

# THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: A STUDY OF JEWISH THEOCRACY

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*A structural review of Jewish history is undertaken in order to demonstrate the continued dialectic encounter between the heavenly (theos) and the earthly (kratos) in Jewish political conception, which help in understanding the fundamental problems of the Jewish polity in general, and the Israeli polity in particular.*

*Three constant trends in Jewish theocracy — conflict, unity and priority — are defined and presented in a historical survey from Pharaonic Egypt to the present day.*

*The revolutionism of the various forms of Zionist philosophies lies not in the revolution of the traditional encounter between theos and kratos, but in the search for a new sacred content that accords with individual beliefs. The traditional approaches to resolving the theocratic dilemma were extended to the State of Israel. Philosophies as diverse as the theistic syntheses of Buber and Soloveitchik, the dichotomous approaches of the Canaanites and Leibowitz, and the unified approaches of Ben-Gurion and U.Z. Greenberg are presented.*

*The dialectic continuum of Jewish history remains unbroken, with the aspiration of Judaism as always being to cling to eternal life without relinquishing the reality of territorial life. The kingdom of Israel has constantly been faced with the challenge of realizing the kingdom of heaven. History has yet to prove whether this challenge constitutes the true excuse of Judaism, or whether it is an obstinate quest for the impossible.*

In the present article I shall examine one aspect of the Jewish political tradition, namely the dimension of metaphysical sanctity within the political system. Through a structural review of Jewish history I hope to demonstrate the continued interaction between the heavenly and the earthly in the Jewish political conception.<sup>1</sup> The recognition of the existence of such a continuity will help us to understand the fundamental problems of the Jewish polity in general, and the Israeli polity in particular, not as independent phenomena but as a single edifice whose basic structure is the dialectic encounter between these two components.<sup>2</sup>

The roots of this political-metaphysical encounter lie, in my opinion, in the overall approach of Judaism which views the existential dichotomy of existence between the human and the Divine as the two dialectic components of a single system.<sup>3</sup> Politically, this approach is

*Jewish Political Studies Review 1:1–2 (Spring 1989)*

reflected in the perception of the political phenomenon as existing on two planes — both as an earthly phenomenon of territorial existence and as a heavenly phenomenon represented by the Temple Mount — the mountain of God, of the Divine Presence. Thus Judaism recognizes the meaning of political existence while relating it to the world of the sacred, to which metaphysical criteria are applied. Thus, while the state is in fact a polity, one of many, it is also located in the Holy Land, whose existence is an integral part of the Divine order.

This interpolation of the sacred in the institutions of government is known in political language as theocracy. I shall in the following pages try to trace the extent of theocracy<sup>4</sup> present throughout Jewish political history, while discussing the continuousness of the encounter between the two component elements of this form of government: *theos* and *kratos*. The term "*kratos*" here comprises everything related to the political phenomenon — not only government, but also the political entity and territorial sovereignty, not only policy but also polity. The concept "*theos*" will be understood as comprising the entire system of beliefs with a sacred dimension, not restricting it merely to the religious conception in its traditional sense. However, despite the broadness of this definition, it shall not include those ethical-social or historical-theological ideas which do not possess the binding nature of an absolute value. Neither will I refer to the different varieties of atheistic religions, which, like the "civil religion" of Rousseau,<sup>5</sup> grows out of *kratos* alone.

The subject of the present article is thus to elucidate the duality of the Jewish political conception, tracing the continuous encounter between *theos*, as a supreme system of absolute values,<sup>6</sup> and *kratos*, as the independent entity of the political system.

This encounter can in fact be divided into two parts: the positive encounter which, remaining true to the two-dimensional approach,<sup>7</sup> strives to achieve a dialectic harmony between *theos* and *kratos*; and the negative encounter, which seeks a way out of the fundamental imbroglio of dialectic unity to achieve a unidimensional political way of life and ideology. The theo-political essence of Judaism is therefore a source of constant struggle between opposing attitudes.

It is my contention that there are three constant trends in Jewish theocracy: 1) conflict; 2) unity; and 3) priority — namely, a synthesis which accords greater weight to the theistic element. I shall briefly define the nature of these three trends and then present them chronologically in a historical survey.

1) The approach which views *theos* and *kratos* as two opposite poles finds support in the logical-conceptual dissimilarity between them, as Nathan Rotenstreich notes:

In religion, man relates to God, and this relationship of man, as a human being, to God has a universalist meaning, and its nature and validity are independent of time and place. In a state, man relates to man, and this relationship is by its very nature limited, fragmentary, and lacking in universal scope.<sup>8</sup>

In light of the basic dissimilarity between these two substances, the unidimensional political approach calls for a monolithic rather than a dual definition of life:<sup>9</sup> either an independent political-national existence, or a fusion with the sacred, waiving physical-political existence. Josephus Flavius<sup>10</sup> renounced Jewish political existence (undoubtedly partly in justification of his betrayal, as did Philo Judaeus.<sup>11</sup> Spinoza, on the other hand, chose an existential policy, and saw the attempt to achieve a political-metaphysical encounter as the very cause of Israel's political destruction.<sup>12</sup>

These approaches are aware of the existence of the theo-political encounter in Jewish history but try to evade it through an absolute decision on the essence of Judaism either as political nationalism or as a religious-spiritual value.

2) As opposed to this, there also exists within Judaism a central school of thought which maintains an integrated view of the state and Divine sacredness, according to which one cannot exist without the other. Judaism, according to this view, is no more than metapolitical realization through political fulfillment. The anomaly of this synthesis is perceived as the part which is indicative of the whole, as the singularity which is the essence of Judaism. To this school belong — with varying definitions of sacredness — such personalities as Moses Mendelssohn,<sup>13</sup> Uri Zvi Greenberg,<sup>14</sup> Maimonides,<sup>15</sup> and Ben-Gurion.<sup>16</sup> (Their philosophies will be discussed below.)

3) As opposed to these two is the approach which does not reject the encounter, but does renounce the attempt at unity; it recognizes the body politic, but only as the basis of Divine worship. Despite the differences between the spiritual-sacred outlooks of Abravanel,<sup>17</sup> Ahad Ha'am,<sup>18</sup> Buber,<sup>19</sup> and Borochoy<sup>20</sup> (to be discussed below), they all share a minimalistic approach to the state as the basis for realizing the sacred goal.

I shall try to prove that these three approaches — the perception of the political goal as legitimate in and of itself or as the basis of sacred values, or, alternatively, the yearning for a dialectic fusion between the two — have characterized Judaism throughout its history, and the present generation is no exception.

In this respect, Jewish history can be divided into three broad units:

1) the generation of the wilderness and the First and Second Temple periods; 2) the diaspora and messianism; 3) Zionism and the State of Israel. The generation of the wilderness, the diaspora, and Zionism, especially spiritual Zionism, represent the heavenly-theistic aspect, while the period of the kings of Israel and the Hasmoneans, messianism, and the sovereign existence of Israel as a state, with their political-“kratic” emphasis, serve as a counterweight.

1) I will not try to present a factual historical analysis of the generation of the wilderness; rather, I shall refer to the imprint which it left on our historical consciousness, in which the controversy between the historical-archeological and biblical-fundamentalist approaches is irrelevant. The generation of the wilderness, as it appears in Jewish tradition, serves as a symbol of the pre-state period in the life of the Jewish people, based on a highly developed relationship between man and God, during which social relations were formed and institutionalized. However, despite the existence of a political community, the generation of the wilderness lacked the essential political element — territorial-political life. This, then, was a period of *theos* without *kratos* — in the sense of polity. The Jewish people and God were engaged in preparing themselves to receive the land — the body politic. In contrast to this reality of exclusive *theos*, the generation of the wilderness was confronted with two examples of “kratic” existence: Egypt, with its affluence and plenty, which served as a temptation and a trap; and the Land of Israel, which represented both a destination and a challenge. Their task was to free themselves from the negative effect of the Egyptian *kratos* in order to be worthy of attaining the desired positive *kratos*. Like the two political models, they were confronted with two types of temptation: the attraction to exaggerated worldliness, from the golden calf to their craving for meat — the “Egyptian” mentality of their past — and the attraction to absolute spirituality, as fitting for a people which has always maintained a dialogue with God.

