

“THE WAR OF THE TORAH”: THE ISRAELI RELIGIOUS PEACE MOVEMENTS’ STRUGGLE FOR LEGITIMATION

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Since the Six-Day War, religious Zionism has been increasingly identified with the ideology of the Complete Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael Hashlema). The maximalist stance on the territorial issue has become depoliticized and achieved a taken-for-granted status. The religious peace movements have interpreted privileged texts and politicized the annual cycle of festivals in an attempt to break this ideological hegemony and to show that their more dovish stance is also grounded in an authentic reading of Jewish tradition. However, they have failed to create the cultural resonance that is an essential prerequisite for success.

The Long Journey to the Right

With the signing of the armistice agreements in 1948, the question of Israel’s boundaries disappeared from the public agenda. The right-wing Herut movement continued to dream and sing about “the two banks of the Jordan,” but for all intents and purposes the subject was no longer relevant. Only after the Six-Day War, nearly twenty years later, did it become a live issue again. The debate as to whether the territories that came under Israeli jurisdiction had been liberated or occupied was not just a

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semantic one; it reflected the conflicting opinions about their future and that of Israeli society as a whole.

Although a number of Mapai leaders joined and even played a prominent role in the Complete Land of Israel movement, this renewed polarization of political life led, by and large, to a return to the old prestate divisions between Labor and Revisionist Zionism. However, the position of the latter had changed enormously. The inclusion of the newly created Gahal bloc in the National Unity Government that was set up on the eve of the Six-Day War was a clear indication of the fact that Herut, its main component, had shed its pariah status. A decade later, the broader-based Likud assumed the reins of power. With this "upheaval," the dominant party structure that had hitherto characterized Israeli politics gave way to the polarized situation of two large blocs competing for supremacy. Henceforth, elections were no longer a foregone conclusion; they could and did, in fact, go either way.

This move to the right was both paralleled and influenced by a similar one within religious Zionism.¹ In the wake of the Six-Day War, the National Religious Party (NRP) adopted a maximalist stance on the territorial issue based on a messianic interpretation of contemporary Jewish history. This led to, and was subsequently reinforced by, the termination of its historic alliance with Labor Zionism and the party's inclusion in the Likud-led government of Menachem Begin. With the passage of time the NRP took an increasingly hawkish stance. However, this continual move to the right did not prevent parties with an even more nationalist stance from running for the Knesset. Some were religious (e.g., Morasha in 1984), others were joint religious-secular endeavors (e.g., Tehiya from 1981 to 1992, Ihud Leumi in 1999). However, both the means and the ends they were meant to achieve were always the same — a strengthening of the political right and of Israel's hold on the administered territories.²

A similar development occurred beyond the confines of the Knesset. Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful) was established in 1974 as a faction within the NRP, but it soon left the party and party politics in general. As an extraparlimentary group dedicated to settlement of the areas captured in the Six-Day War, it had an enormous impact not only on the Israeli map but also on the Israeli mind. However, the passage of time saw the emergence of new groups. Zu Artzenu (This Is Our Land) led the struggle for the Complete Land of Israel during the Rabin administration, and Dor Hahemshech (the Next Generation) began to fill this role after Ehud Barak took office. The younger settlers were determined

to build on the achievements of their parents, or at least ensure that they are not destroyed.

The significance of these developments goes beyond the stance of the different parties and extraparliamentary groups. Before the Six-Day War, religious Zionism used its political power to assure its own cultural autonomy and to impose *halakhah* (Jewish law) in public life by legislative means. Since 1967, however, this politicization of religion has been supplemented by the religionization of politics.³ Leaders of the national-religious camp, political and spiritual alike, began to take an increasingly active role in other spheres of political life, and particularly with respect to the issue of the territories. In fact, the religious right soon became the “main ideological bolster of the hawkish position.” As Shlomo Deshen has pointed out:

No other force competes with it in supplying the spiritual vitality and depth to the position of the pragmatists, which in itself is ideologically sterile. The orthodox fill a crucial position in the Israeli right wing, and consequently in the overall Israeli political spectrum. This importance is distinct from the pivotal position of the orthodox in coalition arithmetics; even if the religious parties were to falter at the polls their ideological importance, as the essential powerhouse of the right wing would remain unchanged.⁴

This situation has led to an almost total identification of religious Zionism with the Israeli right and the ideology of the Complete Land of Israel. To be an Orthodox Jew is to be a hawk. Religious doves are not only a rare bird; they are, in the eyes of many at least, a nonkosher species. These exceptions to the rule are, therefore, a cognitive minority⁵ and cognitive deviants⁶ at one and the same time.

