

# Zionism's New Challenge

*Assaf Inbari*

Israel is home to three Jewish nations:<sup>1</sup> The secular, the Haredi, and the national religious, all of whom are called “Israelis.” Zionism has failed to mold them into one people. The fashionable response to this failure is to dismiss the melting pot idea in favor of “multi-culturalism.” This is the liberal model, the “live and let live” approach. In theory, it is wonderfully enlightened. In reality, it is lethal to Zionism.

There is a name written on the post-Zionist punching bag: David Ben-Gurion. Israel's first prime minister is the villain of the post-Zionist narrative: It was he, after all, who tried to force the melting pot on the young state's immigrant ethnic groups. Fortunately, declare the post-Zionists, his scheme of ethnic oppression never stood a chance. They consider cultural assimilation of any kind “oppressive,” because the very idea of nationalism is utterly foreign to them.

“Identity,” to their way of thinking, is citizenship. The “state” is a civil, and not a national, entity. Hence, they are not Zionists: They recognize the cultures of communities, not nations, and are allergic to the term *Am Yisrael*

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(“Nation of Israel”). They see anyone who speaks of Am Yisrael as “right-wing,” “nationalist,” even “fascist.” Enlightened Israelis such as themselves would never say Am Yisrael. Rather, they say “Israelis.” “I am an Israeli.”

A Jewish Israeli? An Arab Israeli? Secular, Haredi, or national religious? “What difference does it make?” reply the multi-culturalists. “Your nationality, your religion, your denomination—they define only your community affiliation. As the citizen of a state, your citizenship is your identity. A Canadian is Canadian, and you are an Israeli.”

Thus do the multi-culturalists rejoice at the breakdown of society into discrete cultural enclaves. They like to break down, to deconstruct. Ben-Gurion liked to build up, to construct. But building, apparently, is “oppressive.” They forget, it would seem, that “a society in danger of actual collapse cannot afford the luxury of cultivating its diversity, especially not at a time when the little its various groups have in common is heading towards extinction,” as Israeli author and social commentator Gadi Taub once observed.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, Ben-Gurion did fail to build a nation. But he failed not because he tried to build a nation. He failed, rather, because he tried to build an *artificial* nation. Because there is no “Israeli” nation. There is only a Jewish nation. And it was *this* nation that required a melting pot. But Ben-Gurion, who did not understand this, focused his efforts on creating an empty alternative.

Because of his intense hatred of diaspora Judaism, Ben-Gurion failed to grasp the difference between a melting pot that negates the exile, and a melting pot that negates Judaism. This was his great mistake. He should have recognized that the purpose of Zionism—beyond its basic Herzlian goals—was the creation, in Israel, of a Jewish identity untainted by exile. He should have understood that Israel is the state of the Jews, and not of the “Hebrews.”

The term “Hebrewness” had three very distinct meanings in the pre-state era. Ben-Gurion sought to erase Jewish identity in order to revive a biblical “Hebrewness.”<sup>3</sup> The poet Yonatan Ratosh, on the other hand, sought

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to erase Jewish identity in order to revive a Canaanite “Hebrewness.”<sup>4</sup> And Haim Nahman Bialik advocated a “Hebrew culture” that would include the entire Hebrew-Jewish continuum, from the Bible, Midrash, Mishna, and Talmud to the Hebrew poetry of Spain’s golden age, through Rabbi Moses Haim Luzzatto’s dramatic verse and up to the literature of the Haskala and the modern Hebrew revival. To Bialik, Hebrew culture should not be based on the denial of two thousand years of Jewish life. Rather, it should grant Judaism the fullness that it had lacked during two thousand years of exile. “Our brothers in the diaspora want to see here, among us, what life in exile denies them—culturally, spiritually, and morally,” he observed in 1926.<sup>5</sup> Bialik saw the return of the Jewish people from its dispersion, its reconnection to its homeland, and the revival of its language as the redemption of *Judaism*, not some pre-Jewish, “Hebrew” identity. He hoped that Judaism, at long last, would cease to be a fossilized religion and instead become a living culture.<sup>6</sup>

In the end, Ratosh’s call for a Semitic, land-based identity entranced a mere handful of young radicals. Bialik’s “Hebrew culture,” on the other hand, found a great many supporters. But it was Ben-Gurion’s biblical “Hebrewness” that eventually became the state’s official cultural ethos. No doubt, this ideal was perfect for a certain type of Israeli, “salt of the earth” *sabras* like Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon, and Yitzhak Rabin. As the basis for a national identity, however, it was absurd. The majority of Israelis were not raised on farms. They did not ride horses or drive jeeps. Most came from traditional Jewish communities, and defined themselves as Jewish traditionalists. In fact, they still do: In 1993, Israel’s Guttman Center of Applied Social Research conducted a survey on faith and observance among Israeli Jews. Results showed that a full 55 percent of respondents believe that the Tora was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, with only 14 percent professing not to believe it at all. Furthermore, 71 percent said they “always” fast on Yom Kippur.<sup>7</sup>

It is hardly surprising, then, that Ben-Gurion’s “Hebrew” melting pot was, in truth, no melting pot at all. He made no attempt to bridge the

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differences between the secular and religious by proposing a shared national identity. Rather, he proposed an estranged co-existence. He attempted to preserve the status quo, one that served as a refuge from a Zionist challenge that intimidated everyone, secular and religious alike. The secular feared Judaism, and the religious feared modernity. But above all, they feared each other. They were afraid to meet, to talk, to enrich each other and become enriched, and to create, in time, a truly multi-dimensional culture.

Multi-dimensional, not multi-cultural. Ben-Gurion's "Hebrewness" was one-dimensional. Secular and Ashkenazi, it was an "Israeli" identity that excluded the majority of Israelis. Precisely because of this, it gave birth to multi-culturalism. It encouraged every sub-group to curl up inside itself. Now, had it been multi-*dimensional*—had it been Jewish—it would not have been simply the status quo masquerading as a melting pot. *I am Haredi, you are secular, and she is a religious Zionist from Beit-El.* This is what Ben-Gurion's "Hebrewness" gave us. We do not learn in the same schools, eat in the same places, or walk the same streets. We do not live *with* each other, but alongside each another. Sheltered by the status quo, we successfully avoid one another, and speak of each other with ignorance and disdain. "The status quo," writes professor of Jewish thought Aviezer Ravitzky, "is predicated on the false assumption on both sides of the divide that the other camp will eventually dwindle, be quashed, or perhaps even disappear altogether."<sup>8</sup>

We were always too busy, we secular and religious Jews, with things we judged far more urgent than meeting each other. There was national security, in spades; there was the absorption of waves of new immigrants; there was the need to build the infrastructure to support and sustain the state; there were borders to argue over; there were budgets to dispute. All these were, and continue to be, of extreme importance. Yet lost in the shuffle was perhaps the most important issue of all: The question of national identity.

