Israel . . . the holy bounty" (Rabbi Moshe Levinger).<sup>250</sup>

We may thus distinguish three ideas that may be said to be shared by the enemies and supporters of Zionism, by the Satmar Hasidim and the disciples of Rabbi Kook: determinism, essentialism, and perfectionism. But, as we have seen, it is precisely these common conceptions, precisely the absolute messianic demand that they share, that lies at the

root of their profound differences.

Nevertheless, there are certain highly charged situations in which the two opposing camps, and particularly the more extreme elements within them, may find themselves on the same side. In a paradoxical way, the metaphysical elevation of the State of Israel threatens to undermine the authority of the given, earthly state. The wider the gap between the ideal and the real, between the anticipated perfection and the actual implementation, the more questionable is the existing state (at least for the more extreme messianic Zionists). At a certain point, it is no longer this mere shadow of the messianic state that is authoritative, but only "the State of Israel, the pedestal of the Lord's earthly throne," as it looms in the believer's imagination in all its unconditional redemptive significance. It was in this spirit that Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, for example, former dean of the Yamit Yeshivah and one of the most militant of Zvi Yehudah Kook's followers, defended the Jewish underground that appeared in Judea and Samaria in 1985. He was full of deference for the ideal "state," but had none for its actual existing authorities.<sup>251</sup> Such statements are issued by other groups as well, particularly when the possibility of Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria is discussed. "If the leaders of our country decide to separate us from the [full extent] of the State of Israel and set up an alternative state in the land of the Philistines [i.e., Israel within the 1949 cease-fire lines], we shall deny their right to use the name 'State of Israel' and go on maintaining the [true] Jewish state in the heart of the country, under the banner of the duty to gather in the exiles and settle the land . . . To the extent that the state shirks its obligations, it forfeits its right to exist to those who are prepared to fulfill them in its stead."<sup>252</sup> Thus writes Barukh Lior in *Nekudah*, the magazine of the Jewish settlements in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza District (1985). In this view, therefore, the "full" State of Israel will negate and undermine the partial state. Needless to say, such sentiments have been expressed more frequently and more vocally since the 1993 Oslo agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

It should be stressed, however, that these statements have been subjected to internal criticism. "The Land of Israel versus the State of Israel? A Haredi-nationalist state in the Judean diaspora?" asks Yo'el Bin-Nun.<sup>253</sup> Similarly, when the Council of Settlements in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza proclaimed that it would treat any Israeli government that gave up part of the Land of Israel "as an illegal government, just as General de Gaulle treated the Vichy government of Marshal petain that had betrayed the French people,"<sup>254</sup> angry voices were raised in protest from within the settlement movement. We shall, they said, "treat the Council . . . that commits this crime as an illegal, treasonous council and not recognize its decisions."<sup>255</sup> What these polemics clearly demonstrate

is the potential for radicalism inherent in the idealistic view of the state. It is true that good citizens can be expected to rise up against the state if it arrogantly abuses its mandate and tramples on their basic values. But generally an effort is made to avoid such confrontations insofar as possible. But when the state is held up to absolute, metaphysical standards, they cannot so easily be put off, and an explosion becomes a distinct possibility.<sup>256</sup>

Moreover, if the State of Israel is expected to realize final, messianic goals, how long can it content itself with being a mere "beginning" and not press forward? If we have already reached the age of redemption, realization, and conquest, how much longer can the Temple Mount and the Holy of Holies remain in alien hands? The more that is expected of present reality, the greater will be the pressure to "ascend the mountain" and take those measures that will turn the tide of history. Will young people burning with the fire of redemption be content to go on waiting on the threshold of the inner sanctum at the same stage where their predecessors did? Will they agree to work, to take the lead, and to initiate all kinds of activities for the sake of the Land of Israel but, when it comes to the very heart of the land, beating on the heights of the holy mountain, sit idly by? (This is precisely the demand made of them by their teachers at Merkaz ha-Rav, who forbid going up to the Temple Mount.) Is it conceivable that "when it comes to the Land of Israel we are Zionists, but in regard to the Temple Mount we are like Satmar Hasidim?"<sup>257</sup> as a young firebrand once asked Tau. The strong desire to eliminate the mosques from the Temple Mount is thus a direct result of this tension,<sup>258</sup> and not all will be able to restrain themselves indefinitely.

Finally, just as there can be no Jewish return to the Land of Israel except a complete return, there can be no Jewish notion of peace except a perfect peace. Peace is no longer merely a contingent political concept, attainable in the course of history, but an ahistorical, utopian one, the peace of the End of Days prophesied by Isaiah and Micah. "True peace" must be based on utter harmony, love, and brotherhood, not just on a balance of forces that keeps conflicting interests in check. Hence, as Gideon Aran has pointed out, many of the younger Kook's disciples, the leadership of Gush Emunim, saw the peace agreement with Egypt as a betrayal, not only of the ideal of the integrity of the Land of Israel, but also of the integrity of the Jewish idea of peace. Rabbi Ya'akov Ariel, in a speech before the national council of B'nai Akiva in 1979, protested:

What is being done today is a mockery of the word peace. The true peace for which we aim and to which we must educate [our people] is a peace based on the unification of the human race around one Torah . . . [The present] peace is not the peace of the Bible.<sup>259</sup> . . . It is not for this "peace"

that a Jew lifts his eyes in prayer. True peace entails a spiritual revolution . . . The idea of peace includes the absolute dominion of the Lord. A peace that lacks the element of a common faith and a single [shared] idea is not a true peace or a stable one.<sup>260</sup>

Clearly, in this area as well, the elevation of an idea to utopian status prevents it from being realized, even partially, in the here and now. Once peace is understood in exclusively messianic terms, political activity aimed at achieving it is, in effect, neutralized. "Without the [messianic] repair of the world there will be no peace" (Hanan Porat).<sup>261</sup> "Until both sides acknowledge the power of almighty God, as opposed to the imaginary earthly substitutes for Him, there will be no true peace" (Yo'el Bin-Nun).<sup>262</sup> Note: the very criticism leveled at Zionism by its bitterest ultra-Orthodox critics, that it was attempting to reclaim the land in an unredeemed world, in history, is now being leveled within the Zionist camp in relation to the question of peace. Peace has been put off until such time as it can be realized fully, even if that means leaving the field of history to the forces of war.<sup>263</sup> For messianic perfection knows no compromise: it is all or nothing.<sup>264</sup>

## Conclusion

**IN THE TWO GENERATIONS** since Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook's death, his messianic hopes have come much closer to realization in the material than in the spiritual realm. Independence, the enormous growth of the Yishuv, the recovery of dominion over the Land of Israel, success in making the land productive, military power and victory—all these material achievements have given encouragement to the belief in the revealed End. But the spiritual picture is rather different: a nonreligious majority that stubbornly refuses to heed the Call and ground its national identity in faith,<sup>265</sup> and the failure of the new generation to reach higher moral ground. In sum, the visible elements of salvation have become more visible, while the invisible ones have become more deeply hidden.

How have these developments been received by Kook's followers? Zionism's material successes have certainly strengthened their belief in an imminent realization, within history, of prophetic messianic hopes. The Six-Day War and the propagation of Jewish settlements throughout

Judea and Samaria dramatically reinforced this belief. "The approach of the sages of Israel throughout the generations [was] . . . to view Jewish history with open eyes, in light of the Torah, and with complete faith in the guiding hand of the Lord. It was only from this perspective that Rabbi Abba could say in the Talmud that we would recognize the End by two clear signs: the beginning of the ingathering of the exiles and the flowering of the Land of Israel. With God's help, these things are coming to pass before our very eyes, and there can no longer be any doubt or grounds for holding back our joy and gratitude to the Redeemer of Israel" (Rabbi Zefaniah Drori)<sup>266</sup> On the spiritual level, however, matters are different. It has been hard to avoid a sense of perplexity and bafflement: how to explain the fact that a collective return to religious observance has not yet occurred? Why has faith not yet surfaced on the level of personal conscious affirmation, as expected?

Given these developments, it is no wonder that messianic tensions have centered mainly on the earthly realm, on the flourishing of the land, and on political sovereignty. The latter are confirmed by every act of conquest and settlement.<sup>267</sup> Moreover, the messianic ideology is compelled to loosen as much as possible the traditional dependence of national redemption on religious renewal. As Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook put it, "The great ingathering of the exiles is a revelation of the light of the Messiah, which does not depend on our *teshuvah* but on the divine decree that 'this people I formed for Myself' [Isa. 43:21]." <sup>268</sup> The historical redemption, then, is not a function of achieving a higher spiritual state <sup>269</sup> but is, rather, preordained.

As we have seen, there are some who even believe that the people's collective destiny is completely independent of its actions. "The process of redemption is imposed upon us, in spite of what we do." Others, while not going this far, have still translated traditional expectations of spiritual renewal into worldly terms. In fact, what they are trying to do is superimpose the original, optimistic vision on a recalcitrant reality, turning it willy-nilly into a reality of *teshuvah*: "return to the Jewish people, return to Jewish heroism, return to physical labor and the tilling of the soil, return to social justice" (Aviner).<sup>270</sup> The outward historical reality itself constitutes religious renewal. What cause is there for complaint?

The roots of these ideas are, of course, to be found in Rabbi Abraham Kook himself. But what he hoped for was a gradual convergence of the outward and the inward, an imminent merging of outward historical salvation with inward religious awakening. He firmly believed that when the secularists achieved their worldly goals—legitimate goals, in his view—they would quickly realize that what they had really wanted all along was something more, something higher, a return to the Jewish soul and

the commandments. He thus foresaw a process of perfection taking place in both realms, matter and spirit, land and Torah. But the longer this parallel development has been delayed, the more evident the revealed End, the more obscure the traditional *teshuvah*, and the greater the gap between the two, the more Kook's followers have felt the need to deepen their a priori interpretation and impose it upon the actual course of events. One must soften the sharp edges of the recalcitrant reality so as to see in it the shining vision. The vision is no longer put forward as a normative model by which society is to be judged. Rather, it is now to serve as a protective enclosure, justifying and defending what exists. "Our reality is one of *teshuvah*, and it is a messianic reality." Now, a messianic reality is something no right-thinking person can criticize or resist. Indeed, what one must do is live by its lights and try to integrate into it, judging oneself and one's comrades, not by any short-term yardstick, but by the long-term one of the great vision of the future.