The “long journey to the right” has led to a depoliticization of the Complete Land of Israel ideology within religious Zionism. It has achieved a “taken for granted” or “goes without saying” status. Not only is the maximalist stance on the territorial issue regarded as beyond dispute; many members of the religious right do not even know that there is an alternative. The naturalization of the hawks leads perforce to the marginalization of their more dovish counterparts.⁷ The religious peace movements are therefore faced with a twofold task: they have to show that there is, in fact, an alternative ideology to that of Gush Emunim, and that it is grounded in a legitimate/Orthodox reading of the Jewish tradition.⁸

Religious Doves

The renewed ideologization of Israeli society in the wake of the Six-Day War led very quickly to settlement efforts on the West Bank. Within less than a year, Rabbi Moshe Levinger headed the first attempt to return to the ancient city of Hebron. This was followed by similar actions throughout the administered territories. However, it was not until the beginning of 1974 that the different groups involved came together to form Gush Emunim. As has already been pointed out, the major aim of the new organization was to settle the areas captured in the Six-Day War and especially on the West Bank, or what they referred to as Judea and Samaria. Doing so, it was hoped, would ensure Israel's continued hold over "the heartland of the historic Land of Israel."

In response to these developments, a group of religious Jews set up Oz Veshalom (Strength and Peace), "an ideological and political circle of religious Zionism." Their aim, as expressed in the movement's manifesto, was to promote a peace settlement based on territorial compromise, so as to preserve the Jewish character of Israeli society and maintain its high ethical standards. Although the mere existence of such a group was of immense importance during the halcyon days of Gush Emunim, it met with only limited success. Most of the founders were Jerusalem intellectuals, and they found it very difficult to spread their message beyond the capital and the academic world. Oz Veshalom remained a small elite group with little impact on the direction of the religious right. Even when the Lebanon War caused a certain amount of disaffection in the national-religious camp, the movement was unable to take advantage of it.

The religious right's adamant stance in favor of entering Beirut and against the establishment of a committee of inquiry into the Sabra and Shatilla massacre led to a spontaneous demonstration in Jerusalem. The fact that the protest attracted a relatively large number of people and that most of them had never taken part in the activities of Oz Veshalom prompted the idea of setting up another religious peace movement. The organizers were convinced that the protest was indicative of a much wider rift within the religious right. At the same time, however, they felt that those concerned would not join Oz Veshalom because of its elitist image. Only a new movement that had not been stigmatized as "Peace Now with *kipot* (skullcaps)" would be able to offer, then, an alternative vision to that of the Complete Land of Israel.

Netivot Shalom (Paths of Peace) was meant to fill this role, but it has in fact failed to do so. At the founding meeting of the

new movement in 1982, the large hall was filled to capacity. Many of those who attended were part of the “knitted-skullcap generation,” and it was addressed by two prominent religious-Zionist rabbis — Rav Yehuda Amital and Rav Aaron Lichtenstein, the coprincipals of Yeshivat Har-Etzion. The widespread media coverage of the nascent movement and its young leaders reinforced the feeling that there was a new force in the making. However, although Netivot Shalom continued to attract larger numbers and a wider variety of people than Oz Veshalom, the balance of forces within religious Zionism remained the same.

With the passage of time, both religious peace movements came to the realization that there was nothing to be gained from their duplication of efforts. After three years they began to coordinate their activities, and soon became, to all intents and purposes, a single unit. The joint movement retained both names because of the contingencies of fundraising, but it is usually referred to by supporters and opponents alike as Netivot Shalom.

From the outset, the religious peace movements have engaged in a wide variety of educational activities. These include publications, such as ideological essays and pamphlets on the weekly Torah portion, and the organization of different forums (e.g., lectures, symposia, and study weekends) for the dissemination of their worldview. Since the founding of Netivot Shalom, protest actions against the government and/or the religious right have become an increasingly important feature of the religious doves’ repertoire, and with the signing of the Oslo Accords, contacts with Palestinian organizations were developed. They took the form of different kinds of dialogue, as well as joint action on house demolition and other human rights issues.

Although Netivot Shalom’s educational activities are open to all, many of them cater almost exclusively to members and sympathizers. To a large extent, therefore, the movement preaches to the converted. Nevertheless, the importance of this particular role should not be underestimated. As Aronoff pointed out in his anthropological study of Netivot Shalom,⁹ many members wonder from time to time whether they are going crazy, and they therefore need a periodic reaffirmation of their worldview. Such is the fate of a cognitive minority.

Of course, Netivot Shalom’s main efforts are directed toward the national-religious camp and especially its younger generation. Movement spokesmen regard themselves as particularly suitable for this task because they “speak the same language” as Gush Emunim. Although the ultimate aim is to convince the religious right to adopt a more dovish stance, Netivot Shalom is aware of

the need “to make our voice heard even if it is not heeded”; just presenting an “alternative vision of religious Zionism” is important because it shows that there is “no necessary connection” between traditional Judaism and the ideology of the Complete Land of Israel.¹⁰ There are other faces to the Torah, and Netivot Shalom is one of them.