In 1940, the Zionist leader Berl Katznelson lamented that, "For many, many of those coming to us—or being brought to our shores from afar and even from nearby (and, I fear, for a not insignificant number of their

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children, raised or even born here)—this place has still not become a home. Our educational responsibility is to make this land, and the world of the spirit from which it sprang, into a home that the soul embraces.”<sup>9</sup> But how could these shores become a Jewish home without Judaism? Note that Katznelson feared not only for those “brought to our shores from afar,” but also for their children, “raised or even born here”—that is, for the sun-baked sabras: Ben-Gurion’s ideal of “Hebrewness.” A home needs a foundation. A Jewish home needs a Jewish foundation. It is not enough merely to love one’s homeland. “The world of the spirit from which it sprang”—that is, Judaism—is also necessary.

Katznelson, like Bialik, addressed a secular public estranged from Judaism. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Israel’s first chief rabbi, addressed a religious public that had rejected the Zionist enterprise. “The expectation of salvation is the force that preserved exilic Judaism,” he wrote in 1920, “the Judaism of the land of Israel is salvation itself.”<sup>10</sup> In other words: Come out from exile, and take the exile out of your hearts. “The real life of sanctity in Judaism,” he continued, “cannot be revealed other than by the people’s return to its land, which is the way paved for its renaissance.”<sup>11</sup> That is, the return to Zion is not in and of itself the desired renewal, but merely a means to achieve it. The true renewal, Rabbi Kook believed, was the revival of Judaism: “All the sublimity in its soul and heart’s vision will rise to life in proportion to the place occupied by the practical foundation to revive the fainting vision [of diaspora Judaism].”<sup>12</sup> To Rabbi Kook, the “practical foundation” was the revitalization of halacha. The ghettoized, community-based halacha of Israel’s immigrants from the diaspora was rendered obsolete by the Jewish nation’s return to its homeland. Rabbi Kook sought a *Zionist* halacha.

**Y**eshayahu (Isaiah) Leibowitz, another religious Zionist, began to publish articles in the 1930s that called for a halachic renewal. “The religious problem in Israel has never been addressed. It will remain so until the rejuvenation of halacha, based on principles that are immanent in its

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very own nature, intended for a nation in its homeland—such that religion will seem a completely realistic way of life for the nation and the State of Israel.”<sup>13</sup> So he wrote in 1953, at the age of fifty, when he was still a member of *Hapoel Hamizrabi* (the Mizrahi Labor Federation, later part of the National Religious party). Several months later, however, a single event would radically transform his worldview.

On October 14, 1953, an elite Israeli commando unit led by a young Ariel Sharon attacked the West Bank village of Qibya in retaliation for the murder of three Israelis in the town of Yehud several days before. A number of buildings were destroyed and sixty-nine residents were killed in the incursion. Leibowitz was outraged. In response, he published the first of what would be forty years’ worth of articles, all arguing that the State of Israel was morally corrupt, because it had exploited “the religious concept of holiness to further social, national, and political agendas and values.”<sup>14</sup>

Operation Kadesh in 1956 only strengthened these views. But it was the Six Day War that finally solidified Leibowitz’s aversion to any exultation of nation, land, and state. He railed against Israel’s occupation of the territories, lambasted the mass prayers at the Western Wall, and demanded the separation of religion and state.<sup>15</sup> It is almost entirely for these views that he is remembered today. Indeed, very few people recall Leibowitz’s earlier, opposing convictions. So let us now remember: Until his fiftieth year—that is, until Qibya—Leibowitz advocated a state that would manifest the values of Judaism. He sought the renewal of halacha “for a nation in its state.”<sup>16</sup>

Why did Isaiah II make a greater impact than Isaiah I? Why does every educated person in Israel know about the elderly Leibowitz’s call for the separation of religion and state, and so few about the opposite, and equally passionate, stance taken by the younger Leibowitz?

The answer is simple: To supporters of the status quo, Leibowitz’s call for the separation of religion and state was music to their ears. In his aggressive, “radical” style, the elder Leibowitz gave the secular a free pass to unburden themselves of Judaism, and the Haredim a free pass to unburden

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themselves of citizenship. When he spoke about the occupation, Leibowitz was controversial; when he spoke about Judaism, he merely expressed the view of the majority—and in so doing, was controversial only insofar as he tended to yell.

Indeed, we may ask, what exactly was his innovation, and whom exactly did he challenge, when he reduced the Tora to its diaspora proportions? When he claimed, for example, that observing the halacha was a matter between man and God, or between man and his fellow? This had been the Haredim's position all along, and the reason why all of us, secular and religious alike, feel justified in our estrangement from each other and our lack of motivation to alter the status quo.

To be sure, Leibowitz *was* both innovative and challenging when he campaigned for the creation of a Jewish state on the basis of a revitalized, Zionist halacha. Unfortunately, this stance won him little recognition: A small audience at *Hakibbutz Hadati* (the national religious movement's kibbutzim) and a few polite listeners at Hapoel Hamizrahi assemblies. But outside this narrow group of moderate religious Zionists, his views held no weight. Most Israelis, if not all of them, were content to uphold the status quo.

This was the fate of Rabbi Kook's halachic vision as well. As we know, religious Zionism never rose to his challenge of halachic renewal. In fact, the reverse came to pass: Religious Zionism has become more and more Haredi. Today's *gedolim* (revered rabbis whose views are generally considered authoritative in religious communities) are unquestionably Haredim. This is not surprising: Rabbi Kook's son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, was the spiritual father of Gush Emunim. He thus provided national religious youth with the perfect alibi for evading his father's call to renew and revive the halacha: The settlement movement in Judea and Samaria. His students fled to the hills beyond the Green Line and proceeded, for the next three decades, to deceive themselves. For there is no religious challenge, no halachic boldness, and no contribution to nation-building to be had in the settlement movement. If anything, the opposite is true: The settlers have made a great contribution to the nation's coming undone.

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Bialik, Katznelson, the elder Rabbi Kook, the young Leibowitz, Martin Buber, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Hugo Bergmann, Ernst Simon, Dov Sadan, Gershom Scholem—all of these Zionist thinkers sought to forge an Israeli national identity grounded in Judaism. They were all admired in their lifetimes and remembered long after their deaths, but the level of practical influence their ideas have had is negligible. Yes, there are streets named after them. There are prizes in their honor, and symposiums in their memory. But none of them put pen to paper in hopes of being designated a thoroughfare. They wrote in order to create a shared culture and a joint destiny for the Jewish people. They believed that a common fate and a past of shared troubles were not enough to bring about an ingathering of exiles. They may be enough to maintain a feeling of camaraderie among the world's scattered Jewish communities, but this camaraderie—particularly if it is based solely on memories of persecution and victimhood—is not a strong enough foundation on which to build a life together in the same country.

After two thousand years of exile, the Jews who have come together to live in a sovereign state will become a single nation only when they are able to define *positive* aspirations for it, around which both secular and religious can unite. This was the working assumption of the above-mentioned thinkers. Unfortunately, they did not capture the hearts and minds of the nation. David Ben-Gurion did.