It is in this perspective that we must interpret the criticism leveled at certain Zionist rabbis who protested the deterioration of the Lebanon War and its cruel after-effects in the refugee camps; criticism such as that of Rabbi Oded Walensky, of the Merkaz ha-Rav Yeshivah: "The people of Israel are not in need of a weak, half-hearted ethic or of truncated liberal-Orthodox-existentialist beliefs and opinions . . . The indecision and laxity, the lack of will to strive onward in our work of national reconstruction in our land that these cause, and the retreat from absolute conviction and the ability to overcome all the obstacles set up for us by our enemies that occurs under their influence—[all these] make them decidedly immoral in comparison with the higher moral goals that underlie our national revival in wholeness and unity in the land."<sup>271</sup> Is it any wonder that several years later, when the Palestinian-Arab uprising began, Rabbi Zalman Melamed, dean of the Beit-El Yeshivah, wrote an article suggesting that this development was but another organic phase in the inexorable unfolding of the redemption of Israel?<sup>272</sup>

Finally, we would do well to ask about the other level to which Rabbi Kook's vision of redemption relates, the universal one. As we have seen, he anticipates the perfection of human beings as such, the reordering of society and of the world as a whole. The redemption of Israel, as he sees it, is bound up with the correction of all humankind: "The [material] building up of the nation and the emergence of its spirit are all one thing, and this, in turn, is one with the building of the world. The blessing of Abraham for all the nations of the world shall begin to take effect openly and vigorously, and on this basis our work of building in the Land of Israel shall be renewed."<sup>273</sup> As we have seen, even the agonies of the First World War and the social revolutions accompanying it seemed to Kook to herald a human rebirth. And indeed, his hopes did find support in

subsequent events, so that he did not need have to impose them upon an altogether hostile reality.<sup>274</sup> It seemed briefly, in the wake of the war, that the nations might actually turn their swords into plowshares. But such hopes were soon dashed by death-dealing new regimes and the debasement of the revolutions that had once seemed so promising. The "postmodern" world is a much less cheering place than the "modern" one was.

In face of this gap, the two paths of spiritual response we have just described lay open to Kook's disciples: to concentrate on the redemption of the people of Israel, putting aside the universal vision;<sup>275</sup> or to reinterpret the national revival itself as actually bringing about universal redemption. They have fully explored each of these modes of response.

It is perhaps to this dichotomy that one of the leading figures at Merkaz ha-Rav was referring when he distinguished between the elder Kook and the younger: the father's personality, he said, was carved out of "the soul of Being (*nishmat ha-havayah*)," while the son's was derived from "the soul of the nation." This imagery is apt for characterizing the transition that took place from the universal, even cosmic, dimension that permeated the elder Kook's writing to the particular, Jewish dimension so highlighted in the work of the younger Kook. Indeed, the latter often said that if his father's book *Orot ha-kodesh*, which deals with metaphysical being, was altogether holy, his book *Orot* (Lights), which deals with the revival of the Jewish people, was the "holy of holies." For "the holy things particular to Israel," Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook said, "are the holy of holies."<sup>276</sup>

**[back to top](#)**

---

## **About the Author**

**Aviezer Ravitsky** is the chairman of the Department of Jewish Thought

at Hebrew University. His recent books include *Studies in Crescas' Philosophy* (1988) and *'Al Da'at Ha-Maqom: Studies in the History of Jewish Philosophy* (1991).

---

## **Table of Contents**

### **Title**

**"A Messianic Reality"**

**A Divine Polity**

**National Revival and the Reconstitution of the Sanhedrin**

**The "Basel Decree"**

**Messiah Ben Joseph**

**Historical Progress**

**An Astonishing Generation**

**A Recalcitrant Reality**

**Historical Necessity**

**Historical Necessity and Political Radicalism**

**Idea and Reality**

**Conclusion**

**Notes**

**About the Author**

## Notes

1. Yosef Bramson, ed., *Ba-ma'arakhah ha-tzibburit*, ed. Y. Bramson (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 24-25.
2. Furthermore, there are those who reinterpret the wording of the oaths in an attempt to find therein an activist call to *aliyah!* See Mordecai Atria, *Sod hashevu'ah* (Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 22-24; Mordecai-Gimpel Jaffe, "We Shall Raise the Banner in the Name of Our God" (in Hebrew), in E. I. Slutzki, ed., *Shivat Zion*, pt. 2 (Warsaw, 1900), p. 15; Yitzhak Nissenboim, *Masoret ve-herut* (Warsaw, 1939), p. 121.
3. Yosef Bramson, *Yemot olam: Ha-ketz ha-dohek* (Jerusalem, 1980), p. 7; and see Bernard M. Casper, "Reshit Zemichat Geulatenu" (in English), in S. Spero, ed., *Religious Zionism* (Jerusalem, 1989), p. 71; Shaul Y. I. Taub of Modzitz, *Imrei Shaul* (Tel Aviv, 1980), p. 187.
4. Zvi Yehudah Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1967), 1:56.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
6. Zvi Yehudah Kook, "Clarifications" (in Hebrew), *Amudim* 369 (1976): 380.
7. Z.Y. Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael* 1: 193-94.
8. Shlomo Aviner, *Am ke-lavi* (Jerusalem, 1983), 2: 192-94; Uriel Tal, *Mithos u-tevunah be-yahadut yamenu* (Tel Aviv, 1987), p. 102.
9. The idea had already originated in *Serer ha-Zohar*. See Yehudah Liebes, "The Messiah of the Zohar: On R. Simeon bar Yohai as a Messianic Figure," in *Studies in the Zohar* (Albany, 1993), pp. 1-84. On the approach of Lurianic Kabbalah, see Gershom Scholem, "The Messianic Idea in Kabbalism," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays* (New York, 1971), pp. 43-48; *idem*, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 44-66; Isaiah Tishby, *Torat ha-ra vaha-kelipah be-Kabbalat ha-Ar"i* (Jerusalem, 1965), p. 143. But see also Ronit Meroz, "Redemption in the Doctrine of Rabbi Isaac Luria" (in Hebrew), doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem,

1982, pp. 255-360; Yehudah Liebes, "'Trein urzilin de-ayalta'" (in Hebrew), in *Kabbalat ha-Ar'i*, a special issue of *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisrael* (10 [1992]), pp. 113-69.

10. Meir Ibn-Gabbai, *Avodat ha-kodesh* (Venice, 1566), "Helek ha-Avodah," p. 37. In his own way, Rabbi Isaac Abrabanel also made the redemption dependent on the merit of the people, and not necessarily on the Messiah and his merit. See the introduction to his *Yeshuot meshiho* (Königsberg, 1861); and see Rivka Schatz, "Facets of the Political-Messianic Awakening following the Expulsion from Spain" (in Hebrew), *Da'at* II (1983): 60-61.

11. *Ha-Tzofeh*, 26 January 1975, quoted in Gideon Aran, "From Religious Zionism to a Zionist Religion: The Roots of Gush Emunim and Its Culture" (in Hebrew), doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1987, p. 445 (hereafter cited as "Religious Zionism"). See Abraham Isaac Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* (Jerusalem, 1962), 1:177; idem, *Orot* (Jerusalem, 1963), p. 73: "Now the End has already awoken, the third coming has begun."

12. Zvi Yehudah Kook, *Le-hilkhot tzibbur* (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 244,246; and see idem, *Le-netivot Yisrael* 2: 157-58; interview with Kook in the periodical *Eretz-Yisrael*, Kislev 5735 (1974/75).

13. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, p. 160; and see the introduction above. On the issue of identification with the concrete State of Israel, see *Ma'or* I (1984): 35.

14. See Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983), p. 198; Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism, Religious Zionism, and Israeli Politics: The Impact and Origin of Gush Emunim," *Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (April 1987): 226. See also Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 112, 132.

15. Hayyim Druckman, "Our Teacher" (in Hebrew), in *Rabbenu tzv"l* (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 47. He states there: "One may also understand Rav Zvi Yehuda's unique attitude toward the IDF in terms of that selfsame relationship to the state. As his late father put it: 'The armies of Israel are the Armies of God.' [Rav Zvi Yehudah] carried things to the extent that he saw even in the tanks of the IDF, its cannons and planes, objects of mitzvah and of holiness, as they served the commandment of settling the Land of Israel." Note: the remarks cited here from Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook were made some thirty years before the creation of the state, and referred to the community and people of Israel (*Orot*, p. 24), but are now applied specifically to the ranks of the fighters.