Movement leaders are also interested in making their brand of religious Zionism known to secular Israelis. As Uriel Simon, one of the founders of Oz Veshalom, explained in a letter to a high school teacher: “It is our duty to teach the religious right that their interpretation of the Torah is not the only one, and that it will lead to disaster. We also have to teach the secular left that the pursuit of peace and justice does not contradict Judaism at its best. That is the twofold role that we have undertaken despite our meager resources.”¹¹

For Simon and others, creating an awareness of Netivot Shalom among secular Israelis, and, for that matter, among Palestinians, fulfills an additional purpose: it leads to a *kiddush hashem*, a sanctification of God’s name. As religious Jews, their efforts in pursuit of peace will, they hope, reflect favorably on the Holy One whose name is peace.

Man (*Adam*) vs. Land (*Adama*)

Netivot Shalom spokesmen often try to clarify the movement’s positions on different issues by comparing them to those of the secular left and/or the *haredim* (ultra-Orthodox). In such instances they draw attention to both the distinctiveness and superiority of their worldview. As we have seen, however, most of Netivot Shalom’s criticisms are directed toward the national-religious camp. Both the agreements and disagreements between the advocates of the Complete Land of Israel and the champions of territorial compromise make them natural adversaries.¹²

Netivot Shalom, no less than Gush Emunim, favors the religionization of politics. It also maintains that the religious-Zionist agenda should be expanded to include a broader range of issues than has hitherto been addressed by the NRP. To quote the first clause of Netivot Shalom’s manifesto: “Our religious-Zionist understanding integrates the Jewish national renaissance with the fulfillment of the Torah’s instructions for living in the Land of Israel according to the dictum ‘and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These values must guide the political behavior of the state of Israel no less than the conduct of

individuals.”¹³ Despite the fact that its interpretations of Jewish law are very different and even diametrically opposed to those of the religious right, Netivot Shalom also favors applying them to the relationship between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, Gush Emunim and Netivot Shalom not only agree on the parameters of religious Zionism, they also see eye to eye regarding its major components. Both movements are committed to four “loyalties” — to the Torah of Israel, the People of Israel, the Land of Israel, and the State of Israel. However, these links also constitute the crux of the controversy between them, since Gush Emunim and Netivot Shalom do not attach the same importance to these commitments and each movement has a different hierarchy of priorities or “balance of values.”

Netivot Shalom’s sharpest criticism of the leaders of the national-religious camp is that they have reduced religious Zionism to a single value. Movement spokesmen contend that their fixation on the idea of the Complete Land of Israel constitutes a gross distortion of Judaism. After all, they argue, the often-quoted statement, “Settling the land is equal to all the other precepts,” is just another example of rabbinic hyperbole, and according to Maimonides and other luminaries it is not even one of the 613 biblical commandments, so that the focus must clearly be shifted elsewhere.

The need for a new hierarchy of priorities is also associated with what is seen as the national-religious camp’s false and even idolatrous understanding of the sanctity of the Land of Israel. Time and again Netivot Shalom leaders have pointed out that no physical space is, or for that matter can be, inherently holy. Its special sanctity, they insist, is conditional on the behavior of those who live in it. The holiness of the chosen land is dependent on the conduct of the chosen people.

For Netivot Shalom, peace is the very center of Judaism: “Its [the Torah’s] ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.” As Uriel Simon summarized the situation in his opening remarks at a rally devoted to the issue of territorial compromise: “The argument between Gush Emunim and us is that we love the Land of Israel and want peace, while they love peace and want the Land of Israel. The difference is that they say let us have the entire Land of Israel now and the messiah will bring peace, while we say let us make every effort to achieve peace and the messiah will bring the entire Land of Israel.”¹⁴

Simon and others back up this comparison by quoting a rabbinic saying that emphasizes the religious duty to actively seek

and pursue peace: "Now the Torah did not insist that we actually go in pursuit of the commandments, but said: if a bird's nest chance to be before thee...when thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard....In all these cases, if they come your way you are commanded to perform the duties connected with them but you need not go in pursuit of them. In the case of peace, however, seek peace wherever you happen to be, and pursue it if it is elsewhere."¹⁵

The duty to make peace derives, at least in part, from the even more basic obligation to preserve human life. Thus, Netivot Shalom's manifesto stipulates that the sanctity of human life should be "the highest priority of religious Zionism." Since this call for a new "balance of values" is invariably based on the biblical idea that every person is created in the divine image, the movement is not only concerned about Jewish lives; it also expresses disquiet about taking Arab ones, asserting that we must fear killing others no less than we fear being killed ourselves.¹⁶

Of course, this view of mankind in general and Israel's Arab neighbors in particular has much wider ramifications. It necessitates a commitment to *taharat haneshek* (the purity of arms) if and when war does break out, and a humane attitude toward those under Israeli administration as a result of past hostilities. To quote the movement's manifesto once again: "The basic principle that whatever is hateful to you do not do unto your fellow man, applies not only to interpersonal relations, but also to the relationship between the Jewish and Palestinian peoples." As has already been pointed out, this extension constitutes the very essence of religious Zionism.