**B**en-Gurion's melting pot was fashioned from myths, symbols, memorials, songs, military parades, marches to Tel Hai and Masada, coins engraved with the seven species of the land of Israel, speeches, youth movements, air force expositions, sandals, kibbutz-style hats, national sports teams, national workers' unions, national building projects, special IDF units, classic children's stories, Independence Day celebrations, and hourly Voice of Israel newsflashes from Jerusalem.

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To Sephardi Jews, who immigrated to Israel en masse in the 1950s, this particular brand of “Hebrewness” was far too narrow and constricting. Nor were they the only group to be hurt by Ben-Gurion’s model of nationalism. Literary critic Nissim Calderon notes that “[The Ashkenazi sabra] was strongly compelled to conform to the stereotype of himself, to measure up against an untainted icon.”<sup>17</sup> No, Ben-Gurion’s melting pot was not “oppressive.” It was not evil in intent. But it was misguided.

And yet, even a misguided enterprise can have some redeeming value. After all, the sabra embodied many impressive qualities: Friendship, loyalty, simplicity, resourcefulness, courage, self-sacrifice, patriotism. The new Jew was created, to use Amos Oz’s popular expression, “under this blazing light,” and indeed, this light, the azure skies of the Promised Land, was the right backdrop for such a creation after so many generations of timid life in the eastern European darkness. But the sabra image was sectarian, and proved to be a double-edged sword: On the one hand, it was essential to the establishment of the state. On the other, it ensured that the state would not be a Jewish one.

As the years went by, still more symbols and icons were added to the pile. The elite Unit 101’s daring Meir Har-Tzion. The songwriter Naomi Shemer. Ammunition Hill. Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin marching through the newly liberated Old City. The spy Eli Cohen in Damascus. The smiling Yossi Ben-Hanan, holding his rifle aloft in the Suez Canal. Paratroopers at the Western Wall. Ariel Sharon’s blood-stained bandage. The Yom Kippur War’s “Tzvika Brigade.” The Munich massacre. Yoni Netanyahu at Entebbe. Maccabi Tel Aviv.

Surely, the Maccabi phenomenon deserves an article in itself. For only Israelis could delude themselves into believing that Maccabi—a basketball team comprised mainly of foreign players—is in fact “the nation’s team.” Indeed, the obsession with Maccabi epitomizes the synthetic aspect of Israeli identity, which offers no end of compelling symbols around which to rally—all of them empty substitutes for Judaism.

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That said, certain symbols have been enduring and vital. Memorial ceremonies for fallen soldiers, for example, have always evoked an authentic feeling of camaraderie among most citizens, and certain songs, whose lyrics and melodies captured the prevailing national mood, have become pivotal, formative themes for millions of Israelis. And the Hebrew language has undoubtedly done more to unite us than anything else. Indeed, if Israel is a melting pot, Hebrew is the chef's mixing spoon: Polish and Moroccan, Russian and Ethiopian, British and Argentinean—all of these people become Israeli upon achieving mastery of the Hebrew language. As a result, Israeli society is that much less tribal—and that much more unified.

In this respect, at least, the melting pot has been rather successful, especially considering that it has just begun to boil. Nevertheless, the fusion of various ethnic groups, as important as it may be, is not the same as the fusion of the three Jewish nations—secular, Haredi, and religious Zionist—into a single people. For the success of the ethnic fusion depends on a successful Jewish amalgamation. Most Sephardi and Ethiopian immigrants, for instance, consider themselves either religious or “traditional.” Their Jewish identity is worth no less—indeed more—to them than their ethnicity, and it is this identity that distinguishes them from secular Western Jews. Russian immigrants, by contrast, are by and large secular, and their culture is Russian, not Jewish. But precisely because the “Russian and Israeli cultures are missing a common language,” as the writer Anna Isakova puts it, “can the only common language be provided by turning to Jewish culture, to our common heritage.”<sup>18</sup>

We ought to be aiming for a united nation, not a uniform one. Ben-Gurion dreamt of a secular homogeneity, much as the Haredi rabbis dream of a halachic homogeneity. But such dreams destroy whatever chance we may have of a multi-dimensional national unity. Uniformity steamrolls over cultural identity. Unity, on the other hand, is a cross-cultural partnership, which is always greater than the sum of its parts.

In the mid-1970s, from the Yom Kippur War and Ben-Gurion's death in 1973 until the Likud party's rise to power in 1977, the dream of secular

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homogeneity was shattered, and the dream of multi-culturalism took its place. When Ben-Gurion's melting pot broke apart, we were all left holding on to the pieces: Our glorified military leaders and heroes. Yitzhak Rabin, Yigael Yadin, Rafael Eitan, Avigdor Kahalani, Rehavam Ze'evi, Ehud Barak, Efraim Eitam, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, Amram Mitzna, Ariel Sharon. For the last 30 years, the vast majority of those elected to party leadership, if not the premiership itself, are ex-generals. What does this say about the Israeli electorate?

Naturally, a society under constant threat of war casts its lot with those experienced in the art of battle. But that is not the whole story. Put simply, the ex-general is the "ultimate Israeli." He is Ben-Gurion's melting pot sabra in the flesh. He is also, unfortunately, impervious to the question of Jewish national identity. Education, media, culture—the factors that truly shape both individual and collective identities—are the last things to concern a military man, if indeed they concern him at all. But perhaps they do not concern us very much, either, since we are the ones who keep electing them.

Indeed, the one-dimensional ex-general is the perennial favorite of a multi-cultural society. Absent a multi-dimensional identity of its own, such a society naturally looks to its military leaders for reassurance—and thus avoids those nagging questions about national values, goals, and mission. "This is a sick and polarized society," said veteran politician Yitzhak Ben-Aharon shortly after Rabin's assassination. "It has nothing to believe in. With a sincere, sweeping type of mourning, we've latched on to Rabin as a way to believe in something."<sup>19</sup>

His observation was correct not only with regard to the candle-holding youth in Rabin Square, but also to the Israeli public that, three years before, had elected Rabin *because it had nothing to believe in*. Indeed, Rabin offered no platform other than his personality: No agenda, no ideology, no concrete promises of any kind. No one could have guessed—let alone Rabin himself—that in the years to come he'd be shaking Arafat's hand. Just as no one could possibly have guessed that, ten years hence,

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prime minister Ariel Sharon would uproot Gaza's settlements—the very ones he'd helped to build—after taking office. Rabin was elected because he stood for nothing. We chose a person, not a worldview.

Rabin's first government fell on the same night that Maccabi Tel Aviv won the European Championship Cup, asserting its status as “the nation's team.” Thousands of Israelis thronged to what would become Rabin Square, cavorting in the fountains just feet from where a prime minister, in a few years' time, would be shot in the back. Rabin was assassinated in the Piazza of the Melting Pot Delusion. And he was murdered, in no small part, because Ben-Gurion's melting pot was never Jewish.

**A** Jewish melting pot requires two simultaneous developments: A secular Jewish awakening, and a religious process of halachic renewal. The following are two possible ways these might be accomplished; the first in the realm of education, and the second in the realm of the arts.