16. Eliezer Waldman, "To Conquer the Mountain" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 55 (1983): 20.

17. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, 1967), pp. 44-47; Alistair Kee, ed., *The Scope of Political Theology* (London, 1978).
18. See Z.Y. Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael* 1:183; S. Aviner, *Am ke-lavi* 2: 154.
19. This is Maimonides' wording in *Mishneh Torah*, Melakhim 8: 1.
20. Zvi Tau, *Sihot be-et millhamah*, ed. Y. Haikin (Jerusalem, 1983), p. 42.
21. Ibid.
22. Eliezer Waldman, "To Conquer the Mountain," 23; idem, *Al da'at ha-zeman veba-makom* (Kiryat Arba, 1983), pp. 96-97.
23. These remarks were made during the Lebanon War and were published in the internal organ of the yeshivah in Kiryat Arba. Rabbi Lior also ruled that it is incumbent upon all generations to conquer all of the land, from the Brook of Egypt to the Mountain of Beirut, and that to do so one is required to endanger oneself in war (*mizvat milhamah*). See the interview with him in *Nekudah* 48 (1983).
24. See Z.Y. Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael* 2: 157-58. And see the interview in *Ma'ariv*, 14 Nisan 5723 (1963): "Every Jew who comes to the Land of Israel, every tree that is planted in the soil of Israel, every soldier added to the army of Israel, constitutes another spiritual stage, literally; another stage in the process of redemption, like the glorification and increase of Torah through adding yeshivot."
25. See Yitzhak Shilat, "Empty Messianism and False Messianism" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 76 (1984): 16-17.
26. Abraham Isaac Kook, "On Zionism" (in Hebrew), in *Ha-Devir*, vols. 7-9 (Jerusalem, 1920), p. 28; cf. Moshe Y. Zuriel, ed., *Orot ha-Reiyah* (Sha'alabim, 1989), 2: 928.
27. Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot*, vols. 10-12, p. 38.
28. We have only a portion of the original tractate.
29. A.I. Kook, "On Zionism," p. 29.
30. See, for example, Rashi's commentary and Meir Halevi Abulafia, *Yad Ramah*, on BT Sanhedrin 51a. Rabbi Kook did not hide the fact that his interpretation differed from the conventional one.
31. A.I. Kook, "On Zionism," p. 30.

32. As stated in chapter 1, even Rabbi Reines and his colleagues hoped that the return to Zion would bring in its wake a spiritual awakening and religious repentance. But this hope was clearly separated from the circumscribed operative realm of their Zionist activity.

33. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2: 36, 40 , 3: 27. See also Aviezer Ravitzky, *Al da'at ha-makom* (Jerusalem, 1991), p. 76.

34. A.I. Kook, *Ha-Devir*, vols. 10-12, p. 36.

35. Ibid., p. 35. Compare Kook's remarks in "Israel's Destiny and Its Nationhood" (in Hebrew), *Ha-Peles* (1901): 227.

36. A.I. Kook, "On Zionism," pp. 28,33.

37. A.I. Kook, *Ha-Devir*, vols. 10-12, p. 36.

38. But see BT Sanhedrin 18b-19a; Keritot 5b; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Sanhedrin 2: 5.

39. Throughout Rabbi Kook's tractate is interwoven the faith and hope that "now that the national pride is continually expanding, we need not fear those who find it easy to change the explicit rules of the Torah" ("On Zionism," p. 30). Likewise, "Those who fear the Lord and heed His word are not a party within the people, but are the nation itself" (p. 38). Herzl made a similar claim regarding the status of Zionism within the nation.

40. See Jacob Katz, *Leumiyut Yehudit* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 181-90. Indeed, according to the nation's historical memory, in the days of the High Court in Jerusalem "there was not much controversy in Israel" (BT Sanhedrin 88b) and the views of the different sages "were close to one another" (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Mamrim 1:4; idem, introduction to his *Commentary on the Mishnah*). It would seem that Rabbi Kook expected a substantive change of this type to take place through the very establishment of the Sanhedrin.

41. The utopian hope regarding a general national-religious improvement to take place upon the reinstatement of the Sanhedrin reminds one of Alkalai's hopes regarding the messianic power of "the authorized assembly" that will emerge from among the sages of Israel (see above, chapter 1), or even of the hopes attached by Joseppe Mazini in his day to the future "assembly of humanity." In all these visions, the gathering together of collective human inspiration will heal the problems of the people or of humankind. See Hans Kohn, *Prophets and Peoples* (New York, 1946); Jacob Talmon, *Ha-meshihyut ha-medinit: Ha-shelav ha-romantit* (Tel Aviv, 1965), pp. 212-13.

42. A.I. Kook, "On Zionism," p. 30.

43. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1:341. But in 1903 Rabbi Kook still made the national revival conditional upon the renewal of the Sanhedrin. See on this "Brooks in the Negev" (in Hebrew), *Ha-Peles* (1903): 719.
44. Zvi Makovski, *Ve-ashiva shoftayikh* (Tel Aviv, 1938), pp. 36-38; Zuriel, *Otzrot ha-Reiyah*, p. 151. See also A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 4: 80.
45. See Abraham Isaac Kook, *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah* (Jerusalem, 1984), p. 457; Zvi Yaron, *Mishnato shel ha-Rav Kook* (Jerusalem, 1974), p. 269 n. 64.
46. Judah Leib Maimon, *Hiddush ha-Sanhedrin be-medinatenu ha-mehudeshet* (Jerusalem, 1951), P. 57; see also p. 54.
47. See Jacob Katz, *Halakhah ve-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 213-36. On the hopes of Rabbi Israel Shklov for the renewal of the Sanhedrin, see Aryeh Morgenstern, *Ge'ulah be-derekh ha-teva* (Elkanah, Israel, 1989), pp. 61-78.
48. See the sources used by Katz, *Halakhah ve-Kabbalah*, p. 214 n. 5; Judah Leib Maimon, "On the History of the Idea of Renewing the Sanhedrin in Judaism" (in Hebrew), *Ha-Tzofeh*, 7 December 1951; *Geulah Bat-Yehudah*, "The Vision of the State among Early Religious Zionists" (in Hebrew), *Shragai* 3 (1989): 24.
49. Rabbi Kook mentions the "storm of controversy" that arose in Safed at the time concerning the renewal of *semikhah* (with the authority of ancient rabbinical ordination). While refraining from taking an explicit position regarding this polemic, it is quite evident toward which side his view tended: "What great happiness will come to the nations by means of the restoration of ordination according to the view of R. Jacob Berab of Safed."
50. Abraham Isaac Kook, "Brooks in the Negev," pp. 77,71-76. See also idem, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 2:134, 164, 208; idem, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah* (New York, 1974), pp. 186-88, 194.
51. Max Nordau, "Ein Templersreit," *Die Welt* (Vienna), 11 June 1897; Shmuel Almog, *Tzionut ve-historya* (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 69. Over the course of time, Rabbi Kook was to draw a sharp distinction between Herzl and Nordau: "the latter is the abomination of my soul and of the soul of everyone who has a spark of Judaism" (*Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 2: 294).
52. Herzl declared at the first congress that Zionism "is not intended to impinge upon the religious consciousness of any stream in Judaism." At subsequent congresses he repeatedly declared that "Zionism does not

do anything against religion." He thereby sought to bypass the polemic concerning this question. See Alex Bein, *Herzl* (Jerusalem, 19m, pp. 185, 193, 213; Y. H. Farbstein, "The Haredim and the First Congress" (in Hebrew), in L. Yaffeh, ed., *Sefer ha-Kongress* (Jerusalem, 1950), pp. 191-92; Joseph Adler, "Religion and Herzl: Fact and Fable," *Herzl Year Book* 4 (1965), pp. 271-303.

53. Abraham Isaac Kook, "Eztot me-rahok," *Ha-Peles* (1902): 532; and see idem, *Musar avikha* (Jerusalem, 1971), 94-96; idem, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 99.

54. Of course, one needs to examine the specific context of each individual statement. See, for example, Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot*, pp. 74, 84, 155-56.; idem, *Arpelei tohar*, ed. Y. Shilat (Jerusalem, 1983), 11-12; idem, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 70-71, 3: 205; idem, *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah*, pp. 452-54; Yoel Bin-Nun, "Nationalism, Humanity, and Knesset Israel," in [B. Ish-Shalom, ed.], *The World of Rav Kook's Thought* (New York, 1991), pp. 207-54.

55. Abraham Isaac Kook, "Afikim Banegev," in [B. Ish-Shalom, ed.], *The World of Rav Kook's Thought*, pp. 78-79; and see idem, "Eztot me-rahok," pp. 531-32.

56. Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet* (Philadelphia, 1988), p. 61.

57. To use the later concepts of Rabbi Joseph Baer Soloveichik ("Kol dodi dofek," in *Ish ha-emuna* Jerusalem, 1972], pp. 86-106), we may say that these declarations pushed aside the "covenant of fate" in favor of the "covenant of faith." They are also somewhat reminiscent of Rabbi Isaac Breuer's concept of "the people of the Torah" (see, e.g., his *Moriah* [Jerusalem, 1945], pp. 61-63). On the difference between the teaching of Breuer and that of Rabbi Kook, see Mordecai Breuer, "Nation and State in the Teaching of Isaac Breuer" (in Hebrew), in R. Horwitz, ed., *Yitzhak Breuer: Iyyunim be-mishnato* (Ramat Gan, 1988), pp. 163-73.

58. In fact, over the years Rabbi Kook never ceased to reflect upon this problem. See, for example, his harsh remarks in "Fallen on Our High Places" (in Hebrew), in *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah*, pp. 910-93; *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, pp. 235-36; *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 264: "The refuse that is from the side of the mixed multitude who come from Russia, the worst of whom, it is impossible that they should have any hold in the Land of Israel."

59. See Zvi Yehudah Kook, "To Clarify Basic Things in Their Simplicity" (in Hebrew), *Amudim* 360 (1976): 40. Rabbi Abraham Kook and Rabbi E. A. Rabinowich had family connections: the father-in-law of the former, Rabbi A. D. Rabinowitz-Teomim, "the Aderet," was the uncle of the latter.

60. Ibid. See Zvi Yehudah Kook, *Or le-netivati* (Jerusalem, 1989), p. 281.

61. On other important issues in Rabbi Kook's early thought, see Eliezer Goldman, "Secular Zionism, the Destiny of Israel, and the Purpose of the Torah" (in Hebrew), *Da'at* II (1983): 103-26.

62. The expressions of warning and conditioning that appear in Rabbi Kook's writing during this period are too numerous to count. For example, "All this hardship . . . all this terrible decline that is likely to be brought upon the head of our nation by virtue of this [Zionist] movement unless it adjusts itself to our national nature and spirit . . . Only if we inscribe upon the banner of Zionism the name of the Lord God of Israel and the return to His Torah, then it will be uplifted and ascend" ("Brooks in the Negev," p. 79).