The generation of the wilderness is thus an ambivalent phenomenon in Judaism, as the generation which was closest to God but which was at the same time found unworthy to enter into the Promised Land. While R. Akiva (in accordance with his personal adherence to the idea of political sovereignty) believed that the generation of the wilderness had no portion in the world to come,<sup>21</sup> kabbalistic literature<sup>22</sup> attributes the separation between the generation of the wilderness and the Land of Israel and the “sin of the spies” to its excess sacredness, as a generation which did not want to be defiled by the worldly life of state and government after having been privileged to witness the revelation at Sinai. But even according to this interpretation, which praises the exclusive spirituality of the generation of the

wilderness, it does not serve as an ideal model for the Jewish people. The historical challenge — even in light of the admiration of the *theos* of the wilderness — remains the achievement of a “kratic” existence. Thus, while Jewish life can be elevated even without territory, the peak of Jewish life is a combination of sacredness and sin.

The biblical account of the generation of the wilderness — with its conflicting interpretations — also reflects the dialectic attitude of the Jewish tradition towards political *kratos*; purely physical political existence as in Egypt is one of the “forty-nine gates of uncleanness” from which the people had to be purified over a period of forty years before reaching the level of true political life, which is not the converse of Divine worship but its fullest realization. Thus, without *kratos*, there can be no existence; but *kratos* alone has no value.

This approach became part of the Jewish heritage, and the generation of the wilderness has come to symbolize the motif of exclusive *theos*, with the elevation and the destruction inherent in it. This motif was not expunged even after the transition to territorial existence within the Land of Israel, but it was offset by constant conflict with the opposite tendency towards over-emphasis of the political-human dimension.

It is common practice<sup>23</sup> to view this period in Jewish history as a theocratic period (beginning with the affirmation of the state, and ending with the Pharisaic position of anti-political theocracy). However, it is hard to find factual support for this view. The Bible itself, while “theistic” in character, tells of a *dual system* of two parallel authorities: the ruling establishment represented by the king, versus the prophet, as the agent of God. The traditional views of this duality vary: Abravanel, in accordance with his overall meta-political approach,<sup>24</sup> rejected the very existence of the monarchy as an attempt to create an “empty” *kratos* in the Egyptian style, a situation which runs counter to the goal of the Divine Promised Land.

This approach also finds support in modern interpretations. According to Abraham Heschel,<sup>25</sup> prophecy and monarchy are mutually incompatible, both ideologically and historically: political prosperity has always led to a neglect of the Divine goal, while political-territorial decline has led to a recognition of theistic truth.<sup>26</sup> This view of the conflict between prophetic *theos* and political *kratos* also implies the rejection of this *kratos* as a decadent phenomenon within Judaism.

In contrast to this is the positive attitude of Maimonides<sup>27</sup> towards political manifestations, an attitude supported by the fact that prophecy flourished precisely during the height of the monarchic period, indicating that they complement one another.

However, despite these differences of opinion, there is no question that the relationship between prophet and king — *theos* and *kratos* —

was not one of identity but rather encounter, either harmonious or conflicting, according to one's point of view.

As for the Second Temple period, the priests indeed represented *kratos*, and thus would seem to have constituted a theocratic government in the *literal* sense of the term; however, in a patent adulteration of content, although they performed the religious rituals they did not represent the fundamental Jewish *theos*. They were Hellenizers at the beginning of the period and Sadducees at the end. While the first Hasmonians truly embodied the identity between *theos* and *kratos*, at the end of the period Alexander Yannai personified the independent "kratic" aspect in its extreme sense, with no trace of the prophetic *theos* which had characterized the Maccabees. Similar anti-"theistic" phenomena also emerged in the golden age of the Davidic monarchy: although David was called the servant of God and became the symbol of Jewish independence and the father of the Messiah, he was not found worthy to build the Temple, for his hands had been contaminated by the blood of his many enemies.<sup>28</sup> Solomon, who did in fact build the Temple, sinned by possessing many horses and wives,<sup>29</sup> like the gentile kings, and in the time of his son Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided. Subsequently, neither the kingdom of Judah nor the kingdom of Israel corresponded to the criteria of political existence established by the prophets. Thus, the prophetic voice became a "voice calling in the wilderness" — in the name of the generation of the wilderness, as opposed to the Egyptian and Canaanite phenomena of Jewish *kratos*.

Thus, in its territorial metamorphosis, the internal tension of the generation of the wilderness was repeated: the development of a political existence, "like all the nations," as reflected in treaties with Egypt and Aram, versus the theistic-prophetic yearning for the wilderness,<sup>30</sup> for the closeness with God which had existed prior to the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. The government naturally leaned towards the creation of a political center of gravity, often even to rebellion against the oppressive presence of Divine power. This was paralleled by the protests voiced by the prophets with the full weight of their authority, by means of which God was involved in the life of the Jewish state even when the representatives of the political *kratos* sought to deny such involvement.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, while theocracy was not actually implemented as a form of government in the First and Second Temple periods, the encounter between *theos* and *kratos* was a decisive political factor of the entire period. It was not the government but history itself which was theopolitical; political phenomena were measured by clearly metapolitical criteria, and as such were accepted as an integral part of the nation's relationship with God; just as the building of the capital city was



equated with the sanctification of God's name in the time of David, so was religious transgression equated with an aborted political act in the case of Saul and the Amalekites. Thus, general political ruin was perceived as a manifestation of religious sin and punishment; the loss of Jewish political-sovereign existence was equated with the destruction of the Temple.

Thus, exile, which is a purely political phenomenon, is also considered a religious phenomenon, as a period of alienation and remoteness between God and the Jewish people. Our historical consciousness thus reinforces Maimonides' approach by negation: in the absence of a sovereign *kratos*, the "kingdom of Israel," *theos*, too, became remote, and we were deprived of the "kingdom of heaven." In the same way, Divine involvement in political existence was a source of its vitality; the remoteness of God and the destruction of the political entity were thus reciprocal causes.

2) With its political destruction, the Jewish people returned for the second time in its history to life in the wilderness: in other words, it had to fortify itself within political-communal patterns in the absence of any territorial foundation — without a polity. In his book *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn provides a good description of this semi-existence:

And even today, no better advice than this can be given to the House of Jacob: Adopt the mores and constitution of the country in which you find yourself, but be steadfast in upholding the religion of your fathers, too. Bear both burdens as well as you can. True, on the one hand, people make it difficult for you to bear the burden of civil life because of the religion to which you remain faithful; and, on the other hand, the climate of our time makes the observance of your religious laws in some respects more burdensome than it need be. Persevere nevertheless.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to Mendelssohn's solution of "be a Jew at home and a man outside," the Jews developed a way of life based on the home alone, isolating themselves within the spiritual kingdom of heaven while renouncing any contact with the external world of *kratos*. In establishing the academy of Jabneh following the destruction of the political center in Jerusalem, Johanan ben Zakkai established a refuge for the Jewish spirit, which succeeded in protecting it for almost two thousand years. While this institution belonged to the wilderness of the nations, Judaism found consolation in it and drew strength from its spiritual life.

By consciously exploiting historical necessity, Judaism renounces the problematic encounter between *theos* and *kratos*, thus deriving certain benefits: it freed itself from internal tensions, from the temptation to deteriorate into an existential political structure, as had Yeroboam

and Alexander Yannai. Now, without a body politic, it was easier to ascend to heavenly heights, to be a chosen people — as Leibowitz notes:

It was an easy matter from a religious point of view to be a good Jew in the diaspora. While such an existence required courage — the spiritual capacity to suffer and even die in the name of values...the Jew in the diaspora was freed from responsibility for some of the most difficult human tasks and obligations — problems of government and constitution, of war and peace, the welfare of the people, and social reform. It is much harder to be a religious Jew and to observe the Torah while fulfilling the political obligations of a state and providing people with their social needs. The justification for the easier nature of religious observance in the diaspora lay in the historiography which postponed political independence and responsibility to the time of the messianic redemption in the indefinite future.<sup>33</sup>

Again we find, this time as the result of bitter historical experience, the recoiling from political existence characteristic of the wilderness, as a land that “devours its settlers.” This recoiling was accompanied by a reconciliation with the phenomenon of the diaspora, through an ideological rationalization according to which the national existence of the Jewish people is based not on territorial factors but on its metaphysical source embodied in the Sinai covenant.<sup>34</sup> The Jew can therefore fulfill his obligations as a citizen in the country of his dispersion, while at the same time maintaining and observing the covenant between God and His people, which was loftier and more exalted than the life of the state.<sup>35</sup> However, this phenomenon of “love” of the diaspora cannot be understood without the messianic belief which counterbalanced it.<sup>36</sup> Despite the variety of interpretations of the nature of the messianic age — the degree of its spirituality or corporeality, its universal or naturalness — it is generally accepted in Jewish tradition that the coming of the Messiah also (according to Abravanel)<sup>37</sup> or primarily (according to Maimonides)<sup>38</sup> signifies the return to Zion and the establishment of a Jewish state, namely: a return to the existence of a Jewish polity. While full Jewish existence as a people, serving its God in its own state, was transformed from a realistic aspiration to a messianic dream, the dream itself was designated as an integral part of the system of *theos*, one of the fundamental tenets of faith. Hence, the diaspora without the belief in the coming of the Messiah and without the yearning for Zion is also a diaspora without prayer and without the belief in God.