Halachic thought is the cornerstone of Jewish thought, and it is profoundly neglected by Israel's secular school system. The Bible is taught in every Protestant school in the world; it is, by now, hardly “ours.” The Oral Tora, by contrast, is the *Jewish* Tora, and the secular establishment's failure to teach it has turned Israel into a strange nation of Protestant Hebrews. Certainly, the Oral Tora ought to be a staple of every Israeli high school curriculum. It should be a required subject, not an optional course that students are permitted to ignore. At least as many hours should be devoted to the study of the halacha as are devoted to the study of the Bible.<sup>20</sup>

Is this cultural coercion? Perhaps. But there is no education without coercion. A tradition does not fall from the sky. It has to be taught. We learn math, language, civics, science, and history through precisely the same kind of “coercion.” If our children are to be Jews, and not Protestant Hebrews, the Oral Tora must be one of the core subjects in secular Israeli schools.

Of course, as is the case with all subjects taught in school, there is an interesting way to approach the study of halachic texts, and there is a tedious

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way. If, for instance, the oral tradition is presented as material to be learned by rote—no different from, say, the multiplication tables—students will climb the walls out of boredom. Fortunately, however, the oral tradition naturally lends itself to a more absorbing approach. The Jewish individual is a legalistic entity. Judaism defines every human action, every natural urge—eating, working, making love—in both positive and negative legal terms. This is kosher and that is *treif*; this is ritually pure and that is ritually unclean; this is permitted and that is forbidden. Nothing is simply neutral. The legal, Jewish way of thinking should be taught as an existential attitude. Here, the method is the point; as such, the goal should not be the recitation of laws. Rather, it should be the acquisition of a whole new set of cognitive tools.

And while we're on the topic: Why *don't* Israeli high schools teach law? If thinking Jewishly means thinking legalistically, shouldn't high school students be learning the fundamentals of both civil and criminal law, as then-education minister Amnon Rubinstein suggested in 1995? How many Israeli students—indeed, how many Israeli adults—know the difference between civil and criminal law? Between crime and misconduct? Between illegal actions and those that are merely unseemly? These differences are of vital importance, but the majority of Israelis are ignorant of them. After all, ignorance of the law is convenient. It absolves us, much like the status quo, of the need to formulate common values and objectives.

Not surprisingly, then, the legal system has become a clearinghouse for all of Israel's social dilemmas, chief among them the issue of what our self-defined status as “a Jewish and democratic state” actually means.<sup>21</sup> Aharon Barak, then-chief justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, observed in 1997 that

establishing the scope of application of this saying [“the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state”] will keep us busy for a long time. By “us” I am referring to Israeli society as a whole, not just its legal community, since this saying reflects what is unique about the State of Israel and about Israeli society. We are not like all the other nations; we are not like any other country... Every stratum of Israeli society will have to ask itself what the values of Israel as a Jewish country and as a democracy are.<sup>22</sup>

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Which just goes to show: Even a chief justice famed for his judicial activism does not believe that the legal system is the appropriate body to determine the ethical content of Israeli public life.

The unfortunate phenomenon of turning ethical decisions over to the courts is a result of the Israeli public's spoiled and irresponsible—and sometimes downright ignorant—attitude towards the law. We have not been trained to think legalistically; thus, we transfer all responsibility to that mysterious cult of the black robes. It's not that we don't have opinions, of course; every cab driver thinks himself a philosopher. But a nation accustomed to amateurish thinking is also accustomed to shunning responsibility for its judgments. The result is a culture of lazy, populist thought; of an endless and fruitless venting of steam; of an emotional, at times hysterical wrangling—a culture that is incapable of rational, substantive debate.

Legalistic thought, by contrast, is substantive. In Judaism, this type of contemplation has been *de rigueur* for centuries, practiced and perfected in every beit midrash. It is this way of thinking that must be incorporated into the Israeli school curriculum, alongside the fundamentals of the secular law we live by. Only then will Israeli students be able to define their perspectives and articulate their positions, to base arguments on fact, to draw legitimate conclusions, to substantiate, to apply broad principles to individual situations, and to express themselves in eloquent Hebrew. Above all, they will recognize that human beings are responsible for their actions, in accordance with the Jewish-halachic concept of man.

If we equip our children with these tools, we could shape a Jewish public sphere. True, the majority of the country would remain secular. But the public's *way of thinking* would be Jewish, thus enabling, at least theoretically, a genuine integration of the secular, Haredi, and religious Zionist sectors of society. If it is our desire to formulate mutual goals, we must first begin to devise a common language. The educational, and not the judicial system can and should take up the task.

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Regarding the arts, one wonders: What is “Jewish” about the Israeli visual arts?

“Jewish art,” wrote Israeli artist Michael Sgan-Cohen in 1977, “is the art of the word and the symbol, the art of nuance and not of plain textual meaning.” It is not, in other words, naturalistic, but it is not abstract either. “It is not art for its own sake,” Sgan-Cohen insisted, “but a socio-ethical enterprise.”<sup>23</sup> As opposed to pagan and Catholic art, which became synonymous during the Italian Renaissance, “Jewish art is not given to Monumentalism.... It is wary of the beauty of material and form (echoes of the golden calf) which serve no purpose other than to be beautiful.... Classical art and what it represents is, to Jewish art, idolatrous.”<sup>24</sup>

According to Sgan-Cohen, the undisputed representative of idolatry in Israeli art is Yigal Tumarkin. “His art is fundamentally linked to Monumentalism.... His concept is materialistic, dependent on the object itself and its aesthetic value; there is no ethical or Jewish rationale in those monuments.... As such, even if one of Tumarkin’s central themes is an anti-war sentiment, it is ironic that his sculptures are the best example of Israeli militarism—rootless, aggressive, and arrogant.”<sup>25</sup> And arrogant, high-handed art, as Sgan-Cohen describes Tumarkin’s work, cannot, by definition, be Jewish.<sup>26</sup>

Just as he loathed Tumarkin’s brash conceit, Sgan-Cohen abhorred the work of Rafi Lavi, one of the leading Tel Aviv painters in the 1960s and 1970s. Lavi was the antithesis of Tumarkin. Whereas the former’s work is monumental, heavy, and aggressive, Lavi developed a lean, “secular” aesthetic of scribbling, or “doodling,” as he himself described it. Nonetheless, this anti-Tumarkin posture was, to Sgan-Cohen, “a senseless avant-garde movement” consisting of “works without any cultural roots.” Works, that is, that “are a mere weak echo”—derivative and pathetic—“of what is going on in other cultural centers.”<sup>27</sup>