63. A.I. Kook, "Israel's Destiny," p. 47.

64. A.I. Kook, "Brooks in the Negev," p. 72.

65. Lionel Kochan, *Jews, Idols, and Messiahs* (Oxford, 1990), p. 189.

66. See Abraham Isaac Kook, "The Eulogy in Jerusalem" (in Hebrew), in *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah*, pp. 94-99. For a summary of the article, see Zvi Yaron, *The Philosophy of Rabbi Kook* (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 243-44. See M. Z. Neriyah, ed., *Ginzei ha-Reiyah* (Jerusalem, 1984), p. 16.

67. Zvi Yehudah Kook, *Le-sheloshah be-Elul* (Jerusalem, 1938), pp. 14-15. The official ultra-Orthodox leadership in Jerusalem did not oppose the eulogy. See Yossi Avneri, "Rabbi Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook, Rabbi of Jaffa" (in Hebrew), *Cathedra* 37 (1986): 57.

68. For sources, see chap. 1, n. 54, and appendix, n. 6.

69. A.I. Kook, "Eulogy in Jerusalem," pp. 96-99.

70. Ibid., p. 97.

71. Luz, *Parallels Meet*, p. 141. I chose to exemplify this conventional view specifically through Luz's excellent book. Cf. M. Bernstein-Cohen and Y. Koren, *Sefer Bernstein-Cohen* (Tel Aviv, 1946), p. 122.

72. On Herzl's "messianic" image in his own generation, see Theodor Herzl, *Tagebucher* (Berlin, 1923), 2: 458, 3: 551; Joseph Nedava, "Herzl and Messianism," *Herzl Year Book* 7 (1971): 9-26; Shmuel Almog, "Messianism as a Challenge to Zionism" (in Hebrew), in Z. Baras, ed., *Meshihiyut ve-eskhatologia* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 434-35.

73. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah*, letter 571,2:208. In fact, Kook's criticism of Herzl was likewise leveled against the Mizrachi movement

itself.

74. In his novel *Altneuland* ([Leipzig, 1902], p. 287), Herzl imaginatively uprooted the Temple from its original place (on the assumption that the Mosque of Omar would continue to stand on its site) and situated it elsewhere in Jerusalem.

75.

See Ahad Ha-Am, *Al Parashat Derakhim* (Berlin, 1930), 3:158, 162. Ahad Ha-Am indeed reacted to Herzl's literary picture with mockery and criticism, seeing it as a further manifestation of Herzl's alienation from "all of the historical tradition that was deeply rooted in the heart of the people" (p. 162). For Rabbi Kook's understanding of the eternal holiness of the site of the Temple, see *Mishpat Kohan* (Jerusalem, 1937), responsum 96; idem, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 2:285.

It is worth noting, however, that, as against Ahad Ha-Am, who compared support of the Uganda plan to "public apostasy" (*Iggerot Ahad Ha-Am* [Tel Aviv, 1957], 3:136), Rabbi Kook was actually among the defenders of the plan, along with the people of Mizrahi (*Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1 :17).

76. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1:209.

77. See Bein, *Herzl*, p. 412.

78. A.I. Kook, "Afikim Banegev," pp. 78-79; and see idem, "Eztot me-rahok," pp. 531-32.

79. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, p. 122. See also Kook's remarks in *Moriah*, 22 Tammuz 5671 (1911).

80. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, pp. 122-23.

81. Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* (Jerusalem, 1964), 2: 544.

82. Needless to say, in the past there were great individuals, prophets, and sages. We are speaking, however, of the collective human sphere. See *ibid.* 3: 217-19.

83. *Ibid.* 2: 545. See Shmuel Sperber, "'Continuity of the Generations' in the Teaching of Rabbi Kook" (in Hebrew), *Sinai* 57 (1965): 203-10.

84. On "the anarchy," see also A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1:177; idem, *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah* 1: 20; and see Benjamin Ish-Shalom, "Religion, Repentance, and Personal Freedom," in [B. Ish-Shalom, ed.], *The World of Rav Kook's Thought*, pp.409-11.

85. See R. N. Niebuhr, *Faith and History* (London, 1949), pp. 1-14.

86. See Henry de Saint-Simon, *Oeuvres choisies* (Brussels, 18 59), 2: 328.
87. A.I. Kook, "Israel's Destiny," p. 45.
88. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 1: 374-76.
89. See S. H. Bergman, "The Doctrine of Development in the Teaching of Rabbi Kook" (in Hebrew), in his *Anashim u-derakhim* (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 350-58; Nathan Rotenstreich, "Harmony and Return," in his *Jewish Philosophy in Modern Times: From Mendelssohn to Rosenzweig* (New York, 1968), pp. 219-38; idem, *Iyyunim ba-mahshavah ha-Yehudit ba-zeman ha-zeh* (Tel Aviv, 1978), pp. 41-56; S. H. Bergman, "All Reality Is in God," in *Faith and Reason* (New York, 1961), pp.121-41.
90. Concerning these questions, see Yosef Ben-Shlomo, "Perfection and Becoming Perfected in the Theology of Rabbi Kook" (in Hebrew), *Iyyun* 33 (1984): 289-309; idem, "Spirit and Life in the Teaching of Rabbi Kook" (in Hebrew), *Divrei ha-Akademya ha-Leumit ha-Yisraelit la-Mada'im* 7, no.11 (1988): 257-74; idem, "The Divine Ideals in the Teaching of Rabbi Kook" (in Hebrew), *Bar-Ilan* 22-23 (1988): 73-86; Tamar Ross, "Rabbi Kook's Concept of the Godhead" (in Hebrew), *Da'at* 8 (1982): 109-28.
91. In fact, this intellectual "transplanting" did not require any artificial effort. The modern idea of progress was itself originally none other than a secularized version of the belief in Divine Providence guiding history toward perfection.
92. See F. E. Manuel, *Shapes of Philosophical History* (Stanford, 1965), pp. 92-135; J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (New York, 1932); Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago, 1949).
93. See especially Kook's essay "Brooks in the Negev," pp. 656-59. On the fear of religious antinomianism underlying these warnings, see Goldman, "Secular Zionism," p. 124.
- 94.
94. A.I. Kook, "Israel's Destiny," p. 225.
95. A.I. Kook, "Brooks in the Negev," end.
96. Thereafter, Rabbi Kook never stopped demanding restrained progress and warning against premature messianic antinomianism. See, for example, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 173-74; *Glat Reiyah* (Jerusalem, 1963),2: 262-64.
97. A.I. Kook, *Arpelei tohar* (unbound, Jerusalem, 1934), p. 13; idem, *Arpelei tohar*, p. 15. (The edition currently in print softens this text in

accordance with the views of the editor and his mentors.)

98. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 85

.

99. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 1: 194.

100. Eliezer Goldman, "Rav Kook's Relation to European Thought," in *The World of Rav Kook's Thought*, pp. 139, 146; idem, "The Formation of Rabbi Kook's Central Ideas" (in Hebrew), *Bar-Ilan* 22-23 (1988): 78-120; idem, "Responses to Modernity in Orthodox Jewish Thought," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 64. See also Adin Steinsaltz, "The Problematic Nature of Orot ha-kodesh" (in Hebrew), *Sinai* 57 (1965): 266-69; Ross, "Rabbi Kook's Concept"; Benjamin Ish-Shalom, *Rav Avraham Itzhak ha-Cohen Kook: Between Rationalism and Mysticism* (Albany, 1993), pp. 6-11, 244 n. 17; Mordecai Pechter, "Circles and Straightness: The History of an Idea" (in Hebrew), *Da'at* 18 (1987): 78-90; Yehudah L. Ashkenazi, "The Use of Kabbalistic Conceptions in Rav Kook's Teaching," in *The World of Rav Kook's Thought*, pp. 123-28; Eliezer Schweid, *Ha-shivah me-hadash* (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 283-84.

101. Compare, for example, Kook's remarks in "Brooks in the Negev," p. 662, where he utilizes the Kabbalistic doctrine of *shemitot* (eons) specifically to emphasize the idea of gradual ascent.

102. Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, "Utopia and Messianism in the Thought of Rabbi Kook" (in Hebrew), *Kivvunim* I (1979): 25.

103. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1941), pp. 244-86; idem, *Shabbatei Sevi*, pp. 44-51; idem, *Devarim be-go* (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp. 201-2.

104. See Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven and London, 1988), pp. 264-66; Yehudah Liebes, "New Directions in the Study of Kabbalah" (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 50 (1992): 161-67.

105. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 2: 526. See Ben-Shlomo, "Perfection and Becoming Perfected," p. 97.

106. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 2: 526. See also Yehudah Gelman, "Evil and Its Justification in the Thought of Rabbi Kook" (in Hebrew), *Da'at* 119 (1987): 147-55.

107. Abraham Isaac Kook, *Eder ha-yakar ve-ikvei ha-tzon* (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 108.

108. Elhanan Bunem Wasserman, *Ikveta di-meshiha* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1952), pp. 6ff. On a parallel approach attributed to Rabbi Elijah, the

Gaon of Vilna, see Aryeh Morgenstern, *Ge'ulah be-derekh ha-teva* (Elkana, 1989), p. 54.

109. Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot*, p. 83; idem, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, pp. 140-41. See also idem, *Orot ha-emunah* (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 29; idem, *Arpelei tohar*, pp. 12,29; idem, *Orot ha-teshuvah*, ed. Y. Filber (Jerusalem, 19m, sec. 4, p. 30. The impact of this viewpoint is clearly felt in the writings of Rabbi Jacob Moses Harlap, the disciple of Rabbi Kook. See *Mei marom* (Jerusalem, 1977), 3: 60-62.

110. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 1: 152 (corrected according to the manuscript, as cited by Ish-Shalom, *Rav Kook*, p. 59).

111. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 2: 541-42.

112. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 3: 143. See also idem, *Arpelei tohar*, p. 46; and Rabbi Kook's notes published in *Ma'or* I (1984): 22-23.