This messianic belief demonstrates that the *post factum* affirmation of the diaspora never became — except for rational arguments in favor of assimilation — an ideal, doctrinal affirmation. Ultimately,



Jewish thought viewed the diaspora as a distorted situation produced as the result of sin, which will be terminated with the coming of the Messiah. Judaism never renounced *kratos*, even in the diaspora, but rather elevated it to the level of *theos*; in accordance with the spirituality of life, the longing for political territorialism became a messianic-metaphysical principle.

The anomaly of Jewish existence through the thousands of years of exile is epitomized not by non-territorial existence but by the internalization of this territory, preserving it as part of its spiritual life. An extreme expression of this can be found in Jabotinsky's explanation of the miracle of Jewish life in the diaspora:

A small group of people is huddled together, assaulted on all sides by many enemies who are demanding something of them; the small group does not surrender, and apparently prefers to suffer unending torture, so long as it can preserve something, not surrender something to the enemy....If the history of the diaspora is the self-protection of a group of people — what is this sacred treasure which they are defending with such obstinacy, so that their adherence to it would appear to constitute the basic motive of the entire history of this nation without a land? This sacred treasure is its religion....However, Judaism is not developing, Judaism does not yield to the law of evolution. Since the Jewish people lost its land, Judaism has ceased to change and evolve. It became frozen in place, remaining at the same level as when the Jewish people lost its homeland. This dead corpse is certainly not the sacred treasure itself, but only the cloak or the shell of that treasure. Judaism has died; anything that does not develop is considered dead....It died, in effect, at the very hour when Israel became a people without a land....It is not the Jews living in the diaspora who protected the religion, but the religion which protected something else....It is not its religion but its uniqueness which our people has preserved....The Jewish religion is mighty, a religion which contains many grains of eternal truth. Nevertheless, the role which the Torah fulfilled in the diaspora was not that of the treasure itself, but only of that which preserves and protects this treasure....What is the uniqueness of Judaism? — The true kernel of our national uniqueness is the pure fruit of the Land of Israel.<sup>39</sup>

This reflects, of course, Jabotinsky's personal definition of the essence of Judaism, from his evaluation of the stagnation of the Jewish religion to his view of the national axis as the sole axis of Judaism. But despite this subjectivity, his radical view of the diaspora as a "theistic" shell to a "kratic" kernel serves as a counterweight to the view of the diaspora as a period of theistic exclusivity which utterly rejects the political idea.<sup>40</sup>

The key to the question of the balance between *theos* and *kratos* in Jewish thought throughout the diaspora lies in the essence of messianism, according to which the return to a political existence in the Holy Land is viewed as the basis for the return of the Divine Presence, or as identical to it. Thus, Judaism displayed a clearly passive attitude — except for the tragic exception of false messiahs — towards the actual realization of the messianic era.

This passivity was derived to no small extent from their acquiescence to their condition in the diaspora and from their contenting themselves with realizing the goal of undisturbed spiritual life — and perhaps also from their inability to cope with political reality. But it was also caused by the ideological perception of the ideal political existence: while the future redemption will be political in nature, it is utterly dependent upon spiritual redemption. Hence, while there has been no renunciation of the “kratic”-political dimension, the possibility of its neutral existence has been completely negated. The Land of Israel — in the diaspora as in the wilderness — is God’s Promised Land, for the fulfillment of metapolitical goals. The longed-for realization of such a state, which is also in a sense the kingdom of heaven, requires a metaphysical miracle; even if a Jewish political entity should be established in the Holy Land through independent human action without direct Divine intervention, it will lack metaphysical content and will therefore also be valueless.<sup>41</sup>

3) The revolt of Zionism against the diaspora phenomenon was first and foremost a protest against passivity, against human paralysis with regard to the historical aspirations of the Jewish people. If we add to this the elements of secularization, the revolt against God, and the true impetus for the Zionist awakening — the persecution of the Jews and not their ideal destiny — one would have thought that the continuing dialectic of the adherence to *theos* as a part of “kratic” existence or as the major element in the yearning for its reestablishment would have come to an end. The Zionist perception of life without territory as the root of all evil should have finally upset the balance in favor of *kratos*, creating an emotional identity between metapolitical life based on sacred values and extinction, adversity, destruction and anti-Semitism, all of these having been the fate of the Jews in the diaspora. The revolt against the diaspora should therefore also have been the revolt against the metaphysical content of messianic yearning.

But despite this logical reasoning, the theocratic encounter continued even in the political thought of Zionism. While the traditional belief in Torah and the religious commandments had disappeared (except for the exception of religious Zionism), the belief in the unique-sacred Jewish mission remained. While the Jewish *theos* lost its per-

manent framework and content, it still found expression in the yearning for some form of sacredness, in the motif of the Jews as the Chosen People,<sup>42</sup> and in the desire, as such, to establish a political existence. Thus, despite its revolt against the values of the diaspora, Zionism did not renounce its right to fulfill the aspirations of the diaspora, namely: the embodiment of the messianic phenomenon, without passively waiting for metaphysical aid, but also without renouncing the self-fulfillment of a metaphysical goal. Thus, it remained necessary to find justification for political existence in a goal that went beyond this simple existence, anchoring it in a world of sacred values.

The revolutionism of political ideology in the Zionist philosophies is expressed not in the repudiation of the traditional encounter between *theos* and *kratos*, but in the refutation of the traditional content of *theos* and in the search for a new sacred content that accords with individual beliefs. Hence the great divergence of theistic goals which Zionist thought defined for the political entity: for Borochoy, an idealistic-Marxist goal; for Bergman, a humanistic-universalist goal; for Buber, a mystical-Jewish goal; for Joseph Salvador, the creation of an ideal society; for David Ben-Gurion, the reestablishment of harmony between state and prophecy. But despite this great divergence of views, all were united in their attitude towards sacredness, which is the essence of religious Judaism.

Even Herzl himself, who was divorced from the traditional Jewish values of sacredness and motivated primarily by his desire to put an end to Jewish suffering, referred to the uniqueness of the Jewish mission. Although he formulated the idea of the return to a political-sovereign existence as a nation among nations, he nevertheless saw the need to invest this independent political entity with special content. According to *Altneuland*,<sup>43</sup> Jewish political existence in the Land of Israel would form an ideal society which, in its content, progress, culture and moral values, would serve as a banner to the nations. Thus, even the father of the Jewish state was afflicted by the diaspora approach of not being able to accept Jewish political existence as a self-evident fact that did not have to be legitimized by its uniqueness. While this is a form of traditional apologetics directed towards the non-Jewish world, it can also be viewed as a response to an internal Jewish need for an extra-existential justification for the political phenomenon — if not a wheel in the Divine Chariot, then at least an example to the nations.<sup>44</sup>

Although he viewed political *kratos* as his central goal (to the point of proposing the Uganda plan), Herzl did not renounce, in principle, the idea of Jewish uniqueness, and viewed political revival not only as a means of restoring the body, but also as a way to achieve the flourishing of the spirit, as his statement before the Second Zionist Congress indicates: "Our culture is like a miser who places his

inventions and discoveries in a box. Rather, it is in order to be used by man that they came into this world."<sup>45</sup> From a condition of non-political isolation, Herzl called for the restoration of an open political existence, not at the expense of the Jewish spirit, but in order to achieve its fullest realization, as a light unto the nations.