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To the poet Meir Wieseltier, this was no accident. “Tel Aviv,” he wrote in 1999, the year Sgan-Cohen died at the age of fifty-four, “is a stifling black hole of spiritual desolation.... It is a city without awareness. Without a memory. A city that is ‘just like’ or, even worse, deludes itself that it is ‘just like,’ is dying to be ‘just like.’ Just like New York. Just like Amsterdam. Just like Stuttgart. Just like something. But its sparkling cultural exterior is fragile and fuzzy with the lifespan of a neon sign.”<sup>28</sup> To return to Sgan-Cohen’s observations, this Tel Aviv—Tumarkin’s and Lavi’s—is the capital of “our cultural provincialism, and the lack of that kernel of selfhood in our culture.” “We Jews,” he concluded, “are not some faraway province, but rather the nerve center of enormous colliding forces”—East and West, tradition and modernity, “Hebrewness” and Judaism, the national and the individual.<sup>29</sup> Who among Israeli artists understood and expressed this potential? Sgan-Cohen tentatively named Mordechai Ardon, Pinhas Cohen-Gan, Moshe Castel, and primarily Aryeh Aroch, who developed “a world of private ideas and images employing Jewish language.”<sup>30</sup>

When Sgan-Cohen passed away, he was eulogized by his friend Adam Baruch in the latter’s book *Seder Yom* (“Agenda”). Baruch explained that the Jewish-Israeli art for which Sgan-Cohen yearned was not art whose Jewish character could be measured by biblical motifs (as was the case, for example, in the sentimental art of the Betzalel school) or by kabbalistic themes (as in the works of Ardon and Yaacov Agam), but rather art whose Jewish character emerged “without any modernistic or post-modernistic posturing,” from a Jewish way of thinking.<sup>31</sup> “The core of what makes art ‘Jewish,’” wrote Baruch, is “the conscious and critical look inward,” which captures the Jewish conceptual and moral essence.<sup>32</sup> Thus, artists whose works burst with Jewish motifs have, in most cases, missed the point. At issue, maintains Baruch, is not how to employ a Jewish repertoire, but how to employ a Jewish *outlook*.

In his speech to the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel in 1901, Martin Buber spoke of his yearning for a distinctive Jewish art.<sup>33</sup> One hundred years later, in Jerusalem, an art competition was organized with the theme

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*kedusha* (“holiness”).<sup>34</sup> The very selection of such a central Jewish concept—an abstract principle opposed to aesthetic idolatry—dictated that the participants should employ a Jewish outlook and mode of expression. Two hundred fifty artists rose to the challenge, and the twenty-two winning compositions were compiled in a volume entitled *Limits of Holiness*.<sup>35</sup> The objective of the contest, explained the book’s co-editor Avigdor Shinan, was “to encourage the connection between the creative arts and the beliefs and values that are at the core of Judaism.”<sup>36</sup> In an essay included in the volume, Moshe Halbertal, a professor of Jewish thought, defined Jewish artistic representation as “depictions that hide more than they reveal, images that hint and indicate, but do not expose or desecrate.”<sup>37</sup>

In 2003, Gideon Friedlander-Ofrat, chief curator of the Tel Aviv gallery Time for Art, organized an extensive exhibition entitled “Jewish Revival in Israeli Art.” Among the artists showcased were Avraham Ofek, Naftali Bazam, Michal Ne’eman, Arnon Ben-David, Jack Jano, Haim Maor, Belu-Semion Fainaru, and, of course, the late Michael Sgan-Cohen. The show assembled the fruits of a movement that had begun in the mid-1970s—perhaps in the wake of the Yom Kippur War or the Conceptual art movement, and possibly both—that sought Jewish artistic independence by way of a departure from the legacy of Tumarkin and Lavi.<sup>38</sup> This shift in artistic form and content is far from complete. An imitative obsequiousness, a desire to be “just like” someone or somewhere else, still dominates Israel’s artistic landscape, just as it does in most other areas of our lives. “My sympathies to Conceptual art in Tel Aviv, a city without a concept,” wrote Wieseltier sarcastically in the 1970s.<sup>39</sup> And since the eighties, most Israeli artists have been engaged in rootless, self-important “post-modernist” works, vague in intention but rich in replication. Alas, the Jewish route in Israeli art is still a detour, a back road. Will it ever become a highway?

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The same question can be asked of Israeli literature, theater, cinema, music, and dance. In an essay that delineates the values befitting Jewish art, professor of Bible studies Uriel Simon wrote that they must include “the preference of wisdom over cleverness; of the moral over the aesthetic; of self-restraint over materialism; and of happiness over pleasure.”<sup>40</sup> He also mentions “loyalty to meaningfulness,” “faith and optimism,” and “longing for spirituality” as Jewish approaches to life and culture, all of which stand in stark contrast to the bitterness and despair that characterize much of art today.<sup>41</sup> Simon made do with a general prescription. He did not attempt to outline its practical application to various artistic fields. What follows are several suggestions.

We begin with literature. The Jewish author is a teller of tales. Whether his story is real or fictional (what is real and what is fictional in the Bible or the Talmud? Was there any distinction made between the two?), it is a story of *action*, whose power lies in its brevity. In the Bible, talmudic legends, and even Hasidic tales, whole lives are compressed into a few lines, at times even a single sentence. “And the land was quiet for forty years.” Forty years in eight words. There is no descriptive element here, nor any attempt at psychological analysis; neither is there any stylistic excess—no fancy literary footwork to admire. This is economical, spare, plot-driven prose. Every word matters and is rich in meaning. Rabbi Nahman of Breslav, Franz Kafka, S.Y. Agnon, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Primo Levi, Pinhas Sadeh (*Death of Avimelech*), Yaakov Shabtai (*Uncle Peretz Takes Off*), and Yossel Birstein (*Don't Call Me Job; A Face in the Clouds*) all told tales. Their tone was informative, not indulgent. In this straightforward manner, these writers produced frighteningly powerful tales, distinctly Jewish in their concision.

Prophetic verse, from Amos and Psalms to the daily prayers, is spoken poetry, not linguistic acrobatics. Its intensity stems from its content, not its form. It is powerful, not pleasing or enchanting. The Jewish poet talks to someone (to the reader, to God) in order to say something important.

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He does not, therefore, mince words, put on airs, or hide behind a mask of irony. Like Bialik, he “carves the poem from his heart,” and he demands an answer: “Out of the depths I have cried out to you.”<sup>42</sup>

Alexander Pushkin, Charles Baudelaire, and other literary magicians wrote brilliant poetry, but their way is not our way. Our way is that of Bialik, as well as Uri Tzvi Greenberg, Amir Gilboa, Avot Yeshurun, Zelda, Yehuda Amihai (at his best), and, in her later poems, Dalia Ravikovitch. Today, Haviva Pedaya, a superb religious poet, and Dalia Pelech, a superb secular poet, continue to carve powerful Jewish language from their hearts. May others follow their lead.