Gush Emunim has repeatedly attributed Netivot Shalom's stance to a weakness of faith. It is explained, or more precisely explained away, in terms of self-interest or an attachment to Western values rather than authentic Jewish ones. Of course, the leaders of the movement see things very differently. Only at the End of Days, they insist, can God's Torah be complete. Religious Zionism is therefore faced with a fateful choice between man (*adam*) and land (*adama*). It has to give preference to the former because to do otherwise would be to abandon fundamental Jewish values such as the pursuit of peace and the sanctity of human life. Returning part of the Land of Israel is distressing but it cannot be avoided. And as Netivot Shalom spokesmen repeatedly point out, in the words of the Kotzker Rebbe "there is nothing more whole than a broken heart."¹⁷

A War of Verses

The religious tenor of the debate between Netivot Shalom and Gush Emunim is perhaps best exemplified by the extent to which both movements quote traditional Jewish sources in support of their worldview. Even though Netivot Shalom leaders often criticize their right-wing counterparts for making “political statements in the guise of halakhah,” they invariably reply in kind. As members of the same textual community,¹⁸ movement spokesmen feel the need to prove that their ideology is grounded in traditional Judaism.¹⁹ For better or worse, the movement is constantly engaged in “a war of verses.”²⁰ Sources of all descriptions — biblical and rabbinic, *halakhah* and *agada* (Jewish homiletic lore) — are quoted in support of territorial compromise with the Palestinians and a more humane attitude toward them as long as they are under Israeli administration.²¹

Netivot Shalom makes frequent reference to *halakhic* decisions by prominent rabbis,²² on issues such as the rights of minorities and the application of the Talmudic principle of self-defense (“If someone comes to kill you, kill him first”) to Israel’s relations with the Palestinians. However, movement spokesmen give particular prominence to the ruling of the former Sephardi chief rabbi, Rav Ovadia Yosef, on the question of territorial compromise:

If the army generals and the government decide that it is a matter of saving life, that if parts of Israel are not returned there is a chance of an immediate war with Arab neighbors...and if these territories are returned there will be less danger of war and a chance of lasting peace, it is permissible to return parts of the Land of Israel because nothing is more important than saving lives....If there is a disagreement [between experts] on an issue in which lives are at stake we adopt a lenient stance. It is therefore necessary to return the territories to prevent the danger of war.²³

On countless occasions, Netivot Shalom has quoted this unequivocal statement as a rejoinder to rabbinic rulings against ceding any part of the Land of Israel, and to any edict instructing soldiers to disobey any order to evacuate settlements or even military bases in Judea and Samaria. Territorial compromise, movement leaders insist, is in accordance with Jewish law, or at least with one authoritative reading of it.

Netivot Shalom also resorts to what Tololyan has referred to, albeit in a very different context, as projective narratives.²⁴ These

historical accounts are descriptive and prescriptive at one and the same time; in addition to recalling what happened in the past, they indicate how people should act in the present. Or as Jewish tradition succinctly puts it: "The deeds of the fathers are a sign to the sons."

Abraham is undoubtedly the most frequently cited role model for territorial compromise. Time and again, Netivot Shalom draws attention to the fact that he gave up part of the Land of Israel that God had just promised him so as to avoid conflict and bloodshed between his shepherds and those of his nephew, Lot. "Separate thyself I pray thee from me, if thou wilt take the left hand then I will go to the right, or if thou take the right hand then I will go to the left."²⁵ The rightness of Abraham's decision was attested to by the fact that God immediately reconfirmed his right to the entire land: "And the Lord said after Lot separated from him, 'Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, eastward and westward, for all the land which thou seest to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever.'"²⁶

This incident, together with Abraham's subsequent insistence on buying and paying in full for the Cave of Machpela,²⁷ are regarded as a sign to future generations that there is a clear distinction between religious and legal/political rights to the Land of Israel. Whereas the former is eternal, the latter cannot always be actualized if they conflict with other imperatives such as the pursuit of peace and/or respecting the rights of others. In such instances, territorial compromise is not only legitimate, it is mandatory.

Netivot Shalom also makes frequent reference to the biblical motif "for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." In this case "the sign to the sons" is clearly spelled out. Time and again the Torah commands the descendants of the Hebrew slaves to be sensitive to the pain and suffering of others — to see the Jewish eyes of the Palestinians.²⁸ Recalling the experience of the Children of Israel in Egypt is meant to encourage moral behavior toward today's strangers rather than provide justifications for all sorts of immoral acts against them.