The theistic aspect of political Zionism becomes the center of gravity in spiritual Zionism and in the philosophy of Ahad Ha'am. Despite the secular nature of his teaching, despite his renouncement of the transcendental dimension of Judaism, Ahad Ha'am does not renounce the ethnocentric sacredness of the values of Jewish tradition, and continues to believe, if not in the God of Israel, then in the immanent spirit of Israel and its universal mission as the spiritual center of the world. The essence of Judaism, according to his worldview, is the constant following of this spirit; he viewed the Land of Israel as the territorial-geographical nest for the spirit. He therefore affirms the return to Zion, while restricting the political dimension to communal autonomy in the historical territory of the Jewish people. His minimalist approach to the political phenomenon can be viewed as the continuation of the recoil from the "kratic adventure" characteristic of the wilderness and the diaspora. It is not by chance that Nordau argued: "Ahad Ha'am is one of the secular rabbis of protest." In fact, the latter's political ideology can be summed up as Zionist fulfillment with a theistic substance and a "kratic" vessel, tempering the significance of each: a *theos* without God, resting on a *kratos* without sovereignty.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast to this was the ultra-political Zionist approach. Those who adhered to this approach, known in Zionist literature as "territorialists,"<sup>47</sup> viewed the establishment of the Jewish state as the pinnacle of achievement and rejected any extra-territorial or metapolitical goals. Any search for a moral-religious-historical goal to justify political existence is to perpetuate the Jewish anomaly of the diaspora, while self-justifying political revival would be a sign that the Jews had recovered from the deformity of the diaspora and was becoming part of the global political system.

The storm raised by the Uganda affair was essentially the eruption of this basic controversy over the aims of Zionism: the realization of the exclusivity of the Jewish people in its land, or the ultimate liberation from this exclusivity and from the suffering inherent in it — acceptance or rejection of political existentialism and of the traditional Jewish values of sacredness.

Unlike Herzl who recommended Uganda as a realistic compromise between concrete adversities and historical desires, the extreme territorialists identified Zion with the Jewish prayerbook<sup>48</sup> and with the messianic yearnings of the diaspora. For them, divorce from the past also required a divorce from the myth surrounding geographical Zion:

They therefore preferred Uganda over Zion as a matter of principle. For the very same reasons, the "Land of Israel" Zionists clung to Zion — the land — which they viewed as the basis of the traditional values, desires, and rights of Jewish history, as stated by Heinrich Rosenbaum at the Sixth Zionist Congress:

On what basis did the Zionist executive take it upon itself to enter into negotiations on the question of East Africa? Since when has Zionism begun to see its role as the creation of places of refuge for the Jewish people?...We shall continue to wait! We shall continue to fight! Our fathers gave their lives on the pyre, crying 'Hear O Israel' and we, their sons, shall not cease to fight for the country which is so dear to us, and which symbolizes redemption for us and for all humanity. We shall continue to fight through suffering and with patience, and so long as breath remains within us, we shall say: we have not yet lost hope.<sup>49</sup>

The Uganda affair ended with the overwhelming identification of the Zionist movement with Zion, but not so the controversy in the area of political ideology — the perception of the state as an independent system, or as rooted in a higher normative sphere. The theocratic dilemma was extended to the State of Israel itself, and finds expression in three traditional approaches:

- 1) synthesis, with a preference for the metapolitical goals;
- 2) the dichotomous approach, choosing an existential policy;
- 3) the desire to realize the biblical idea of the harmonious union of the two.

## 1) The Theistic Synthesis

The view of the state as the basis of spiritual values, the search for a "spiritual center" as proposed by Ahad Ha'am, also finds expression today, receiving even greater force in the search for a counterweight to the excessive worldliness of a purely political existence. The writings of S.H. Bergman, for example, express the fear of the thickening of Israel's political shell as an independent, atheistic value, and the need to strengthen its spiritual heritage as the true goal of the Jewish state:

We have over the past two generations witnessed the growing secularization of our people. The Jewish people can be likened to a man who until now thought that he had only a soul and suddenly discovered his body — thus has the Jewish people discovered the terrestrial world. This was perhaps the greatest revolution which our people has experienced since its dispersion. For the generation



which created the national movement, it was clear that its transient life in this world was the decisive fact which required all the nation's strength. But the time has come to note the limits of this approach. The time has come to recall that we also have a soul which demands to be heard: the soul of the Jewish people is its faith; no one would disagree with the fact that Zionism has drawn its strength from this source; it was a simple matter to muster this great strength which had been accumulating for centuries....But we must ask: what will happen after us?...Are we not in the dangerous situation of a man who lives off his capital but does not add to it? I doubt whether the secular ideal can gather such strength over a long period of time, for this ideal, though lofty, does not embrace the Jew as a whole, for the Jew is first and foremost a man of faith, for the seed of the father of all beliefs lives within us. All the ideals of the various currents within Judaism, whether social, national or conservative, are derived from the overriding ideal of the Jewish people: to reform the world in the kingdom of heaven; the time has come to recall this ideal in its fullest scope.<sup>50</sup>

In contrast to the reality of the diaspora which Herzl described as the hoarding of spiritual treasure without using it, Bergman warns against the waste of this treasure in political life which does not hark back to the spiritual life, which is declining. In a metamorphosis of the prophetic call, he, too, proclaims:

We seek to renew the old meaning of the Holy Name: The ethical movement known as Zionism will show us the way today. Put aside all half-measures, all compromises and all conveniences, and be whole in your paths; renew yourselves in the spirit of unbiased strictness, and God will be for you what he was for Moses: a consuming fire.<sup>51</sup>

A similar attitude towards the Jewish state can be found in Buber's philosophy. While in his *Kingship of God*<sup>52</sup> he foresees total unity between Divine worship and the political institutions, as a "covenant between power and faith," this ideal of the absolute synthesis between political existence and the worship of God, which he believes existed in the time of David, did not yet apply to the Israeli political reality.

Thus, any high statism is in the meantime a form of false messianic pretentiousness of "power without faith."<sup>53</sup> Buber's fear of the false messianism of the Israeli state contains something of the fear of Jewish law and of the reaction of Hasidism to Sabbateanism; indeed, Buber's Zionist view is similar to R. Nahman of Bratslav's love of Israel, referring not to the concrete land but to the heavenly Jerusalem. While he recognizes the sovereign-political existence of Israel (in contrast to his mentor, Ahad Ha'am, who was content with territorial autonomy),



the theocratic encounter which he proposes in this context is a "kratic" foundation for a theistic essence. Hence, he calls for a spiritualization of the political reality in Israel.

A similar reservation with regard to excess *kratos* and a demand for greater *theos*, out of a similar recognition of the fundamental necessity for *kratos*, emerges from Soloveitchik's teaching:

The state is the property of the entire people, given to them by God in His great kindness. There is an absolute identity between the Holy Land and the state. The commandment to inherit and settle the land is expressed not only in the concrete development of the Land of Israel — the construction of houses, the planting of parks and forests, the settling of the land...but also in political conquest and the occupation of the Land of Israel....The very fact that Israeli political sovereignty exists and that Jews rule over the land is the fulfillment of the major aspect of the commandment to inherit and settle the land....The sacredness of the land with which the land is invested cannot be uprooted.<sup>54</sup>

But:

Just as I differentiate between government and state as between sacred and profane, so do I differentiate between a state which is cloaked in the holiness of the land and the Jewish community, identified with the eternal Torah, as between one holiness and another. Higher than all is the God of the universe, who revealed Himself to His people and outlined a special way of life for them. This link between people and God is the ultimate purpose and the foundation. The holiness of the land is also derived from the Divine inspiration which shone on the people when they entered into a relationship with their Creator. Outside of this extraordinary framework, a small country surrounded by enemies has no value. God made two covenants with Abraham — a national covenant and a territorial covenant....The territorial covenant is not independent....Hence I view its greatness, value and importance only within the framework of the uniqueness of the Jewish people and its unity with God. As a historical-secular entity that is not guided by its covenantal mission, the state does not arouse any enthusiasm in me, nor does it ignore a burning fire in my heart.<sup>55</sup>

While the theological content of Soloveitchik's philosophy is not identical to that of Buber or Bergman, the political tone is the same: the minimizing of the value of the political system, because of the uniqueness of the spirit and the mission of the Jewish people.

## 2) The Dichotomous Approach

In contrast to this perpetuation of the theistic approach to Jewish political life, we find the political-existentialist approach, which in its most extreme form is known as the Canaanite philosophy.<sup>56</sup> Its basic premise is that the State of Israel is not an immanent continuation of historical Jewish existence — although it is rooted in Zionism, which is an integral continuation of the diaspora-messianic-metapolitical Jewish heritage. However, this has nothing to do with the new Hebrew nation in Israel:

As for the revival of the Hebrew nation which is emerging before our eyes in its own land, still only half-consciously; this nation is not a continuation of that “eternal people,” scattered and dispersed, whose traits, which are foreign to us, are constantly presented as the “Jewish consciousness.” This national revival is a new beginning and not the outgrowth of Zionism....Rather it sprouts from new roots in the same ancient land....Just as the profoundest layer is Hebrew-Canaanite, so does the new Hebrew nation tend to develop in the Canaanite direction.<sup>57</sup>

According to this view, the Israeli political adherence to Jewish theism is anomalous, both according to comparative logical criteria, and in relation to the developing reality of the state. In place of “Jewishness,” the Canaanites sought to base themselves on purely “gentile” Israeliness, limited to life and no more, a state whose political myth is not historical-metaphysical but historical-territorial — from the land of Canaan and the Hebrew language to a pan-Hebrew geo-political dream.