As for Jewish theater and film, they ought to dramatize conflicts of values, and depict the moral quandaries of people who bear some type of responsibility—familial, societal, professional, or political. A Jewish life is a life of responsibility; responsibility and not fate, which is the focus of the Greek tragedies. The Western dramatic tradition, from Aeschylus to Shakespeare, from the opera to Hollywood, is pagan at its core. It deals with mankind’s primal urges; an important topic, but not a Jewish one. The Jewish person is normative, demonstrating through his choices that which is superior about mankind. Jewish drama, then, should not be Monumental; nor should it be thrilling or shocking, violent or arousing. Its aim is not to capture the audience’s subconscious, but rather to depict a mature dialogue, one that is conscious and challenging. It is not a spectacular invasion of the viewer’s senses, but an appeal to his interpretive abilities and his imagination via a dramatic language that excels in its restraint.<sup>43</sup>

This is not to say that a Jewish screenplay or theatrical production (or television script, for that matter) must be pedantic and self-righteous, devoid of physical or emotional urges—or worse, devoid of humor. A Jewish work should present flesh-and-blood mortals, not moralistic talking heads. It should deal with feelings and desires, as did the biblical author, and it should cover the entire range of human emotions, from heartbreak to laughter, as did Sholem Aleichem. But it ought to deal with the topic of urges, not just inflame them. It ought to be funny, even to the point of tears, but

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its sense of humor should be warm, not mean and acidic. “If we examine the works of the great artists,” wrote the poet Leah Goldberg in 1938, “we will notice that those which lasted through the ages are those with a heart. That is to say: Those which show great love, and great mercy.”<sup>44</sup> Mercy and not pity. Pity is condescending, rude, derisive. It presents people as pathetic, even revolting. Jewish drama will only take shape from the honest scrutiny of human beings as they are: Neither angels nor beasts, victims nor villains, deniers of urges nor their slaves.

On to music. Here our task is more difficult, but it is still possible to try and define a uniquely Jewish musical creation or experience. Music in the Western sense is a performance, a concert. The brilliant composer, the celebrated violinist, the piano virtuoso, the maestro conductor, the acclaimed baritone display their talents on a hallowed stage. The sanctity of the event is evident from the audience’s hushed stillness, which explodes into applause when the final chord is struck. From a Jewish perspective, this is idolatry. The same may be said of rock or pop music: The worship of a concert pianist is no different from the worship of a rock star. Only the etiquette of the audience is different, not the essence of the rite.

The Jewish concept of *hevruta* (partner study) could shape an alternative musical experience. No idols. No idol-worship. Rather, this music would be a dialogue, played among friends, and largely improvised. Sheet music, if used at all, would contain only general notations, with ample room for interpretation—much like Jewish texts themselves. Here, the melody is what matters. All else—harmony, rhythm, structure, polish—is of lesser importance. David Zahavi’s musical rendition of Leah Goldberg’s “The Recorder” or Hanna Senesh’s “Walking to Caesarea” prove that a good melody can carry itself; it needs no accompaniment. The strength of these melodies is like that of prayer. They develop naturally, like thoughts. It is as if they were conceived with words attached. Thus, the gathering of musicians in a Jewish *hevruta* would form a type of melodic banter. Theirs would be the music of listening and responding to the other. An unselfish experience.

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Finally, the same would be true of Jewish dance. Here, too, we must wean ourselves from the idea that dance performances are meant to amaze. Instead, they should strive to set the language of hevruta to movement. Dance in terms of reciprocity: You move, I answer. A physical conversation. The dancers' goal would not be to display their beautiful bodies, or the astounding control they possess over every limb and ligament. Their purpose would not be aesthetic or acrobatic. Rather, it would be *ethical*. Jewish dancing, like Jewish music, is a conversation, not showing-off.

It has become acceptable in the West to dance to a predetermined sound track; such is the case with ballet and modern dance, Israeli "folk dances" (*rikudei am*), and in clubs and discos. Jewish dance, however, should be based on attentive and responsive improvisation. It should also be largely spontaneous. The choreographer would determine a baseline for the movement, just as a page of Talmud establishes and guides the ensuing discussion. But interpretive freedom would be left to the dancers, ensuring the originality of every such hevruta—that is, making certain that it never devolves into a forced replication of the same old routine. It would be possible, of course, to integrate the hevruta systems of music and dance: Melody and movement would engage in a joint discussion, with dancers responding to musicians, and vice versa.

These suggestions are by no means a call for cultural separatism. Obviously, Israelis will continue to partake of the general culture. They will listen to classical and pop music; they will immerse themselves in Western art and Eastern philosophy; they will read English, French, and South American literature; they will consume films from Hollywood, Europe, and Japan. Indeed, in the age of the Internet and multi-channel TV, separatism is hardly possible. But cultural openness need not obligate us to degrade ourselves through imitation. The more we assimilate into the general culture, the more we reduce our chances of achieving a true Jewish melting pot. And the more we try to develop an authentically Jewish artistic language, the more we will succeed in creating a common culture for Israel's three Jewish nations.

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A nation's living legacy cannot be reduced to Maimonides' "Principles of Faith" or Rabbi Joseph Karo's *Shulhan Aruch*. When speaking of heritage, the divisive, destructive distinction between "secular" and "religious" is far less important than the distinction between those who nurture their heritage and those who neglect it.

Those who nurture their heritage are religious and secular traditionalists. They perceive the present as part of a living continuum. Time, to them, is a river, not a pond. A pond is standing water. Standing water grows fetid. A river moves forward. Those who nurture Judaism row its tides. They delight in its bends. They strive to stay afloat, and they refuse to be deterred by dangerous rapids.

The personal and professional relationship between Bialik and his fellow writers Yosef Haim Brenner and the young Agnon exemplifies the cultural fecundity of Jews who, however different in outlook, nonetheless row the same river together.<sup>45</sup> All three received a traditional religious education, but none of them stayed within the confines of the yeshiva world. Brenner's break from halachic Judaism was a rebellion against his father, a furious settling of scores. Bialik's movement toward secularism, however, was not fueled by Oedipal rage. Orphaned by his father at age seven, Bialik's work reflects a longing for his lost parent and his once-happy childhood home. Agnon greatly admired his devout father, writing at age forty that "he imbued me with the spirit of poetry."<sup>46</sup> Agnon's father taught him the Talmud, the works of the great Jewish sages, and European literature. One does not rebel against such a father. Rather, one is indebted to him, and aspires to make him proud. Indeed, Agnon never abandoned religion. On the contrary, his work proves that a religious way of life need not be incompatible with the writing of modern, secular prose.

A modern secularist, a talmudic secularist, and an independent religionist; each attempted to create a shared national culture, and none of them had any use for labels, whether for themselves or for others. They argued

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as they rowed, but never at the expense of moving forward. Moreover, they never felt the need to dip into other rivers. They each developed their own rowing style, but it is futile to wonder which of them rowed better. Together, they form the perfect example of what a multi-dimensional Jewish culture looks like: Neither secular alienation nor religious fossilization. Unity, not uniformity.

Those who abandon their heritage, on the other hand, grow rank and moldy in the swamps of one-dimensional identity. Secular ponds teem with Israelis whose identities are purely civic; religious ponds teem with Israelis who blindly obey their rabbis. The first group seeks to live only in the present, and pays no heed to the past; the second lives only in the past, and tries to ignore the present. Is it any wonder that both groups spend most of their days slinging swamp-mud at one another?