In certain instances Netivot Shalom spokesmen cite a commentary on a biblical text rather than the text itself. They do so in order to pit their reading against the more widely accepted one and thereby show that there is an alternative interpretation. For instance, on several occasions Uriel Simon has drawn attention to Nachmanides' reading of Genesis 1:1 because "Israeli schoolchildren today are being overzealously fed on Rashi's commentary."²⁹ The actual hermeneutics are, of course, beyond the scope of this

essay. Suffice it to say that, whereas Rashi, the doyen of biblical commentators, used the opening sentence of Genesis to argue that God gave an unconditional promise of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people, Nachmanides contends that it is intended to teach us exactly the opposite — that our hold on the land is conditional on our obedience to the divine word. His emphasis, and that of Netivot Shalom, is on behavior rather than borders, duties rather than rights.³⁰

Not surprisingly, the “war of verses” also includes conflicting interpretations of the writings of Rav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook, the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine and a seminal figure for the knitted-skullcap generation. At the founding meeting of Netivot Shalom, Rav Yehuda Amital bemoaned “the desecration of Rav Kook’s honor.” Subsequently, he and others drew attention to the universalistic aspects of his teachings. They referred to Rav Kook’s often-quoted statement that “the fear of heaven must not supplant man’s natural moral instincts,” and his more far-reaching statement that love of mankind sometimes has to go beyond and even override *halakhah*: “The love of humanity has to burst forth from the fount of kindness, not as a response to a commandment...but as an intense inner spiritual movement. It has to overcome many contradictions that are scattered like rocky obstacles in isolated sources, in the superficiality of certain laws, and in a multitude of points of view that derive from the diminution of the self-evident part of the Torah and the national morality.”³¹

Thus Rav Kook, the most revered spiritual leader of the national-religious camp, is cited in support of Netivot Shalom’s more dovish stance. Even his teachings are subjected to a close reading so as to show that the more right-wing interpretation of them is “by no means the exclusive or the necessary one.”

Shabbat Shalom

The weekly Torah portion (*parshat hashavua*) plays a central role in the Jewish textual community. Besides being the central feature of the Shabbat (Sabbath) morning service, it provides the basis for rabbinic homiletics (*divrei Torah*) both on Shabbat itself and during the course of the preceding week. Of late, an increasing number of religious movements, both haredi and national-religious, publish a weekly pamphlet containing a selection of traditional sources together with articles showing how they pertain to contemporary events.³²

Netivot Shalom's first attempt to incorporate the weekly Torah portion into its cycle of activities took the form of a "protest vigil in support of the peace process" outside the home of the prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu. Each time it included the Friday afternoon prayer service and a short address on the issue of peace as reflected in the *parshat hashavua*. Over a period of six months the number of participants steadily decreased, and it was decided to terminate the weekly vigil. However, the high level of the *divrei Torah* presented gave rise to the idea of bringing out *Shabbat Shalom* — a weekly pamphlet devoted to transmitting the message of peace in the *parshat hashavua*. This would be a particularly effective way, it was thought, of waging the "war of verses" against the religious right.

Publication of a weekly pamphlet has, in fact, enabled Netivot Shalom to show on a regular basis how its political ideology and religious worldview constitute one of the legitimate readings of "seventy faces of the Torah." Each week, *halakhah* and *agada* are cited in support of territorial compromise, the humane treatment of Palestinians still under Israeli jurisdiction, and other issues on the movement's agenda. Even those arguments hitherto not backed up by traditional Jewish sources are now grounded in ancient texts.

To take just one example: in analyzing Rashi's comment that Simeon and Levi were responsible not only for the murder of all the males in Schechem as a response to the rape of their sister Dinah, but also for the attempt to kill their brother Joseph, one contributor pondered the significance of this additional accusation. He suggested that it was an attempt by the biblical commentator to make an unequivocal moral statement: "There is no difference between one form of violence and another. Anybody who can kill all the men of Schechem without distinction, will in the end want to kill his brother as well."³³ Thus, the slippery-slope argument is also couched in traditional terms; the rhetoric of rationality as well as the rhetoric of rectitude is grounded in the sources.³⁴

Of particular interest are those issues of *Shabbat Shalom* that offer an alternative to the kind of "othering" that is so common both in contemporary Israel and the Jewish tradition.³⁵ Aware of the danger that "transforming the other from flesh and blood into an abstract concept on which we project all the evil in the world" may turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, some contributors opted for commentaries that portrayed even the most virulent enemies of the Jewish people as "complex human characters rather than stereotypes symbolizing a cruel history." To quote one *dvar Torah* on the relationship between the brothers Esau and Jacob, a

relationship that is regarded as a paradigm for that of Jews and non-Jews throughout the ages:

There are midrashic statements that fix our worst enemies in an eternal state of hatred. In my opinion, Rashi's approach is preferable. He was able to relate to Esau the man, who also knew how to love and honor others....In today's Torah portion it is said: "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, 'let the days of mourning for my father approach, then will I slay my brother Jacob.'" Rashi explains, "I will wait to kill him until my father is dead that I may not cause him grief."...Rashi consistently adopted this approach. He explains the dots on the word "and he [Esau] kissed him [Jacob]" as follows: "Some say they mean that he did not kiss him with his whole heart but as Rabbi Simeon, the son of Johai, said, 'is it not well known that Esau hated Jacob? At that moment his pity was aroused and he kissed him with all his heart.'"...The implications are clear. If we do not fix Esau in an eternal image of hating Jacob he will have the opportunity to kiss him with his whole heart.³⁶

This, and other interpretations of a similar ilk, are, of course, very different and even diametrically opposed to those offered by the religious right. Consequently, certain synagogues have refused to distribute *Shabbat Shalom* and, in one instance at least, they have been forbidden to do so. Rav Zephania Drori, the chief rabbi of Kiryat Shmona, banned the weekly pamphlet on the ground that it negates the true Torah interpretation of contemporary events. Although these incidents seem to validate Newman's assertion that "synagogues are occupied territory,"³⁷ it must be pointed out that *Shabbat Shalom*'s circulation has increased steadily since it first appeared in October 1997.³⁸ It is now distributed to over four hundred synagogues around the country, including a significant number over the "green line."

This welcome development has placed Netivot Shalom in something of a dilemma. Having succeeded in reaching a much wider audience than ever before, the movement has had to consider how to address it. There are those who feel that the movement should seize the opportunity to convey a clear and unequivocal message to the national-religious camp. Others, however, fear that doing so may imperil the inroads that have been made, and therefore advocate toning down the content. Although *Shabbat Shalom* has included a number of more "extreme" *divrei Torah*, the vast majority are, in fact, rather muted. In accordance with the editori-

al policy set forth in the first issue, moderation and restraint are the order of the day:

Large sections of the religious community have fostered the love of the Land of Israel and the uniqueness of the Jewish people, sometimes at the expense of other values. Our aim is not to undermine the importance of these values but to transmit additional ones that in our view are no less important, and are also nourished from the world of the Torah....We invite readers to respond to the contents of the pamphlets in order to open a fruitful dialogue among synagogue-goers.³⁹

The aim of *Shabbat Shalom* is to present an alternative to the Complete Land of Israel ideology of the religious right and to show that it is one of the seventy faces of the Torah. To achieve this end, however, Netivot Shalom believes that it has to temper its message. Gush Emunim not only sets the parameters of the debate between the two movements; it sometimes determines its content.

A Red Line

The most glaring exception to this policy of moderation and restraint was the publication of a letter in favor of refusing to serve in the administered territories. Its inclusion led to two controversies. One revolved around the issue of conscientious objection, the other focused on the decision to raise it in *Shabbat Shalom*.

Shamai Leibowitz contended that there is "a black flag" hanging over all rather than just some of the Israeli Defence Forces operations in the territories. Its actions over the "green line" bear testimony to "a moral decline unprecedented in the history of the Jewish people." It is therefore permissible or, to be more precise, obligatory to refuse to serve there. Those who do so, Leibowitz continued, are following in the footsteps of Israel's past moral heroes. He cited Abraham's ("the first Jewish refusnik") confrontations with God concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gemorrah and the prophets' reproach of those kings of Israel who abused their power in one way or another to show that conscientious objection is in accordance with a longstanding Jewish tradition.⁴⁰

Leibowitz's critics argued that he had painted a completely false picture of the situation.⁴¹ They pointed out that his letter

made no mention whatsoever of the indiscriminate terror of the Palestinians, and that it was full of "brazen lies" concerning the behavior of the Israeli troops. In addition, the argument in favor of refusing to serve in the territories was based on a total misreading of the sources. According to Yoni Yehuda, for instance, the director of the Movement for the Renewal of Religious Zionism, "Abraham was not a conscientious objector. He did not disobey any orders. In fact, exactly the opposite was the case. In the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham was ready to submit himself to the word of God. The situation regarding Sodom was one of dialogue between him and God. There is no call to rebel against God or the state."⁴²

Pinhas Leizer, the editor of *Shabbat Shalom*, was at pains to point out that Leibowitz's letter did not represent the policy of the movement.⁴³ He had decided to publish it, though, because "it is important to conduct a debate about the moral price that is involved in the control over another nation." Members of the religious community, Leizer insisted, must relate to the moral aspects of the conflict with the Palestinians irrespective of their views as to who is responsible for it or the desired political solution. In this case, *Shabbat Shalom* was not championing the movement's cause. It was simply providing a platform for the expression of different views on a crucial issue facing Israeli society.