113. See Eliezer Schweid, *Ha-yahadut v'ha-tarbut ha-hilonit* (Tel Aviv, 1981), pp. 122-25.

114. See S.B. Urbach, "Religious Zionism in a Messianic Perspective" (in Hebrew), in Y. Tirosh, ed., *Ha-Tzionut ha-datit: Kovetz ma'amarim* (Jerusalem, 1974), p. 169. This article demands critical study. See Alexander Barzel, *Lihyot Yehudi* (Tel Aviv, 1978), p. 19.

115. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, pp. 13-15. Compare Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York, 1926).

116. Shlomo Aviner, ed., *Sihot ha-Rav Zvi Yehudah* (Keshet, 1980), p. 1.

117. Z.Y. Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael* 1: 82.

118. See Abraham Mordekhai Alter, *Mikhtavim u-ma'amarim* (Warsaw, 1936), pp. 66-69; A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 4: 102-3.

119. See Menachem Friedman, *Hevrah ve-dat* (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 278.

120. On the significance of this expression as used by the rebbe, see Hayyim lifschitz, *Shivhei ha-Reiyah* (Jerusalem, 1979).

121. See David Tamar, "The Crowning Glory of Hasidism" (in Hebrew), *Ha-Tzofeh*, 20 May 1988.

122. See the beginning of Judah Halevi, *The Book of the Kuzari*; compare Rabbi Kook's remarks in *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 348.

123. Neilah prayer for Yom Kippur.

124. Mussaf prayer for festivals. See Lam. 1:10.
125. S. Buber, ed., *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*, sec. ha-Omer, p. 68b; and see BT Shabbat 30b, etc. The quotation is from A. M. Alter, *Mikhtavim u-ma'amarim*, pp. 66-68.
126. The rebbe of Munkács even attacked the rebbe of Gur for "what he wrote to honor the name of Rav Kook, who seduces and misleads by his impure writings." See Moshe Goldstein, ed., *Tikkun olam* (Munkács, 1933), pp. 18-19.
127. A.I. Kook, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, pp. 201.
128. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York, 1981), pp. 192-94.
129. A.I. Kook, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, pp. 201-2; idem, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 3: 158. It is interesting to compare this with the words of certain ultra-Orthodox authors concerning the status of the Zionist enterprise, which were said in a different spirit, however: "Even though the intention of the builders was not for the sake of heaven, of such a thing it is said, 'the wicked shall prepare but the righteous shall wear it'" (see Aryeh Leib ha-Kohen, son of the Hafetz Hayim, *Toldot ha-Hafetz Hayim*, p. 43; Menahem Mendel Kasher, *Ha-tekufah ha-gedolah* [Jerusalem, 1967], p. 172); "Let them build! Do they not build for us, the people of the Torah?" (Isaac Breuer, quoting Rabbi Joseph Hayyim Sonnenfeld, in his book *Tziyyunei derekh* [Jerusalem, 1982], p. 120). Compare Breuer's own interpretation of Kook's words in Horwitz, *Yitzhak Breuer*, p. 188. See also the remarks of Rabbi Hayyim Zimmerman in Paul Eidelberg, *Israel's Return and Restoration: The Secret of Her Conquest* (New York, 1987), p. 56.
130. A.I. Kook, *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah*, p. 171.
131. A. M. Alter, *Mikhtavim u-ma'amarim*, pp. 66-68.
132. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 3: 158.
133. A.I. Kook, *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah*, p. 171. See also idem, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 3:348.
134. A.I. Kook, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, p. 199.
135. See David Canaani, *Ha-aliyah ha-sheniyah ha-ovedet ve-yahasah le-dat vela-masoret* (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 112-21; Avraham Zivyon, *Diyokno ha-Yehudi shel Berl Katzenelson* (Tel Aviv, 1984), P. 276; Yaakov Hadani, *Ha-Rav Kook veva-hityashvut ha-hilonit* (Jerusalem, 1980); Eyal Kafkafi, "At the Crossroad" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 101 (1986): 25; Tamar Shinar, "Rabbi Kook: How Did the Image Emerge?" (in

Hebrew), *Nekudah* 135 (1990): 40-43; *Ha-Po'el ha-Tza'ir* 27 (1930); 40 (1909); David Tamar, "The Poet of Judaism" (in Hebrew), *Ma'ariv*, 24 August 1990.

136. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, p. 63. Compare also *Orot*, p. 79; idem, *Orot ha-kodesh* 3: 24; idem, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, p. 184; idem, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 143; idem, *Musar avikha*, p. 85.

137. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-teshuvah*, sec. 17, p. 158. As stated in chapter 1, this idea had already appeared in the writings of Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines.

138. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, p. 135. See Sarah Strassberg, "The Image of Man in the Teachings of A. D. Gordon and Rabbi A.Y. Kook" (in Hebrew), doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989.

139. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, pp. 63-64. Compare Kook's remarks in *Mishpat Kohen*, P. 328.

140. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 2: 186. See Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Understandings of Zionism in Orthodox Jewish Thought" (in Hebrew), *Ha-Tzionut* 9 (1984): 88; Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics in Israel* (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), p. 72.

141. See Martin Buber, *On Zionism: The History of an Idea* (London, 1973), pp. 147-53.

142. See Eliezer Schweid, *Ha Yehudi ha-boded vaha-yahadut* (Tel Aviv, 1974), pp. 178-92; idem, *Ha-yahadut vaha-tarbut ha-hilonit*, pp. 110-42.

143. Cf. Yehudah Alkalai, *Goral la-shem* (Vienna, 1857), sec. 7; Judah Alkalai and Zevi Hirsch Kalischer, *Mivhar kitvehem*, ed. G. Kressel (Eretz Israel, 1953), p. 43; Isaac Jacob Reines, *Or hadash al Tzion* (Vilna, 1902.), p. 252.

144. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 143,58. See idem, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, p. 36. Isaac Breuer presents a view diametrically opposed to the above. According to him, intention and personal awareness are the decisive elements in the religious view on life. See his *Nahaliel* (Tel Aviv, 1961), pp. 312.-13. In the present generation, Yeshayahu Leibowitz represented this Kantian outlook in its full severity.

145. See R.J.Z. Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity* (London, 1976), pp. 56-57.

146. See Rabbi Kook's remarks in *Arpelei tohar*, pp. 90, 132.

147. M. M. Gerlitz, *Mara de-ara de-Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1974), pt. 2., p. 176; M. Friedman, *Hevrah ve-dat*, pp. 97-98.

148. Haggi Segal, *Ahim yekarim* (Jerusalem, 1987), p. 219.
149. Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel* (New York, 1983), pp. 49-50.
150. Yirmiyahu Yovel, "Introducing Secularism" (in Hebrew), *Emdah* 6 (Elul 5745 [1985]): 12.-13; idem, "Messiah Is Phoning" (in Hebrew), *Politikah* 2.4 (1989): 8-9; Ehud Ben-Ezer, *Bin sha'ananim be-Zion* (Tel Aviv, 1986), pp. 23-25.
151. From a statement made by Lichtenstein at a conference held in Jerusalem to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Rabbi Kook, August 1985.
152. See Gideon Aran, *Hevel Yamit Tashmah*, Studies of the Jerusalem Foundation for Israel Studies, no. 18 (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 28, 32, 43, 499-511.
153. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 2: 314.
154. Ibid. Compare A.I. Kook, *Arpelei tohar*, pp. 57-58; and see Ben-Shlomo, "Spirit and Life," p. 273. It is interesting to note that Rabbi Jacob Moses Harlap, one of the outstanding disciples of Rabbi Kook, applied the same dialectical categories to the ultra-Orthodox rabbis as used by his mentor regarding the free-thinking pioneers—that is, he attempted to expose the dialectical tendency underlying their opposition to Zionism. The Zionist attempt to bring about redemption through natural means, wrote Rabbi Harlap, aroused "great opposition among the great rabbis of our generation, even though they themselves did not understand the real quest of their inner souls." They too represented a partial, necessary moment within the messianic process—loyalty to the traditional hope for a complete and miraculous redemption at its most sublime. For "the nature of the redemption of Israel depends upon the nature of their longing for salvation. The more they will know how to uplift their anticipation to a more wondrous and sublime level . . . thus will be the result" (*Hed harim* [Jerusalem, 1953], pp. 60-61).
155. Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* (Jerusalem, 1990), 4: 402, and see 3: 130.
156. Compare Canaani, *Ha-aliyah ha-sheniyah*, p. 119.
157. Yossi Avneri, "Rav Kook's Relationship with the Old Yishuv at the Period of the Second Aliyah," *Shragai* 2 (1985): 11-30; idem, "Rav A. Y. Kook and His Contacts with People of the Second Aliyah," *Be-Shevilei ha-Tehiyah* I (1983): 59-80; idem, "Rav Kook as Chief Rabbi of Palestine, 1921-1935: The Man and His Activity," doctoral dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 1989; Michael Zvi Nehorai, "Notes concerning Rav Kook's Way in Halakhic Rulings," *Tarbitz* 59 (1990): 481-505.