“Orthodoxy is today in a state of less God-fearing, and more fear of extremist humans,” warned the talmudic scholar Efraim Urbach in 1972.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps, were he alive today, he would find reason for optimism in the rising status of Sephardim and women in Haredi and national religious circles. “The religious establishment of Sephardi Jews is far more liberal, far more open, and far more humane than its eastern European counterpart,” explained Eli Amir to fellow author Sami Michael on the occasion of Shas’ establishment.<sup>48</sup> The religious feminist Tamar Ross recently pointed to the connection between “the relaxed, pragmatic, and non-ideological religious atmosphere which characterizes certain factions of Sephardi Jewry,” and the chance for halachic renewal with regard to women’s status issues.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, there are growing signs that the male Ashkenazi halachic establishment no longer holds sway over educated women seeking religious equality, such as Alice Shalvi, Dvora Waysman, Hanna Kehat, Tova Ilan, Tzvia Greenfield, Bambi Sheleg, and Leah Shakdiel. In a similar manner, they are no longer able to dominate leading Sephardi rabbis such as Ovadia Yosef or Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, who devote considerable effort to finding halachic leniencies, as opposed to the Lithuanian rabbis, whose very faith, it would seem, lies in the strictness of their interpretations.

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The growing influence of the Sephardi public and the feminist phenomena in Haredi and religious Zionist circles increase our chances of achieving a Jewish melting pot. Indeed, the more that halacha is refreshed and revived, the more tolerant and equal it will become.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, the fewer draconian demands halacha places on those communities trying to live by its rules, the more secular interest in Judaism will increase. A secular Jew cannot respect a system that discriminates against women, condescends to gentiles, and preoccupies itself with nonsense such as wigs. Nor can he respect, as rabbi and scholar David Hartman wrote, “Jews who worry about public kashrut and Sabbath observance, but don’t seem to be bothered by the unjust treatment or exploitation of foreign workers or minorities.”<sup>51</sup>

Thus, instead of fearing Shas, it would behoove secular Jews to cheer on the revolution being waged in religious strongholds, a revolution leading us ever closer to a softening of the Haredi world’s sharp edges. And instead of fearing the religious Zionists, it would behoove secular Jews to recognize that the movement is not just about settlements. It is also the site of a feminist revolution from within, one that, according to Tamar El-Or, a scholar of Haredi society, will “create a massive change in Orthodoxy in a very short time.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, insists El-Or, the halachic changes currently being pursued by influential religious-Zionist women will eventually make the national religious community more egalitarian. It will also become more religious, “because it will include more individuals who are conversant in Tora, and more observant women keeping more mitzvot.”<sup>53</sup>

Very few women, and very few Sephardi Jews, participated in shaping Ben-Gurion’s melting pot vision. This is but one of the reasons for its failure, and one does not have to be a post-Zionist to say so. On the contrary: Today, it is finally possible to create a melting pot that is both religiously and ethnically egalitarian. But to create such a melting pot, we must want to create. Not to take things apart.

When we said our final goodbyes not long ago to the poet Natan Yonatan, the songwriter Naomi Shemer, and the novelist Moshe Shamir, we said goodbye to an era: The era of Ben-Gurion’s sabra, his secular, Ashkenazi

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“Hebrew man.” His melting pot vision was simultaneously deep-rooted and shallow; embracing and alienating; inspiring and infuriating—it all depends on whom you ask. But one thing is clear: It was not a national melting pot, because there is no Israeli nation. There is only a Jewish nation. Nearly six decades since the founding of the Jewish state, it is time we all awoke to this fact.

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*Assaf Inbari is an essayist, literary critic, and regular contributor to Azure. This essay was originally published in the Hebrew daily Maariv on September 15, 2004, and afterwards in the book The Jewishness of Israel (The Israel Democracy Institute, 2007).*

## **Notes**

1. Aside, that is, from its Arab population.
2. Gadi Taub, “We Are Not a Fruit Salad,” *Yediot Aharonot* holiday supplement, April 5, 2004 [Hebrew].
3. Anita Shapira, “Ben-Gurion and the Bible: Creating a Historical Narrative,” *Alpayim* 14 (1997), pp. 207-231 [Hebrew].
4. For a complete retrospective synopsis of Yonatan Ratosh’s “Canaanite” vision, see Yonatan Ratosh, “The New Hebrew Nation (the Canaanite Conception),” in Ehud Ben-Ezer, ed., *There’s No Serenity in Zion: Conversations on the Price of Zionism* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986), pp. 232-260 [Hebrew].
5. Haim Nahman Bialik, *Words by Heart*, book 1 (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1935), p. 63 [Hebrew].
6. On the term “Hebrew culture” as used by Bialik, see Natan Rotenstreich, “Bialik on Cultural Matters,” in Abraham Kariv, ed., *Knesset: A New Series*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1960), pp. 207-214 [Hebrew]; see also Eliezer Schweid, *Towards a Modern Jewish Culture* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1995), pp. 213-234 [Hebrew].

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7. Shlomit Levi, Hanna Levinson, and Eliyahu Katz, *Faith, Observance, and Social Relations Among Israeli Jews* (Jerusalem: The Guttman Center of Applied Social Research, 1993), pp. 38, 101 [Hebrew]. For more updated data on this subject, see Levi, Levinson, and Katz, *Israeli Jews—A Portrait: Faith, Observance, and Values Among Israeli Jews, 2000* (Jerusalem: The Guttman Center of Applied Social Research, 2002) [Hebrew].

8. Aviezer Ravitzky, “Religious and Secular in Israel: A Post-Zionist Clash of Civilizations?” *Alpayim* 14 (1997), p. 80 [Hebrew]; see also Ravitzky, *Engraved in Stone: Other Voices on Jewish Thought* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1999), p. 258 [Hebrew].

9. *The Writings of B. Katznelson* (Tel Aviv: Mapai, 1948), pp. 260-261 [Hebrew].

10. Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot*, trans. Bezalel Naor (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aaronson, 1993), p. 90.

11. Kook, *Orot*, p. 165.

12. Kook, *Orot*, p. 165.

13. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, “A Renewed Halacha as a Constitution for the State of Israel,” *Tora and Mitzvot in Our Time* (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1954), p. 152 [Hebrew].

14. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, “After Qibya,” *Tora and Mitzvot*, p. 172 [Hebrew]. It is worth noting that this essay, appearing in one of Leibowitz’s earliest books, runs counter to the ideas expressed in previous articles included in the same work. It is this essay that Leibowitz declares his break with religious Zionism.

15. Leibowitz referred to worship at the Western Wall with the disparaging term *Diskotel*, a conflation of the words “disco” and “Kotel” (the Western Wall). He coined the term in a letter published in the Hebrew daily *Haaretz* on July 21, 1967.

16. On Leibowitz’s early religious Zionist tendencies, see Aryeh Fishman, “The Movement Toward an Experiential-Religious Unity: The Early Essays of Yeshayahu Leibowitz,” in Avi Sagi, ed., *Yeshayahu Leibowitz: His World and Philosophy* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1995), pp. 121-129 [Hebrew]; see also Eliezer Goldman, “Zionism as a Religious Challenge in the Thought of Yeshayahu Leibowitz,” in Sagi, ed., *Yeshayahu Leibowitz*, pp. 179-186; Moshe Hellinger, “Modernity, Halacha, and Democracy: Rabbi Haim David Halevi and the Early Yeshayahu Leibowitz—A Comparative Analysis,” in Amihai Berholz, ed., *A Journey Towards Halacha: Interdisciplinary Studies on the World of Jewish Law* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2003), pp. 354-384 [Hebrew].