Thus, the Canaanite values are atheistic values, as Yonathan Ratosh wrote:

A national purpose, unlike a religious-ethical-ideological purpose, does not leave any room for a superstructure. The purpose of a nation, like the purpose of every living organism, is simply to life: to fight for independence if enslaved, to nationalize its land, and to become a nation within it. Our people and our leaders are afraid to alter the Jewish communal purpose. They and their leaders do not grasp that the communal mission is not national; rather, it is fundamentally contrary to such a purpose, for the national purpose, as noted, is the purpose of every living organism: simply to be.<sup>58</sup>

According to this approach, the Jewish heritage of the diaspora, to which the State of Israel clings, is the root of all evil in the Israeli political context: so long as Israel continues to identify itself with the worldwide Jewish diaspora, while hermetically closing itself off from

the peoples of the region, it will continue to be a foreign body in the Eastern Mediterranean, and its existence will be in constant danger.

It is ironic that the Canaanite philosophy in its very revolutionism and criticism of the over-Jewishness of the State of Israel is the reem-bodiment of an immanent phenomenon of the Jewish political tradition: the flight from *theos* to an existential political condition rooted in the geographic environment has reoccurred periodically in Jewish history from the first attempt to return from the wilderness to Egypt, through the Egyptian-Aramaic orientation of the kings of Judah and Israel, to the expansionist tendencies of Alexander Yannai. The view of *theos* and *kratos* as two mutually destructive, conflicting components is not new. Josephus, whose definition of the essence of Judaism is purely theistic, viewed the development of *kratos* as the central cause for the problems of the Jews; while for Spinoza, it was exactly the opposite — the essence of political life must be existential-independent — it is the excess of *theos* in Judaism which brought about its political destruction and exile. Thus, the polarity of the political aspect is reflected in the various interpretations of Jewish history. The Canaanite approach is no more than a modern manifestation of the territorial-Egyptian motif which competed with the prophetic-wilderness motif over the true essence of the Jewish political entity.

It is strange — states the Canaanite historian A.G. Horon — that the State of Israel, which from the point of view of scientific and technological development clearly belongs to the 20th century, professes an identity between religion and nationality. This is only because of the claim that the "Jewish people" is unique. Once we abandon this approach, as has been done by the Hebrew movement, there is no reason why there should not be a clear and absolute separation between religion and state.<sup>59</sup>

The polarity implied here is clear — state versus religion, political doctrine versus the apolitical approach of the "Jewish people."

These views emerged with similar sharpness in the teaching of Leibowitz, who serves as an extreme example of the other side of the spectrum. In contrast to Horon's call for "a state which belongs to the 20th century," Leibowitz is seeking only the national-historical-unique aspect of the state:

The State of Israel, unlike any other state, is not the state of an "Israeli people" living within it at the present time; it is the state of the Jewish people defined not territorially but historically. The state belongs to the people, and not the people to the state. The state was established as the state of the Jewish people, and only as the state of the Jewish people is there any justification for its existence, in spite of all the complications and conflicts which this

entails. If it is not the state of the Jewish people, I doubt whether it can survive for long. From the point of view of accepted political theory, this may be an anomaly, but the history of the Jewish people is also an anomaly.<sup>60</sup>

The overemphasis on this anomaly brings Leibowitz to underestimate the political component, approaching a virtual negation of its value:

I do not know whether the historical Jewish people will continue to exist, but if the state is not the framework for the continued history of the Jewish people — it is utterly superfluous; then this state is only a ruling-sovereign mechanism, a framework of coercion and violence; this is the nature of the state under every regime. The justification for the existence of this mechanism is that it serves as an existential framework for a people which is an empirical, historical given, whose existence does not require explanation.<sup>61</sup>

In accordance with the dialectic laws of logic, a common denominator can be found between these two poles of the theo-“kratic” approach: between the ultra-theistic approach of Leibowitz and the Hebrew-atheistic approach of the Canaanites. First, there is an interesting convergence of interpretations: the ideal of the Canaanites, in the name of which they criticize the existing situation, is in the eyes of Leibowitz, our present image — and it is against this that he is protesting. According to the former, the state still suffers from the anachronism of the diaspora, while according to the latter it is already afflicted with Canaanite existentialism, for example:

The character of Israeli society and its political framework is determined by the fact that three million members of the Jewish people have here formed themselves into a new nation which has no history and no tradition — neither a tradition of ideas nor a tradition of a way of life; all this is lacking in this nation, which is increasingly composed of Jews, the majority of whom...have severed their links with the essential content of the historical Jewish people, which is Judaism. A new, synthetic nation is being formed here, with no specific original content, a people whose national uniqueness is merely its political framework. Not the Jewish people building a state for itself, but a state which is creating a people for itself. Instead of serving as a tool for realizing the values latent in the national existence, the state itself is becoming an end, a supreme value.<sup>62</sup>

Starting with an opposite analysis of the Israeli political reality, both these approaches arrive at the same conclusion: the need for a decision. Like the Canaanites, Leibowitz wants a clear and open

confrontation "between this state which is ours, and which is at present secular, and religion which calls for a totally different substance for the national organization of the Jewish people."<sup>63</sup>

### 3) The Unified Approach

#### *a) The statist approach*

The actual patterns of the State of Israel are interpreted as an "absurd national-religious symbiosis,"<sup>64</sup> so long as it is based on a fundamental conflict between political existentialism and a metapolitical Jewish existence. From Abravanel to Leibowitz, there has existed in Judaism an approach which views all manifestations of full political existence as a form of idolatry. To this category of dichotomous approaches we may also attribute the Canaanite parallel which views all manifestations of spiritual Judaism in politics as morbid and anomalous.

In contrast, however, the central current in Judaism and in Israel today is interested in just such a "symbiosis." The political ideal accepted by the Israeli governmental system is rooted in the myth of the kingdom of David — not the historical reality which brought with it disintegration and collapse, but rather the harmony which it embodied in our historical consciousness between a strong polity and sacred apolitical content. Although this content has today become bereft of the religious patterns of the historical past, it still comprises the element of uniqueness and of mission, the belief that the Jewish people has been chosen as a universal, moral spearhead. These elements are integrated into the overall structure of political existence. Thus, the essence of Jewish existence in a state is measured in two ways — as a political-territorial-historical phenomenon, and also as a spiritual-universal-eternal value.

In his statist aspirations, Ben-Gurion's philosophy took on the characteristic pattern of the unified approach: the proud and sovereign realization of political existence as one of the most radical of the Jewish "political" approaches, alongside the development of Israel as a spiritual center. Ben-Gurion's belief<sup>65</sup> in the spiritual mission of the State of Israel is the result of a theism similar to that of Ahad Ha'am, namely: the recognition of the immanent-Divine sacredness of the Jewish people, embodied in the Bible and the prophetic vision:

In the teaching of the prophets of Israel — the prophets of truth, purity and absolute justice — one finds the secret of the spiritual strength of the Jewish people in all generations. One senses in every page of these eternal books a moral and conceptual

striving for unity: the unity of man, the unity of the human race, the unity of the cosmos, the unity of matter and spirit, the unity of the Creator and the creation. This striving can be traced from the time of Abraham, Moses, the prophets, the medieval sages, to the great thinkers of recent generations such as Spinoza and Einstein. In the Bible, one finds intertwined the historical uniqueness of the Jewish people and its universal mission to all humanity. It expresses something more than history, than poetry, wisdom, philosophy, or revelation. In the Book of Books, one discovers the prophecy of the future — the future of the Jewish people and the future of the human race.<sup>66</sup>

As a member of the People of the Book, Ben-Gurion views the nation living in Zion as the legitimate heir of the Chosen People, with the obligations inherent in this status:

The belief in and the devotion to the supremacy of the spirit have characterized the Jewish people throughout its long historical journey from the revelation at Sinai to the present wars of Israel. This belief was the legacy of all those men of Israel who formed the character of the Hebrew nation from its beginnings to the present, who created and cultivated its philosophy, its poetry, its prophetic teaching, its literature, its laws, its vision of the end of days, and its messianic belief; those who strove to fulfill its national and world mission, who waged its struggle for political and spiritual independence, and who died as martyrs during the Crusades, the Inquisition, the massacres of Chmielnicki, and the Nazi Holocaust, and who created and fostered the settlement movement which led to the establishment of the State of Israel.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, Jewish history appears in the eyes of Ben-Gurion as a continuum of conceptual uniqueness which every generation coped with in its own way and with its own courage. The State of Israel, as part of this continuum, must embody this uniqueness in its political life, hence his declaration:

Israel was never promised that it would rule over the nations, but rather it would be a covenant of people, a light of nations, and today, more than any time in the past, the Jews will understand that the redemption of Israel is related to the redemption of the world, and that the world's hope of salvation from the threat of destruction and annihilation lies in just government and peace, mercy and truth, and precious is man who was created in God's image, as the prophets of Israel taught....The Jewish state, which incorporates within it the Jewish people, both its distant past and its recent history, is destined to discover and to express the traits latent in the Jewish people, to be a light unto the nations and to pave



the way to a new world order which will not betray the vision of messianic redemption.<sup>68</sup>

Ben-Gurion's attachment to the prophetic myth reflects the full depth of the dialectic of the unity between *theos* and *kratos* in his view. The land, in which he himself was the head of the "kratic" system, is in his eyes the land of the prophets — the direct representatives of *theos*, for which there is no longer any metaphysical, metapolitical, and at times even anti-political manifestation.

Ben-Gurion himself was aware of the apolitical ideal inherent in the prophetic vision,<sup>69</sup> and his statist approach therefore contains a dialectic synthesis between national political sovereignty and Divine orientation as expressed by Jeremiah or Isaiah. As he himself summed up in his book *The Eternity of Israel*:

Zionism is the faithful striving for the eternity of Israel, and the eternity of Israel is embedded in these two things: *the State of Israel and the Book of Books* (my emphasis).<sup>70</sup>

#### *b) The messianic approach*

Ben-Gurion's "State of Israel" is an eminent expression of Jewish sovereign *kratos*, but without a king, without the glory of the past, without the promised borders; and his "Book of Books," the embodiment of his credo, is the prophet without his Sender, the Bible without the giving of the Law.

In view of these fundamental changes in content, the statist approach defines itself as the legitimate heir of the biblical theo-political conception, but it does not pretend to embody the orthodox fulfillment of messianic belief.

On the other hand, there exists a higher unified approach in Israel with real messianic aspirations, for which the vision of the end of days is being fulfilled in the political revival, and the State of Israel must therefore function as the Promised Land — with the maximum of political power and the perfection of Divine worship. *Kratos* shall be the kingship of the House of David; *theos* — the heavens, in the manner of ancient Israel; and the political goal — the establishment of the Third Commonwealth.

The poetry of U.Z. Greenberg, for example, is a strong literary expression of these messianic-political aspirations, as in the following appeal to God:

We want eternity in body, eternity in our land,  
eternity in the crown of majesty,  
And not eternity in wandering, eternity in spirit,  
eternity in the misery of exile.<sup>71</sup>

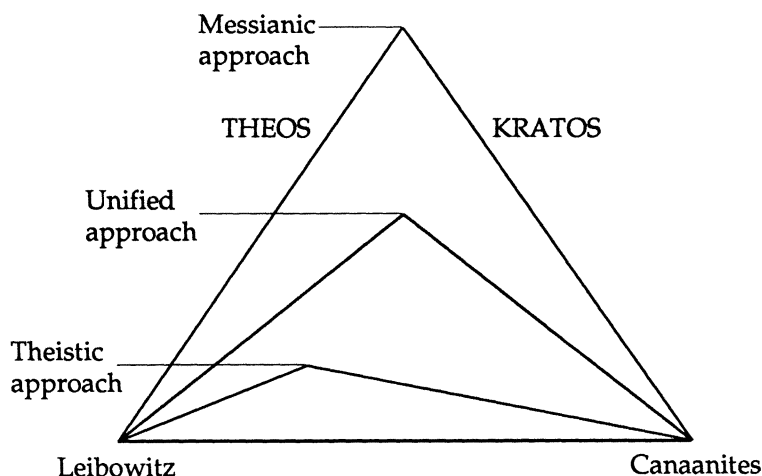
This messianic approach shares much in common with the statist approach: both maintain a unified conception of the kingdom of Israel as its political form of existence and the kingdom of heaven as our eternal goal, and both are identified as a historical fulfillment of age-old longing. But given the significant differences of content between them, they are also mutually critical: from the point of view of the compromising approach, the fundamentalist messianic aspirations seem more like dangerous fanaticism, while the statist approach is viewed by the extremist as the commercialization of a vision, as the depreciation of the act of fulfillment.<sup>72</sup>

In fact, this convergence of contrast and similarity is present in the theocratic encounter in Judaism, in all its forms — not only in the dichotomous approach which distinguishes between exclusive-existential *kratos* and *halakhic*-wilderness *theos*; not only in the unified approach which combines statism and messianism; but also in the theocratic syntheses with an explicitly theistic bias. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is Buber's approach: his ideal of the end of days, like his historical myth, is similar to the messianic ideal of the unified approach. In both these visions, the kingdom of heaven represents the true glory of the kingdom of Israel. But, for Buber, the political reality in Israel is a false messianism, and he views every unified approach (which contains real *kratos*) as an essentially mistaken messianic pretension.

From all this, what emerges is the relative nature of all definitions and the relative nature of any understanding of the political phenomenon in Israel: the same political reality is interpreted both as a *halakhic* state and as a Canaanite state; the same political ideology is interpreted both as a false messianism and as a form of pragmatism which intentionally destroys the vision.

The primary reason for this lies in the roots of Jewish political life, namely: in the adherence in principle to a political outlook which is essentially dialectic in nature. No position or period in Jewish history can be defined as being free of this problematic dialectic. The essence of theocracy as a vision of fulfillment and as an arena of conflict remains unchanged: hence the criticism and accord among the different approaches is derived from their contact with the two opposite axes of the Jewish polity.

The following graphic representation will help clarify the political system in Israel, in its theocratic ramifications. (The horizontal line denotes dichotomy, and the three intersecting points between the two poles represent the three approaches of theocratic synthesis):



Another factor contributing both to the convergence between the various approaches and to the sharpness of the mutual criticism is undoubtedly the unifying recognition that all are a reflection and a realization of the Jewish *Weltanschauung* and a decisive statement on the essence of Jewish existence. Political ideology (in both its unidimensional approach which seeks abrogation or exclusivity, and in its two-dimensional approach which views the polity as an actual historical phenomenon and as an abstract value) is therefore reflected in every important chapter of Jewish history, and is related to the fundamental questions of the essence of Judaism, as expressed in its myths, in the messianic longings torn between deterministic restraint and initiative, in our historical consciousness, and in our present existence.

The development of the present political reality provides a new perspective on the basic questions of the essence of Judaism. It also serves as a touchstone for the whole range of Jewish political ideologies: an inevitable gap has been revealed in all sectors between the political ideal and the actual reality. Bergman or Buber would find it hard to identify the State of Israel with the universal mission of sanctifying God's name; just as Borochof would find it hard to discover in it the society moving towards the egalitarian-socialist age. Ben-Gurion would have had to admit the steady retreat from the ideal of the land of the prophets; and U.Z. Greenberg, despite the spirit of Judah

ha-Levi which animated him, would have had to come to grips with the fact that, notwithstanding all the signs of redemption, we are still far from the messianic age; while the Canaanites would have to recognize the continuing involvement of the Jewish people of the diaspora in the fate of Israel,<sup>73</sup> as well as in such objective difficulties as the existence of the Palestinian entity which refutes the vision of the Hebrew Canaan within a homogeneous geo-political bloc.

In fact, if we add here the objective conditions of siege and isolation in which the State of Israel finds itself today, we can infer not only that the eternal Jewish mission is striving to establish itself in the renewed national Jewish existence, but also that it reflects the eternal affliction of the Jewish people<sup>74</sup> — that their state, today as in the distant past, is “the heritage of all the nations.”<sup>75</sup> The Jewish political anomaly is thus transferred from the realm of the internal spiritual struggle with the idea of the kingdom of heaven, to the realm of historical-actual phenomena in which the world political system is reluctant to accept the existence of a Jewish political entity.