Opponents of Netivot Shalom rejected Leizer's attempt to dissociate the movement from Leibowitz's stance on conscientious objection. They regarded it as hypocritical and self-righteous because *Shabbat Shalom* would not be willing to provide space for an exchange of views about issues such as refusing to dismantle the settlements in the territories or transferring those who live there. In publishing the letter, Netivot Shalom had therefore "broken all the rules." The movement had crossed a "red line" and placed itself "beyond the boundary of legitimate Israeli public discourse."

But opposition to the publication of the letter was by no means limited to the religious right. Many supporters of the movement and some members of the executive were highly critical of the decision to include it in *Shabbat Shalom*. In doing so, they argued, the editor had abandoned the longstanding policy of moderation that had enabled Netivot Shalom to disseminate its views in synagogues around the country, and to reach a much wider audience than ever before. This achievement, Leizer critics predicted, was now endangered. Opponents of the movement would cite the letter as proof of Netivot Shalom's extremist stance, and as a valid reason for ceasing to distribute its weekly *dvar torah* in their synagogue.⁴⁴

The debate within the movement led to the conclusion that it was important to the policy of restraint. *Shabbat Shalom* had to recover its more moderate image. It was therefore decided to set up a virtual channel of communication for the internal discourse of different issues. In this way, Netivot Shalom would be able to address a wider audience and meet the needs of its members. The movement could preach to the unconverted and create a dialogue between those committed to the cause at one and the same time.

Groundless Love/Groundless Hatred

In addition to the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah, there is the cycle of festivals, and this, too, has been appropriated by Netivot Shalom. In fact, the politicization of prayer and ritual is a central feature of the movement's agenda. Each year a number of activities are organized to promote external peace with Israel's Arab neighbors and/or internal peace between religious and secular Jews.

The building of *succot shalom* (tabernacles of peace) at the time of the Sukkot festival is one of the movement's most longstanding activities. Almost every year Netivot Shalom sets them up at different sites around the country. Whether Jerusalem, the development town of Ofakim, the city of Nablus on the West Bank, or the alternative theater festival in Acre, the aim is always the same: to provide a venue for dialogues between Jews and Arabs, and among Jews with different political and religious orientations. In accordance with the traditional custom of hosting *ushpizim* (divine guests who, according to legend, visit the *succah*), everyone is invited to come in and discuss the issue of peace with friends and foes alike.

Drawing on a midrashic statement about the importance of planting trees⁴⁵ and the way in which doing so has come to symbolize the return of the Jewish people to its homeland, Netivot Shalom has also made a tradition of celebrating Tu B'Shvat, the New Year for Trees. Significantly, however, the movement conceives this particular activity as part of a wider struggle for "appropriate" and "blessed" planting:

In contrast to the uprooting of trees on the way to Elon Moreh, the unruliness of settlers led by the Council of Rabbis, the rash settlement in Shiloah, and the completely distorted hierarchy of priorities and allocation of national resources, we want to make Tu B'Shvat a day of the right kind of planting in the Land of Is-

rael. Planting that derives its strength from a moral-religious responsibility to the land and to future generations. Planting that is based on the right hierarchy of priorities—the absorption of immigrants, development towns and honorable coexistence in Jerusalem.⁴⁶

In this spirit the movement has celebrated the New Year for Trees by planting them together with Arabs in highly symbolic places such as a mixed neighborhood within the pre-1967 borders and along both sides of the Green Line.

Year after year, Netivot Shalom spokesmen draw attention to the aim of fasting in Jewish tradition. Recalling the prophet Joel's call to "tear your hearts and not your clothes," they point out that "not fasting but mending one's ways is the essence." In addition, as Uriel Simon reminded his audience at a rally for the Tisha B'Av fast day at the height of the intifada, "repentance that does not include the moral dimension is not real repentance." Fittingly, he concluded his address with the words of Isaiah to the effect that God was oblivious to the people's ritual observance, offerings, and prayer so long as their hands were full of blood, and called on them to "seek justice, and relieve the oppressed."⁴⁷

Netivot Shalom has long related to Jerusalem Day as a time for soul-searching rather than celebration. On several occasions the movement organized a rally at which the speakers drew attention to flawed policies both in the nation's capital and in the country as a whole. In recent years Netivot Shalom has joined hands with other peace groups, both Israeli and Palestinian, in an attempt to show that Jerusalem is united in name alone, whereas in actuality it is as divided as ever. This year, for instance, they organized "an alternative Jerusalem Day Happening" to protest human rights violations and to propagate a vision of what the city could and should be — a city of two peoples, a city of peace and justice.