158. *Shulhan Arukh*, Yoreh De'ah, chapter 340, subsection 5.
159. See A.I. Kook, *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah*, pp. 89-93. It is not surprising that one of Kook's followers recently mistakenly ascribed this reaction to the earlier period of Rabbi Kook. See *Nekudah* 84 (1985): 18, and the response by David Hanshke, *Nekudah* 85 (1985): 4.
160. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1:146. See also Yosef Salmon, "Between Judaism and Zionism," *Zemanim* 30-31 (1989): 187; Zuriel, *Otzrot ha-Reiyah* 1:24.
161. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 2:544. And see idem, *Orot*, p. 71; idem, *Arpelei tohar*, p. 32.
162. Ish-Shalom, *Rav Kook*, pp. 87-88.
163. Isaac Breuer, "Remarks in Memory of the Chief Rabbi, Avraham Yitzhak ha-Kohen Kook," in Horwitz, *Yitzhak Breuer*, p. 188.
164. A.I. Kook, *Moriyah*, 8 Tammuz 5671 (1911). See Avneri, "Rav Kook and His Contacts," p. 60.
165. I found living testimony to this tendency at a gathering called in 1985 at Merkaz Harav Yeshivah to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Rabbi Kook. One after another, the speakers rose to make their declarations: one proclaimed that only scholars from their yeshivah were fit to serve in the Chief Rabbinic Council, as only they represented an "all-Israelite" spirit; the second claimed that only one who came out of their own school was qualified to speak publicly about the teaching of Rabbi Kook; all others can only spread "confusion"; and so on.
166. Needless to say, such a danger affects every monistic, all-encompassing viewpoint, in every culture or religion. See Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (New York, 1991); Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, 1967); Karl Mannheim, *Diagnosis of Our Time* (London, 1943).
167. Schweid, *Ha-yahadut v'ha-tarbut ha-hilonit*, p. 139. See also the internal criticism found in an article by Dan Beerli, "Zionism More Than Ever," *Nekudah* 95 (1985): 8-10.
168. A.I. Kook, "On Zionism," pp. 28, 33.
169. Thus far it has been deleted in the printed version. The editor, Rabbi David Cohen, "the Nazir," added it in his own hand in his personal copy, which I examined. I have also found there many other additions and corrections to the printed version.

170. A.I. Kook, *Orot ha-kodesh* 1: 157-58.

171. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 1: 39, 113, 123, 158,304; idem, *Orot ha-kodesh* 1: 23, 298, 3: 355, 367; idem, *Arpelei tohar*, pp. 15-16; idem, *Orot*, pp. 78, 98; idem, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, p. 84. See also Harlap, *Hed harim*, pp. 65-66, 69-70; Ish-Shalom, *Rav Kook*, pp. 54-55, 261 n. 122; Aran, "Religious Zionism," p. 131; Yoninah Dishon, "Four Motifs in Orot ha-kodesh," *Da'at* 24 (1990): 50-54; Dov Schwartz, "The Intellectual Innovation in the Memoirs of the Nazir," in *Yonati be-hagvei ha-sela'* (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 197-222; idem, "Rav Kook and the Nazir," *Barqai* 5 (1989): 219-21; Haggi Segal, "'Lights' in the Darkness," *Nekudah* 113 (1987): 25; Shlomo Aviner, *Shalhevetyah* (Jerusalem, 1989), PP. 20-24; Menahem Klein, "The Principles of Rav Kook's Theoretical Understanding of the Halakhah," in H. Y. Hamiel, ed., *Be-oro* (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 154-58.

172. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 3: 256-57. See also Yehudah Etzion, "From 'Degel Yerushalayim' to 'Movement of Redemption,'" *Nekudah* 94 (1986): 9.

173. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, p. 14, and see p. 104.

174. Shalom Rosenberg, "Contradictions and Dialectics in Social Ethics," in Y. Cohen, ed., *Hevrah ve-historyah* (Jerusalem, 1980), p. 154; Eliezer Goldman, "The State of Israel in the Test of Judaism" (in Hebrew), *Amudim* 364 (1976): 64-65. One of the sharpest critiques ever written against the worldview of Rabbi Kook is that of Harold Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution: A New Perspective* (London, 1978), pp. 62-65.

175. Abraham Isaac Kook, *Shabbat ha-aretz* (Jerusalem, 1937), introduction, P. 13.

176. A.I. Kook, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, p. 105.

177. A.I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Reiyah* 3: 175. See also the article written by Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook in his youth (in 1913!) under the guidance of his father: *Le-netivot Yisrael* 1: 14-15.

178. One must emphasize that this utopianism does not characterize the Zionist perspective of Rabbi Kook alone. "The spiritual climate in which the Zionist movement was born was filled with nearly eschatological enthusiasm of movements striving to bring about the kingdom of heaven upon earth." See Anita Shapira, "Zionism and Political Messianism" (in Hebrew), in *Temurot be-historyah ha-Yehudit ha-hadashah* (Jerusalem, 1988), p. 151; E.A. Balfer, *Malkhut shamayim u-medinat Yisrael* (Ramat Gan, 1991).

179. See Jacob Katz, "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective," *Studies in*

*Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 16-17.

180. See my remarks in an interview with Seffi Rakhlevski, "Knit Kipah, Dome of the Rock" (in Hebrew), *Devar ha-shavu'a*, 5 June 1987; and see Yovel, "Messiah Is Phoning," p. 10; Shlomo Deshen, "Two Trends in Israeli Orthodoxy," *Judaism* 27 (1978): 379-409.

181. Yosef Ben-Shlomo compared the concrete influence of the writings of Rabbi Kook, which was only realized after his death, with that of Karl Marx's *Capital*. See his article "Ideological Struggle with Right and Left," *Nekudah* 85 (1985): 20.

182. See the articles gathered in the collection David Newman, ed., *The Impact of Gush Emunim* (London, 1986); Amnon Rubinstein, *Me-Herzl ad Gush Emunim uve-hazarah* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1980).

183. See Gideon Aran, "Religious Zionism," pp. 1-99; idem, "From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion: The Roots of Gush Emunim," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 116-43. Compare Karl Mannheim, *Studies in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1952), pp. 304-12.

184. Ya'akov Ariel, "The Father of Gush Emunim," *Nekudah* 147 (1991): 24.

185. See Zvi Raanan, *Gush Emunim* (Tel Aviv, 1980), pp. 60-75; Eliyahu Blitzki, *Rakesh shalom ve-rodfehu* (Tel Aviv, 1984), pp. 160-65; Yosef Salmon, "Traditional Messianism and Modern Nationalism: Continuation or Revolution?" *Kivvunim* 23 (1984): 101-2; Aryeh Fishman, *Bein dat le-ideologia* (Jerusalem, 1990), p. 24.

186. Z.Y. Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael* 1: 125. See also Jacob Moses Harlap, *Ma'ayanei ha-yeshuah* (Jerusalem, 1963), p. 227.

187. *Tanhuma: Shoftim* 9. See Nissenboim, *Masoret ve-herut*; Avraham Rubinstein, "The Footsteps of Messiah and the Birthpangs of Messiah in His Teaching," *Sefer Shragai*, pp. 118-26.

188. See David Hartman, *A Living Covenant* (London, 1985), p. 286.

189. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2: 29. See BT Pesahim 116b, Tosafot s.v. "ve-ne'emar"; Maharsha on BT Nazir 32b; and compare *Sefer ha-Zohar* 3: 221.

190. Z.Y. Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael* 1: 188-95 (the essay was written in 1951). Compare idem, *Or le-netivati*, sec. 47, p. 97; H. E. Schwartz, ed., *Mi-tokh ha-Torah ha-goelet* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 148, 217; Shlomo Aviner, "Mitzvat Yishuv ha-aretz," in S. Aviner, ed., *Sihot ha-RZY* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 13-14; Bramson, ed., *Ra-ma'arakhah ha-tzibburit*,

pp. 52, 79, 86, 91, 97.

191. Jacob Katz has noted that during a number of phases in the history of Zionism there appeared a "messianic determinism," which assumed ab initio the predestined connection between the people and its land. See Jacob Katz, "Israel and the Messiah," *Commentary* 36 (1988): 31-34; and compare his *Leumiyut Yehudit*, pp. 3, 8. See also Luz, *Parallels Meet*, pp. 196-98; A. Shapira, "Zionism and Political Messianism," pp. 149-58; David Sidorsky, "The End of Ideology and Zionism in America," *Pirsumei ha-Hug leYedi'at Am Yisrael ba-tofutzat* 8, no.4 (1974); Eliezer Schweid, *Mi-yahadut le-Tzionut, mi-Tzionut le-yahadut* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 107-20; Michael Graetz, "Secular Messianism in the Nineteenth Century as a Means of Return to Judaism," in Baras, *Meshihiyut ve-eskhatologia*, p. 401; Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History* (New York and Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 67-80. See also Yeshayahu Aviad-Wolfsberg, "The Consciousness of Mizrachi," in Tirosh, *Ha-Tzionut ha-datit*, p. 138.

192. Fisch, *Zionist Revolution*, pp. 63-64.

193. Yosef Ben-Shlomo, *Shirat ha-Hayyim* (Tel Aviv, 1989), p. 88 n. 3.

194. Zvi Yehudah Kook, "Yom ha-Shoah 5733 (1973)," in S. Aviner, *Sihot ha-RZY*; p. II.

195. Zvi Yehudah Kook, "Yom ha-Shoah 5727 (1967)," in S. Aviner, *Sihot ha-RZY*, p. 21.

196. See Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York, 1965), p. 6.

197. See Amnon Rubinstein, *Me-Herzl ad Gush Emunim ve-hazarah*, pp. 100-110.

198. Compare Menachem Friedman, "The Haredim and the Holocaust," in *Jerusalem Quarterly* 53 (1990): 87-123.

199. See Mordecai Attia, *Mahshavot shalom* (Jerusalem, 1948), p. 50; idem, *Simhat olam* (Mexico City, 1951), p. 34; idem, *Mahaseh va-oz* (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 18; idem, *Lekh Lekha* (Jerusalem, 1963), p. 29; idem, *Sod ha-shevu'ah* (Jerusalem, 1965), Pp. 10,24; Hayyim Kolitz, *Sarvanei ge'ulah* (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 25-26.

200. S. Aviner, *Sihot ha-RZY*, Yom ha-Shoah 5727 (1967), p. 21.

201. While this approach is based on traditional sources, the very choice of these, rather than other, sources reflects a certain ideological choice.

202. Eliyahu Avihayil, *Le-or ha-shahar* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 107, 118-

19; and see idem, "Who's Afraid of Our Righteous Messiah?" *Zera'im*, Adar II 5736 (1976).