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17. Nissim Calderon, *Multi-Culturism Versus Pluralism in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Haifa University and Zmora-Bitan, 2002), p. 145 [Hebrew].

18. Anna Isakova, "The Jewish Problem of the Russian Migration," *TECHELET* 8 (Autumn 1999), p. 88 [Hebrew]; see also Anna Isakova, "Russian Jews in Search of the Jewish State," *AZURE* 8 (Autumn 1999), pp. 93-104.

19. Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, *Theory and Criticism* 12-13 (1999), p. 500 [Hebrew].

20. The dismal state of Jewish instruction in the secular public school system was analyzed in depth over a decade ago in the Shenhar Report, whose recommendations have not been implemented to this day. The report was commissioned on October 9, 1991 by then-education minister Zvulun Hammer on the recommendation of a special committee headed by Professor Aliza Shenhar. It was published under the title *People and World: Jewish Culture in a Changing World—Recommendations of the Committee on Jewish Education in Public Schools* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport, 1994) [Hebrew].

21. See Ruth Gavison, *Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State: Tensions and Opportunities* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1999) [Hebrew]; Haim Cohen, "Values of a Jewish and Democratic State," in Aharon Barak and Ruth Gavison, eds., *Selected Writings: The Harvest of a Decade of Courage* (Jerusalem: Nevo, 2001), pp. 45-95 [Hebrew].

22. Aharon Barak, "On the Values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State and on National Unity," in Haim Deutsche and Menahem Ben-Sasson, eds., *The Other: Between Man and Himself and Man and His Fellow* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2001), p. 214 [Hebrew].

23. Michael Sgan-Cohen, "Thoughts on the Possibility of a Jewish-Israeli Art," in Tzvi Barmeir and Ada Tzemah, eds., *Jerusalem: Commentaries on Literature and Philosophy* (Jerusalem: Agudath Shalem, 1977), p. 80 [Hebrew].

24. Sgan-Cohen, "Thoughts on the Possibility of a Jewish-Israeli Art," p. 80.

25. Sgan-Cohen, "Thoughts on the Possibility of a Jewish-Israeli Art," pp. 80-81.

26. Sgan-Cohen, "Thoughts on the Possibility of a Jewish-Israeli Art," p. 84.

27. Sgan-Cohen, "Thoughts on the Possibility of a Jewish-Israeli Art," p. 85.

28. Meir Wieseltier, "Diving Aerial Photo," *Rooms* 13 (1999), p. 11 [Hebrew]; Wieseltier, *Slow Songs* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2000), pp. 44-45 [Hebrew].

29. Sgan-Cohen, "Thoughts on the Possibility of a Jewish-Israeli Art," p. 85.

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30. Sgan-Cohen, "Thoughts on the Possibility of a Jewish-Israeli Art," p. 83.
31. Adam Baruch, *Agenda: Daily Life in the Mirror of Halacha* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2000), p. 206 [Hebrew].
32. Baruch, *Agenda*, p. 158.
33. For a summary of Buber's speech, see David Cassuto, "From Exile to Statehood: Milestones in the Creation of an Authentic Jewish Art," in Yoav Elstein and Theodor Dreyfus, eds., *Jewish Culture in Our Times: Crisis or Renewal?* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan, 1983), pp. 55-56 [Hebrew].
34. The competition was organized by the Adi Foundation, which was established in memory of the artist Adi Dermer.
35. Emily Bilski and Avigdor Shinan, eds., *Limits of Holiness: In Society, Philosophy, and Art* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2003) [Hebrew].
36. Avigdor Shinan, "Prologue: Limits of Holiness—The Story of a Competition," in Bilski and Shinan, *Limits of Holiness*, p. 9.
37. Moshe Halbertal, "On Holiness and the Limits of Artistic and Linguistic Presentation," in Bilski and Shinan, *Limits of Holiness*, p. 34.
38. See the Friedlander-Ofrat essay that accompanied the exhibition catalogue, "And You Will Make for You...": *The Revival of Judaism in Israeli Art* (Tel Aviv: Zman L'omanut, 2003), pp. 7-84 [Hebrew].
39. Meir Wieseltier, "My Sympathies," *Something Optimistic: The Making of Poems* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1984), p. 48 [Hebrew].
40. Uriel Simon, "Secular-Religious Cooperation in Building a 'Jewish and Democratic State,'" *Alpayim* 13 (1996), p. 163 [Hebrew].
41. Simon, "Secular-Religious Cooperation," pp. 163-164.
42. Haim Nahman Bialik, "I Didn't Win Light in a Windfall," in *All of H.N. Bialik's Songs* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1966), p. 135 [Hebrew]. Psalms 130:1.
43. On a tentative suggestion for a Jewish cinematic technique, see Yitzhak Recanati, "Towards a Jewish Language in Film," *Mahanayim* 11 (1995), pp. 330-336 [Hebrew].
44. Leah Goldberg, "In the Light of Mercy," in *The Courage of Secularism: Studies of Our New Literature* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1976), p. 171 [Hebrew].
45. This relationship was described by Haim Be'er in his work, *Their Love, Their Hatred* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1992) [Hebrew].
46. From the letters of S.Y. Agnon to M.A. Jack (1927), collected in Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *From Myself to Myself* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1976), p. 7 [Hebrew].
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47. Efraim-Elimelech Urbach, *On Zionism and Judaism: Studies and Analyses* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1985), p. 344 [Hebrew].

48. Sami Michael, *These Are the Tribes of Israel: Twelve Conversations on the Ethnic Question* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1984), p. 42 [Hebrew]. The Shas, or Sephardi Tora Guardians, party is Israel's largest religious party and the only one dominated by Sephardim.

49. Tamar Ross, "Orthodoxy, Women, and Halachic Change: A Teleological Examination and Interpretative Aspects," in Berholz, *A Journey Towards Halacha*, pp. 392.

50. For challenging proposals regarding halachic renewal for the purpose of its broader, secular-Israeli implementation, see, for example, Hananel Mack, "Fixing the Halachic Reality in the State of Israel According to Halachic Principles," in Nahum Ilan, ed., *Tova's Eye: Dialogue and Debate in Israeli Culture—The Fiftieth Anniversary Book in Honor of Tova Ilan* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad and Ne'emany Tora V'avoda, 1999), pp. 705-724 [Hebrew]; Yedidya T. Stern, "Openings for Halachic Renewal Regarding Issues of Religion and State," in Berholz, *A Journey Towards Halacha*, pp. 438-460.

51. David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating Its Future* (New Haven: Yale, 2000), p. 145.

52. Tamar El-Or, *Next Pesah: Literacy and Identity of Young Religious Zionist Women* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1998), p. 17 [Hebrew].

53. El-Or, *Next Pesah*, p. 17.