This view is related to such external issues as anti-Semitism, the Jewish persecution complex, and the like, which go beyond the bounds of the present study. To return to the subject under discussion here, which is in the realm of Jewish self-examination: over and beyond the problematic comparison between real and ideal, the difficulties of the political attitudes in Israel today can be viewed as being derived from three basic factors: the pluralism of the definition of *theos*; the controversy over the place of the present in the historical evolution towards the messianic age; and, as opposed to these, the continued revolt against the tradition of the diaspora and the attempt to build a new independent Israeli existence.

Despite the novelty of these phenomena, they continue to find expression within the traditional framework of the theocratic continuum. Despite the revolution which has occurred in the system of beliefs and opinions, the basic structure of the political ideologies remains unchanged. Then as now, there exist within us extremists on both sides of the fence: the existential political voices as opposed to the prophetic voices of the wilderness. While the former tried, and are still trying, to free themselves from the Jewish destiny to become “like all the nations,” the latter strive for a particularist realization of a uniqueness which distinguishes Judaism from the historical-political world around it. The proponents of existential *kratos* bestowed their blessing on both the worship of Ba'al and on the Uganda plan, while the advocates of exclusive *theos* applauded the loss of territory. From the point of view of the overall Jewish outlook, both are exceptions. We can conclude that, while the central current in Judaism never renounced political existence, the value of the state was never perceived as an independent normative system. The political goal remained neither to

be "like all the nations" nor "not reckoned among the nations," but rather to be a light unto the nations, as expressed in the prophetic vision: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

In his book on Jewish theocracy, G. Weiler criticizes this phenomenon:

A central tenet of popular Zionism, which has today been adopted by the entire Jewish people, is that the Jewish state must be a shining example to others. For some reason they think that a Jewish state designed to deal only with those needs with which states generally concern themselves is beneath the dignity of the Jewish people.<sup>76</sup>

However, such criticism cannot alter the facts.

I therefore return to my point of departure: the dialectic continuum of Jewish history in which the political and metapolitical are intertwined has not been broken. The aspiration of Judaism, except for one-dimensional exceptions, is to be part of the political world but not to be assimilated within it, to cling to eternal life but without relinquishing the reality of territorial existence. Its goal is to achieve a "federalist" covenant between the *political reality*, with borders, trade, security, economy, and civil law, and the *worship of God* which sanctifies the land, the people, and life.

It is because of this dialectic duality that theocracy, in the literal-ecclesiastical sense of the term as the *actual rule of the representatives of God*, has never been realized in Israel; on the other hand, the political system has never been severed from the theistic system of thought expressed in, "Render unto God those things that are God's and unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." The kingdom of Israel — terrestrial Jerusalem — has constantly been faced with the challenge of realizing the kingdom of heaven — celestial Jerusalem.

History has yet to prove whether this challenge constituted the true course and the essence of Judaism, or whether it is a hopeless, obstinate quest for the impossible.

## Notes

1. In contrast to the Christian Augustinian approach which views the state as the antithesis of the kingdom of heaven. On this see: C.H. McIlwain, *The Growth of Political Thought in the West, from the Greeks to the End of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1932), ch. 5, pp. 154ff.
2. The opposite approach views the history of the State of Israel not as a new chapter in Jewish history, but as a *new nation*, and any connection between this nation and the "eternal people" or the wandering Jew is artificial. A good example of this is: B. Bettelheim, "Survival of the Jews," *The New Republic* (July 1, 1967), pp. 23-30. The struggle for self-determination in Israel as opposed to the historical Jewish consciousness finds expression in G. Weiler, *Theocratia Yehudit*, "Jewish Theocracy," (Tel Aviv, 1976), especially pp. 281ff. See also A. Rubinstein, *Lihiyot Am Hofshi*, "To Be a Free People" (Jerusalem, 1977).
3. See Zohar, I, 44b. S.H. Bergman has enlarged upon this in his book *Faith and Reason: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Washington, D.C., 1961), pp. 81-121; and in *BaMishol*, ed. N. Rotenstreich (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 182-185.
4. Despite my reservations with regard to the accepted definitions of *theocracy*, I nevertheless find it useful to discuss the idea of the kingdom of heaven in Judaism in terms of theocracy, first because this is the accepted term, and second because in this way I will be able to highlight the profound differences between the *rule of religion* as literal theocracy and "theocratic" ideologies, and their historical applications in Jewish history.
5. J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, book 1, ch. 8. See also J.N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 1-33.
6. In the words of S.H. Bergman: "The State of Israel is faced with the choice, whether it wishes to be a state like all other states, with all the intrigues of politics — but then the State of Israel will be without any importance and its foundation will be an ordinary historical event which is of no interest to humanity as a whole. Or does this small state, quantitatively insignificant, wish to serve as the true fulfillment of the messianic longings of the Jewish people throughout the generations, as the beginning of the redemption of the world in the kingdom of God....If the State of Israel views itself and its deeds as the beginning of the kingdom of God, then 'all the families of the earth' will be blessed by this state." *BaMishol*, pp. 57-58. A similar view is expressed by Y. Leibowitz in *Yahadut, Am Yehudi u-Medinat Yisrael* "Judaism, the Jewish People and the State of Israel" (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1975), p. 71.
7. Moses Mendelssohn provides a good definition of this two-



dimensional approach to political existence in Judaism. See M. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem and Other Jewish Writings*, trans. and ed. Alfred Jospe (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 99.

8. N. Rotenstreich, "Mendelssohn's Approach to the Understanding of Judaism," introduction to the Hebrew translation of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem. Yerushalayim, Ktavim Ktanim be-Inyenei Yehudim ve-Yahadut* (Tel Aviv, 1947), p. 17.
9. G. Weiler wrote: "*Halakhah* cannot be the law of the state. *Halakhah* knows only slaves. It does not recognize the national will....It runs totally counter to the principles which animate the state and the life of its citizens. Perhaps the attitude of *halakhah* is that man need not be a citizen at all. This is the problem of *halakhah*. The problem of the state is that man cannot be a citizen and the slave of one whose representatives claim supreme authority." *Theocratia Yehudit*, p. 291.
10. E.g., Josephus Flavius, *Jewish Antiquities*, XIV, 3:2; and *The Jewish War*, I, 4:3.
11. E.R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory* (New Haven, 1938), p. 32.
12. B. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, pp. 8, 183, 192, 193.
13. Mendelssohn, p. 132.
14. See, for example, U.Z. Greenberg, *Sefer ha-Kitrug vеха-Emunah* (Jerusalem, 1936), p. 37.
15. *Guide for the Perplexed*, part III, ch. 12. See also *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Bet ha-Behirah, 6:16.
16. D. Ben-Gurion, *Nezah Israel*, "The Eternity of Israel" (Tel Aviv, 1964), p. 186.
17. Don I. Abravanel, *Commentary on the Torah* (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 39. See also his commentary on the minor prophets, pp. 53-54, 211-214.
18. See, for example, his articles "Moses" (Hebrew), *Al Parashat Derakhim*, "At the Crossroads," collected articles (Berlin, 1904), vol. 3, p. 221; and "Flesh and Spirit" (Hebrew) *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 222-232.
19. As he wrote: "Die Selbstbehauptung muss mit einer Hingabe an eine uberselbstische Sache verkupft sein, um deren willen dieses Selbst erhalten wird." "Rede auf dem XVI Zionisten-Kongress in Basel" (1 August 1929), *Der jude und sein judentum*, pp. 521-522.
20. B. Borochoy, "The Elements of Proletarian Zionism" (Hebrew), *Kitvei B. Borochoy*, "Writings of B. Borochoy," ed. Z. Abramovitz and I. Yitzhaki (Tel Aviv, 1934), p. 172.
21. "The generation in the wilderness hath no portion in the world to come, as it is written, 'In this wilderness they shall be consumed and there they shall die.'" *Sanhedrin* 110b. See also Ezekiel 2:1-28.
22. See *Etz Hayyim, Sha'ar He'arat Ha'mochin*, ch. 1, or *Likkutei Torah, Parashat Shalah*, 38a. See also B. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, p. 178.