203. Waldman alluded to the criticism by Amos Oz, published in *Nekudah* 53 (1983). Oz's remarks were subsequently published in his book *In the Land of Israel*, p. 146: "The sin of arrogance is absent from a religious man's belief in a divine plan . . . The sin of arrogance enters in when that man presumes to understand this plan better than his fellow man, to become its certified interpreter, its earthly representative."

204. Waldman, *Al da'at ha-zeman veha-makom*, pp. 108-10. Compare also the chapter "Builders of the Third Temple," in Amos Elon, *Habet ahorah be-vehala mesuyemet* (Tel Aviv, 1988).

205. Shlomo Aviner, "Concerning Our Redemption and Gush Emunim" (in Hebrew), *Amudim* 366 (1976): 276-77. See also his remarks in *Morashah* 9 (1975): 61-65; Yehuda Amital, *Ha-ma'alot mima'amakim* (Jerusalem and Alon Shevut, 1974), pp. 27,31; idem, in Moshe Davis, ed., *Hizdahut ha-umah im ha-medinah* (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 366; Yaakov Filber, *Ayelet ha-shahar* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 117-26. And see also Moshe Zuriel, "An Irreversible Process" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 129 (1989): 6. For a radical expression of the understanding of the "train of redemption that strides confidently toward its desired destination," see Shlomo Ohanah, *Or hadash* (Jerusalem, 1974); idem, *Sihu bekhof nifle'otav* (Jerusalem, 1971). A rich literature concerning these issues was published in *Morashah* (Tel Aviv, 1975) and in *Eretz nahalah* (Jerusalem, n.d.). Rabbi Shlomo Goren, who at one time entertained the possibility of a legitimate Jewish state that "does not partake in the messianic process" (*Torat ha-mo'adim* [Tel Aviv, 1964], p. 563), changed his mind in the wake of the Six-Day War, claiming that "the first stage of the messianic vision is taking shape before our eyes." After the Yom Kippur War, he stated explicitly: "Everything is going according to the heavenly plan. We need fear no person, we must be confident that we shall ultimately realize the third redemption" (*Ha-Tzofeh*, 14 Shevat 5735 [1975]). See also the response of Uriel Simon, "Biblical Destinies: Conditional Promises" (in Hebrew), *Petahim* 2 (1975): 34; Uriel Tal, "The Land and the State of Israel in Israel Religious Life," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* 38 (1976), pp. 1-22; Immanuel Jakobovits, *If Only My People* (London, 1984), pp. 243-60, and cf. pp. 129-55.

206. Zefaniah Derori, *Ma'ariv*, 18 July 1974. See Janet O'Dea, "Gush Emunim: Roots and Ambiguities," *Forum* 25 (1976): 47.

207. See Aviezer Ravitzky, "The Anticipated and the Permission Given" (in Hebrew), in A. Hareven, ed., *Yisrael likrat ha-me'ah ha-esrim ve-ahat* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 135-97; David Henshke, "What Happened to Orot

ha-Reiyah?" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 78 (1985): 12-13, 28.

208. Rakhlevski, "Knit Kipah," p. 13; Raanan, *Gush Emunim*, p. 64.

209. Hanan Porat, cited in *Amudim* 366 (1976): 276. See also his remarks in *Petahim* 32 (1975): 3-12.

210. See Jacob Talmon, *Ha-meshihiyut ha-medinit*, pp. 1, 9-10; idem, *The Origin of Totalitarian Democracy* (London, 1961), pp. 17-21; idem, *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution* (London and Berkeley, 1982), p. 549. See also Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity*, p. 4.

211. On such tendencies in classical Zionism, see A. Shapira, "Zionism and Political Messianism."

212. See F. Ventury, *Roots of Revolution* (New York, 1960), pp. 402-8.

213. My views on this issue, which appeared in "The Anticipated and the Permission Given," were thereafter copied in Yohanan Rudick, *Eretz ge'ulah* (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 107-8.

214. Dan Tor, "To Continue to Force the End" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 96 (1986): 28.

215. Hanan Porat, cited by Aran, "Religious Zionism," p. 549; and see idem, *Hevel Yamit Tashmah*, pp. 12,51; Julien Bauer, "A New Approach to Religious-Secular Relationships?" in Newman, *Impact or Gush Emunim*, p. 107.

216. Compare *Tanhuma: Be-Hukkotai* 13.

217. See Judah Löw ben Bezalel of Prague, *Netzah Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1971), pp. 133, 148, 180. For further sources, see Amit Kula, "Redemption and Repentance" (in Hebrew), *Tehumin* 6 (1985): 474. See the remarks of Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Shaprut, cited by Isaac Abrabanel, *Yeshu'ot meshiho* (Königsberg, 1861), p. 25a.

218. This idea is also cited in the name of Rabbi Hayyim ben-Attar (*Or ha-Hayyim*); see Attia, *Mahshevot shalom*, p. 3. For the development of this idea during the nineteenth century, see Aryeh Morgenstern, *Meshihiyut ve-yishuv Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 182 (on Rabbi Eliezer Bergman); Judah Leib Fishman (Maimon), ed., *Sefer Shmuel* (Jerusalem, 1923), pp. 153-56 (on Rabbi Shmuel Mohilewer). See also Shmuel Sperber, "The Beginning of the Flowering of Our Redemption" (in Hebrew), in Y. Tirosh and A. Tirosh, eds., *Ha-Tzionut ha-datit ve-ha-medinah* (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 67; H.S.F. Frank, "The Time of Remembering Has Come" (in Hebrew), *Ha-Ma'ayan* 8 (1968): 1-8; Eidelberg, *Israel's Return and Restoration*, p. 40.

219. Uzi Kalcheim, "The Vision of the 'Revealed End' over the Generations" (in Hebrew), in Y. Raphael and S. Z. Shragai, eds., *Sefer ha-Tzionut ha-datit* (Jerusalem, 1977), 1:103. For detailed sources concerning this issue, see Kasher, *Ha-tekufah ha-gedolah*; Yehuda Kiel, *Yisrael u-geulato* (Jerusalem, 1975); Samuel ha-Cohen Weingarten, "The Beginning of Redemption" (in Hebrew), in Raphael and Shragai, *Sefer ha-Tzionut ha-datit*, pp. 151 ff.

220. See Isaiah Berlin, *Historical Inevitability* (Oxford, 1954); Ernest Nagel, "Determinism in History," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 20, no.3 (1960): 291-317; Nathan Rotenstreich, *Sugyot be-filosofia* (Tel Aviv, 1962), pp. 78-94.

221. See Shulamit Haeven, *Mashiah o kenneset* (Tel Aviv, 1987), p. 76; idem, *Ivrim be-Azah* (Tel Aviv, 1991), pp. 91-92.

222. S. Aviner, *Am ke-lavi* 2: 195.

223. Zvi Yehudah Kook, *Ba-ma'arakhah ha-tzibburit*, p. 112. Compare idem, *Le-hilkhot tzibbur*, p. 246; idem, "Between a People and Its Land" (in Hebrew), *Artzi* 2 (1982): 21; idem, "To the Myriads of Our People Israel" (in Hebrew), *Artzi* I (1982): 3.

224. Z.Y. Kook, *Ba-ma'arakhah ha-tzibburit*, pp. 244-46; and see Tau, *Sihot be-et milhamah*, p. 45.

225. Yaakov Filber, "Our Period as Mirrored in the Sources" (in Hebrew), *Morashah* I (1971): 33.

226. Ibid., pp. 31, 37, 70.

227. S. Aviner, *Am ke-lavi* 2: 190.

228. Aran, "Religious Zionism," introduction, p. 8.

229. Aran, *Hevel Yamit Tashmab*, pp. 68-69.

230. See Rudick, *Eretz ge'ulah*, p. 185; D. C. Rapoport, "Messianism and Terror," *Center Magazine* 19 (1986): 30-39; and the remarks of Ben-Yishai, quoted in Rakhlevski, "Knit Kipah," p. 6.

231. Harlap, *Ma'ayanei ha-yeshuah*, p. 29; and see S. Aviner, *Am ke-lavi* 2: 188.

232. Segal, *Ahim yekarim*, p. 216; compare p. 232, the condemnation by Chief Rabbi Abraham Shapira. For similar reactions, see Yoel Bin-Nun, "Not Faith without Common Sense" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 43 (1982); Yehuda Shaviv, "Go to the Halakhah" (in Hebrew)," *Nekudah* 45 (1982).

233. See Yo'el Bin-Nun, "On Behalf of Trust and Faith and against Cries of Despair" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 85 (195): 10-11; Menahem Froman, "It Is Not in Heaven" (in Hebrew), *Emdah* 16 (1987): 10; C.I. Waxman, "Messianism, Zionism, and the State of Israel," *Modern Judaism* 7 (1987): 175-92.

234. Michael Zvi Nehorai, "The State of Israel in the Teaching of Rabbi Kook" (in Hebrew), *Amudim* 358 (1975): 409-17; Z.Y. Kook, "To Clarify Basic Things," p. 40.

235. A.I. Kook, *Hazon ha-ge'ulah*, p. 134. One must also take into account the responsibility of the leader for strengthening the hearts of his community. See pp. 95-96.

236. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, p. 158.

237. See, for example, A.I. Kook, *Ma'amrei ha-Reiyah*, pp. 166-67; and see S. B. Urbach, "In a Messianic Light" (in Hebrew), *Shevillin* 20 (1968): 145-46 (note on *Orot ha-kodesh* 1:217).

238. See, for example, A.I. Kook, *Mishpat Kohen*, p. 328; and see Yehoshua Zuckerman, "Realization as a Surety for Faith" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 43 (1982); Elisha Aviner, "The Birth Pangs of Messiah" (in Hebrew), *Emdah* 4 (1985): 16-18.

239. See I Cor. 15:10; Donald Baille, *God Was in Christ* (London, 1948).

240. Henshke, "What Happened to Orot ha-Reiyah?" pp. 12-13. See, however, Menachem Kellner, "Messianic Postures in Israel Today," *Modern Judaism* 8 (1988): 209.

241. Concerning the "midst of redemption," see Z.Y. Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael*, pp. 196-98; idem, *Ba-ma'arakhah ha-tzibburit*, pp. 11, 28; Shmuel Federbush, *Torat ha-melukhah* (Jerusalem, 1971), p. 102; Menachem Friedman, "The State of Israel as a Religious Dilemma" (in Hebrew), *Alpayyim* 3 (1991): 65; Uriel Tal, *Mithos u-tevunah be-yahadut yameinu* (Tel Aviv, 1987), p. 115.

242. S. Aviner, ed., *Sihot ha-RZY*; p. 1.

243. Ibid., p. 3.

244. Yitzhak Shilat, *Nekudah* 93 (1985): 12; David Setav, "The 'Lights' Have Not Been Extinguished" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 84 (1985): 20.

245. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, p. 149 ; idem, *Mishpat Kohen*, p. 328. See Zvi Tau, *Kelal u-perat: Yisrael ve-ha-amim*, lectures (Jerusalem, n.d.), pp. 8-9; Eli Sadan, "The Desire for Peace and Our National Ethic" (in Hebrew), *Artzi* 2 (1982): 40-41. In fact, Rabbi Kook's statement was rooted in the

Kabbalistic viewpoint, which identifies the supernal collectivity of Israel with a divine being.

246. See Amos Funkenstein, "Passivity as the Sign of Galut Jewry" (in Hebrew), in *Tadmitu-te'udah historit* (Tel Aviv, 1991), pp. 232-42.

247. Z.Y. Kook, *Le-netivot Yisrael* 1:81-93; S. Aviner, *Shalhevetyah*, p. 54; Blitzki, *Bakesh shalom ve-rodfehu*, p. 167; Jakobovits, *If Only My People*, p. 250.

248. Moshe Zuriel, "On Behalf of Redemptive Initiatives" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 105 (1987): 14. See C. D. Dubois, "Problemes de l'utopie," *Archives des Lettres Modernes* 85, no.4 (1968): 12-18; compare Naomi Gal-Or, "*Hamaheret ha-Yehudit*" *bi-shenot ha-shemonim: Hiddush o hemshekhiyut*, Ha-merkaz ha-beinleumi le-shalom be-mizrah ha-tikhon (Tel Aviv, 1986), pp. 34-35.

249. Waldman, *Al da'at ha-zeman vaha-makom*, p. 96.

250. Moshe Levinger, "The Comprehensive Perfection of the State of Israel" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 125 (1989): 20-21.

251. Yisrael Ariel, "Indeed Rebellion against the Kingdoms?" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 73 (1984): 16-17, 28; idem, "Love Upsets Routine" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 79 (1985): 22-24. See also Z.Y. Kook, *Le-hilkhot tzibbur*, p. 52: "This government exists for the people, not the people for the government. How much more so that the living, sensitive people has no connection to the government when it betrays the people and its homeland." And see also Shlomo Aviner, "And We Have Not Been False to Your Covenant" (in Hebrew), *Artzi* 1 (1982): 38-39; Ehud Sprintzak, *Ish ha-yashar be-einav* (Tel Aviv, 1986), pp. 121-45; Yehuda Zuldán, "Suffering of Redemption" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 76 (1984): 22-23.

252. Barukh Lior, "To Prepare for Gift, Prayer, and War" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 85 (1985): 12. Compare the publications of the followers of Meir Kahana, such as: "We must gather round in order to establish a truly Jewish state in every region of the land in which the State of Israel will renege . . . a truly Jewish state with a kingdom, and not an alienated government" (*Or ha-ra'ayon ha-Yehudi*, Sukkot 5753 [1992]). On the ideology of Meir Kahana, see Aviezer Ravitzky, "[The Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality](#)," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 39 (1986): 98-118.

253. See Yo'el Bin-Nun's articles in *Nekudah* 72 (1984): 28-36; 141 (1990): 24-25; 149 (1991): 26-27; and see the response of Michael Ben-Horin, *Nekudah* 151 (1991): 45. See also Yohai Rudick, "'The Jewish Underground'" (in Hebrew), *Kivvunim* 36 (1987): 84-95.

254. The decision of the Council of Settlements in Judah, Samaria, and Gaza, on 2 Heshvan 5747 (1986), taken from Moshe Shapira, "The State of Israel vs. the State of Judaea and Samaria" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 93 (1986).

255. Ibid., p. II.

256. After the political upset brought to power a leftist government in Israel (in 1992), Rabbi Shaul Yisra'eli, *rosh yeshivah* at Merkazha-Rav, was no longer able to control himself and "proposed" to delete from the prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel recited in the synagogues the sentence "Send your light and truth to [the state's] heads, ministers, and advisers." He of course did not advocate omitting the opening petition of the prayer: "Bless the State of Israel, the beginning of the blossoming of our redemption," as this refers to an "essence," to the idea of the state, and not to a concrete government. This was primarily an expression of fury in a personal conversation with the Chief Rabbi of Israel, but one should not at all discount its symbolic significance. In 1994, following the Oslo agreements and the Israeli Defense Forces' withdrawal from certain territories of the land, he was followed in this by a few other rabbis.

257. See S. Aviner, *Shalhevetyah*, p. 85; Menahem Froman, "To Wait in Silence for Divine Grace" (in Hebrew), *Ha-Aretz*, 4 January 1991.

258. See Yehudah Etzion, "To Finally Wave the Banner of Jerusalem" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 85 (1986): 23-24; idem, "From 'Degel Yerushalayim.'" Compare the stenogram of his remarks at the beginning of his trial (12 May 1985), published in *Nekudah* 88 (1985): 24-25.

259. See Aran, "Religious Zionism," p. 560; Amnon Rubinstein, *Me-Herzl ad Gush Emunim uve-hazarah*, p. 121.

260. Ya 'akov Ariel, "The Land of Israel and Peace" (in Hebrew), in *Olah min hamid bar* (Yeshivat Yamit, 1985), P. 101.

261. Hanan Porat, remarks in a symposium in *Petahim* 2 (1975): 9; Raanan, *Gush Emunim*, p. 126.

262. Yo'el Bin-Nun, quoted in Aran, "Religious Zionism," p. 560. See Hayyim Druckman, "The Cry of the Land of Israel" (in Hebrew), *Artzi* 1 (1982): 36.

263. On the utopian understanding of peace in Jewish sources, see Aviezer Ravitzky, "Peace," in A. A. Cohen and P. Mendes-Flohr, eds., *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought* (New York, 1986), pp. 658-702; A. Ravitzky, *Al da'at hamakom*, pp. 32-33.

264. Blitzki, *Bakesh shalom ve-rodfehu*, pp. 167, 190.

265. See David Henshke, "The Blind Alley" (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 134 (1990): 30-32; David Hartman, *Conflicting Visions* (New York, 1990), pp. 42-43.

266. Zefaniah Derori, *Ma'ariv*, 18 July 1984.

267. It is interesting to note the transformations that have taken place over recent generations regarding the center of gravity of the messianic tension and effort. Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Kalischer, a Harbinger of Zionism, saw the renewal of sacrifices as an essential key in hastening the redemption (Katz, *Leumiyut Yehudit*, p. 294). The young Rabbi Kook, and even more so Rabbi Y.L. Maimon, made the renewal of the Sanhedrin the central axis in the messianic process (see above, at the beginning of this chapter; Y. L. Maimon, *Hiddush ha-Sanhedrin*, pp. 23-29). Some Haredi groups, first and foremost Habad, strive to bring the End, primarily by campaigns of reaching out to nonobservant Jews and spreading the teaching of Hasidism (below, chapter 5 ). Finally, contemporary radical religious Zionism makes settlement throughout the Land of Israel the essential catalyst of redemption (see Katz, "Israel and the Messiah," pp. 34-41). The common denominator is the activist effort that seeks new avenues by which to accomplish the historical breakthrough.

268. S. Aviner, *Sihot ha-RZY*; additions to Deuteronomy, p. 21. This approach, which separates redemption from voluntary repentance, attempts to base itself on the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua, BT Sanhedrin 97b. See, however, the opposed view of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (*On Repentance*, ed. P. Peli [Jerusalem, 1980], pp. 132-37), according to which Maimonides followed the approach of Rabbi Eliezer, BT Sanhedrin 97B, making redemption dependent on repentance. See also Lawrence Kaplan, "Divine Promises: Conditional and Absolute," *Tradition* 18, no.1 (1979): 41-42; Eliezer Goldman, "Messianic Interpretations of Current Events," *Forum* 26 (1976): 38.

269. See David Schnall, "An Impact Assessment," in Newman, *Impact of Gush Emunim*, p. 16.

270. Shlomo Aviner, "Repentance and Redemption" (in Hebrew), *Amudim* 376 (1977): 150.

271. Oded Walensky, *Even Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 80.

272. Zalman Melamed, "A Further Stage in the Process of Redemption " (in Hebrew), *Nekudah* 119 (1988): 20-21.

273. A.I. Kook, *Orot*, pp. 16-17.

274. See Eliezer Goldman, "The State of Israel in the Test of Judaism "

(in Hebrew), *Amudim* 360 (1976): 64-65; Fisch, *Zionist Revolution*, pp. 59-66; Herzl Fishman, *Hazon ve-shivro*, (Jerusalem, 1987) p. 367.

[275](#). See Avineri, *Making of Modern Zionism*, pp. 192-94.

[276](#). S. Aviner, *Sihot ha-RZY*; Pinhas, 5736 (1976), addition at the end.

---

### Web Editor's Note

This document has been edited slightly to conform to American stylistic, punctuation and hypertext conventions. Other than these, only a few minor changes to the text have been made in the form of corrections of typographical errors and omissions of some references to other parts of the book in which this chapter appeared.

This document is best viewed with 1024x768 pixel screen area.

[Reprinted in accordance with U.S. copyright law.](#)

## Alabaster's Archive