23. See, for example, G. Weiler, *Theocratia Yehudit*, pp. 111-126. He bases himself primarily on Y. Kaufman, *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisraelit*, "The Religion of Israel" (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1953), vols. 3-4.
24. Abravanel, *Commentary on minor prophets*, pp. 211-214 and 234-235. See also *Mashmia Yeshu'ah* (from *Sefer Rosh Amanah*; Koenigsberg, 1861), pp. 37-39.
25. A.J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York, 1962), pp. 103-140, 474-483. See also D. Daiches, "The Prophets, by Abraham J. Heschel," *Commentary*, no. 6, vol. 35 (June 1963), p. 538.
26. This is Heschel's interpretation to Isaiah 9:1: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a brilliant light; on those who dwelt in a land of gloom light has dawned." See Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 171, and *ibid.*, pp. 162, 167.
27. *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Melakhim, 1:9, and the comments by R. Abraham b. David there. See also *Guide to the Perplexed*, part I, ch. 54.
28. II Samuel 7:1-18.
29. I Kings, chs. 8, 9, 11.
30. E.g., Isaiah 40:3; Jeremiah 2:2 and 31:1-2.
31. E.g., the open conflict between King Ahab and Elijah the prophet. See I Kings, chs. 17-21.
32. M. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, p. 138. See also D. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations" (Hebrew), *Nezah Israel*, pp. 126, 127.
33. Y. Leibowitz, *Yahadut Am Yisrael uk-Medinat Yisrael*, p. 76.
34. See *Yalkut Shimoni*, Nitzvim, on the three covenants. See also *Berakhot* 48b, and Rashi's commentary there.
35. S.R. Hirsch, *Horeb - Essays on Israel's Duties in the Diaspora* (trans. I. Grunfeld, 1962).
36. See G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971).
37. Abravanel, *Yeshuot Meshiho* (cited in *Sefer Rosh Amanah*), ch. 7, pp. 57-62. See also his *Commentary on minor prophets*, p. 401.
38. *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Melakhim, 12:1.
39. Z. Jabotinsky, "Zionism and the Land of Israel" (Hebrew), *Ktavim Zionim Rishonim*, "Early Zionist Writings" (Jerusalem, 1949), pp. 128-129.
40. Quite consistently, rabbinic Judaism never found anything to say in condemnation of Josephus Flavius, the priest from Jerusalem who was prepared to become a Roman slave. This is not surprising. Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai is credited with having laid the foundations for the continued survival of Judaism after the fall of Jerusalem. According to tradition, he saved his life by being smuggled out of besieged Jerusalem in a coffin to Titus' camp. There he asked that the Roman

general grant him Jabneh and its sages — this against the background of the destruction of the holy city, where its residents were faced with the alternative of choosing between death and bondage. Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai was accorded his request. He and Josephus must be judged in the same manner — guilty, condemned, or praised. Both made a choice, and they knew what they were choosing. G. Weiler, *Theokratia Yehudit*, p. 32.

41. On the fear of messianic activism, see L. Strauss, "Abravanel's Political Tendency and Political Teaching," *Isaac Abravanel: Six Lectures*, ed. J.B. Trend and H. Loewe (Cambridge, 1937), p. 108. See also Ahad Ha'am, "In the Footsteps of the Messiah" (Hebrew), from *Yalkut Katan*, cited in *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 4, pp. 87-90. Hence also the rejection of Zionism and the State of Israel by the ultra-Orthodox. On the question of whether the State of Israel divested the Land of Israel of its sanctity, see J.D. Soloveitchik, *BeSod haYahid vekaYahad*, ed. P. Pelli (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 422-424.
42. As for the motto for the Jews' "uniqueness and mission," Ben-Gurion chose Deuteronomy 7:7-8: "It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the Lord set His heart on you and chose you — indeed, you are the smallest of peoples; but it was because the Lord loved you." Quoted in *Nezah Israel*, p. 7.
43. T. Herzl, *Altneuland* (1902). Trans. English P. Arnold (1960), pp. 47, 64, 73-74, 80, 82, 87, 131, 151, 170, 271, 282, 288, 293.
44. This in contrast to the criticism of Ahad Ha'am, who viewed *Altneuland* as merely an imitation of the gentile states: "There is really no impression here of the special national spirit of an ancient people, and it is merely an imitation which testifies to the enslavement of the spirit." But despite his criticism of the severance from the source, Ahad Ha'am admits that "there is also a temple in *Altneuland*, though it is not on the Temple Mount." "Sin and Punishment" (Hebrew), from *Yalkut Katan*, cited in *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 3, p. 162.
45. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des II Zionisten-Congresses* (Wien, 1898).
46. Ahad Ha'am, "The First Zionist Congress" (Hebrew), from *Yalkut Katan*, cited in *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 3, p. 56: "The salvation of Israel will be brought about by prophets and not by diplomats." See also B. Kurzweil, "Ahad-Ha'amism: The Group Will to Survive," *Judaism*, IV (1955), p. 213; and A. Herzberg, *Introduction to the Zionist Idea* (New York, 1973), pp. 51ff.
47. See Ahad Ha'am, "Those Who Cry" (Hebrew), *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 3, pp. 200-209. See also Z. Jabotinsky, "On Territorialism" (Hebrew), *Ktavim Zionim Rishonim*, pp. 134-136.
48. "As for those who fear that 'we are liable to transfer to Palestine too many ancient laws which have become obsolete' — to them I do not even wish to respond, for it is impossible to argue seriously whether

or not our intelligentsia in the Land of Israel will grow side-curls or wear a fringed garment. All this — excuse me for the sharpness of the expression — is pure nonsense." Jabotinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

49. Quoted by A. Bein in *Theodor Herzl* (1940; latest ed. 1970), p. 373.
50. S.H. Bergman, *BaMishol*, p. 93.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Koenigtum Gottes* was written in 1932. The third German edition (1956) was translated into English as *Kingship of God* (1967).
53. M. Buber, *On Zion: The History of an Idea*. Trans. Stanley Goldman (London, 1973), p. 142.
54. J.D. Soloveitchik, *BeSod haYahid vahaYahad*, pp. 424-425.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 430.
56. B. Kurzweil, "The Nature and Sources of the 'New Hebrew' ('Canaanites')" (Hebrew), *Sifruteinu haHadasha — Hemshekh o Mahapekha?*, "Modern Hebrew Literature — Continuation or Revolution?" (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1960), pp. 280-283.
57. A.G. Horon, "The Canaanite Heritage — Its Burial and Resurrection" (Hebrew), from "The Hebrew Past," quoted by Y. Ratosh in *MiNizahon leMapolet*, "From Victory to Defeat" (Tel Aviv, 1976), p. 259.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
60. Y. Leibowitz, *Yahadut Am Yehudi u-Medinat Israel*, p. 147.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 429-430.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
65. With the closing of the Bible, prophecy came to an end, but the Divine Presence did not depart. The people were severed from their land and went into exile, and the messianic vision accompanied them throughout their wanderings, and the voice of God continued to ring in their ears. Their hope in a future of independence and justice was not shaken and did not die. This Divine voice speaks to man today just as it did three thousand years ago. There are those who believe that the voice comes from heaven, and those who say that it comes from the heart. What is important is the voice, and not the debate over its source. D. Ben-Gurion, *Nezah Israel*, p. 174.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
68. D. Ben-Gurion, *Kokhavim veEfer*, "Stars and Dust" (Ramat-Gan, 1976), p. 196.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.
70. D. Ben-Gurion, *Nezah Israel*, p. 186.

71. U.Z. Greenberg, "*BeKez haDerakhim Omed Rabbi Levi Yizhak miBerdichev veDoresh Teshuvat Ram*," "Rabbi Levi Isaac of Berdichev Stands at the End of the Roads and Demands an Answer from God," *Ha'aretz* (May 3, 1946); also in U.Z. Greenberg, *Rehovot haNahar* (1951).
72. B. Kurzweil, "The Essence of the Poetry of U.Z. Greenberg" (Hebrew), *Bein Hazon leVein haAbsurdi*, "Between the Vision and the Absurd" (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1966), p. 49. See also D. Ben-Gurion, *Nezah Israel*, p. 125.
73. On the subject of the diaspora in Zionist ideology, see Daniel J. Elazar, "Towards a Renewed Zionist Vision," *Forum* (1977), no. 2 (26), pp. 52-69.
74. "The State of Israel is isolated today, just as the Jewish people was isolated during the thousands of years of its existence. And perhaps the isolation of the state today is even more striking than in the past, for it is clearly revealed in the international arena....The Jews of America cannot remain silent and in repose until the danger in which the State of Israel finds itself should pass. Those living in the Holy Land cannot speak nonsense about the 'new Jew' being created there." J.D. Soloveitchik, *BeSod haYahid vechaYahad*, pp. 395-396.
75. Genesis 1:1, and Rashi's commentary on this verse.
76. G. Weiler, *Theokratia Yehudit*, p. 283.