Vigils and demonstrations held on fast days often conclude with the responsive reading of relevant passages from the Book of Psalms. In certain instances, however, they also include the recital of prayers compiled especially for the occasion. Thus, at the Tisha B'Av rally just referred to, Yochanan Flusser, secretary-general of Netivot Shalom, read the following elegy which was conceived as part of a national soul-searching about the events of the preceding year:

Woe are we for we have sinned. Let us sit alone and weep. For these I will weep.
For the violence and intolerance. Woe are we...

For the expulsions. Woe are we...
 For the demolition of houses on purpose and unintentionally.
 Woe are we...
 For the rights that have been revoked. Woe are we...
 For the maltreatment of Arabs without reason. Woe are we...
 For administrative detentions. Woe are we...
 For the control of another nation. Woe are we...
 For those injured in the uprising, Jews and Arabs alike. Woe are we...
 For the mounting zealotry. Woe are we...
 For the harassment of those who disagree with our opinion. Woe are we...
 For the groundless hatred among us. Woe are we...⁴⁸

As this elegy clearly indicates, Netivot Shalom has for a long time incorporated the cycle of festivals into its campaign for greater tolerance between the different sectors of the Jewish population. This is particularly the case, however, since the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. The movement now commemorates this traumatic event twice a year. It holds a morning prayer service in Rabin Square on the Fast of Gedaliah, which traditionally marks the assassination of the governor of Judea soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, and a Tisha B'Av reading of the Book of Lamentations at Rabin's grave on Mount Herzl.⁴⁹ The message is clear: Rabin's assassination, like the destruction of the Second Temple that is mourned on that day, was caused by "groundless hatred" between fellow Jews.⁵⁰

Some members of the religious peace movements object to the politicization of prayer and ritual. While accepting these interpretations of them regarding peace with the Palestinians and between Jews of different political persuasions, they contend that such activities are meant for the home and/or synagogue and should not be transferred to the public domain. Clearly, however, Netivot Shalom is unwilling to give up any opportunity to show how its ideology is grounded in traditional Judaism. Whenever possible, the festivals are enlisted in furtherance of the cause.

A Direct Line

Netivot Shalom has repeatedly drawn attention to the different ways in which control of the territories has had a brutalizing effect on Israeli society. Time and again, movement spokesmen describe and bemoan how it leads to "moral insensibility" and, in turn, to "corruption from within," as slowly but surely the excep-

tion becomes the norm.⁵¹ Although these allegations are directed mainly against the government, the national-religious camp is also criticized for having provided moral and political support to those in power. As Ezra Fleischer pointed out at the founding rally of Netivot Shalom: "They provided an ideology for injustice, a vision for decadence and a halo for sin. Without them, injustice would be injustice, decadence would be decadence and sin would be sin. Now they are not only a mitzvah [commandment] but a particularly precious one that demands self-sacrifice and willingness to give up one's life. Without them we would be sinning and embarrassed. Now we are sinning and proud of it."⁵²

Not surprisingly, Netivot Shalom has paid special attention to violent acts carried out by those identified with the national-religious camp. Thus, movement spokesmen pointed to a "direct line" from Sebastia to the violent resistance to the evacuation of Yamit and other settlements in the Sinai, and from there to the Jewish Underground, the Hebron massacre, and the Rabin assassination. With the passage of time, they argued, not only has the violence become more lethal, it has also crossed the "green line." Violence knows no borders, or in the words of the much-quoted Seder Eliahu Rabbah, "He who sheds the blood of a Gentile, will in the end shed the blood of a Jew."

Those who resort to violence are allegedly not on the fringe of the national-religious camp but at its very center. Even more important, they do so for ideological reasons and not because of any mental derangement. The perpetrators of violence are enemy deviants rather than sick ones.⁵³ Consequently, although the political and spiritual leaders of the religious right do not bear criminal responsibility for the actions of their more extreme followers, they are guilty, Netivot Shalom insists, of having provided the ideological basis and legitimation for this violent turn.⁵⁴

At a rally addressing the question "How Did We Come to the 'Jewish Underground'?"⁵⁵ all four speakers tried to explain the decline into both vigilante and millenarian terrorism among the knitted-skullcap generation. Rav Aaron Lichtenstein, for instance, referred to the Underground as "a deviation from the true path of the Torah." Many of its members, he conceded, "had an affinity to God and a love of the people and the Land"; yet "they lacked certain spiritual qualities without which even things that are basically positive and holy can lead to disastrous consequences."

There was a lack of balance between energy and the need to restrain and direct it. There was a lack of balance between the ability and desire to act and the need for common sense and wisdom

that sets the direction and determines the content of the actions. There was an abandonment of Halacha and a disregard for the supreme importance that it attaches to details, which are a restraining and directing force when the energy begins to overflow....There is a danger that out of a longing for the big fire people begin to forget the simple things, that in looking for the bright and glittering lights they do not pay attention to torches and candles....The deviants in our community forgot the need to observe the light of the Torah even though it is sometimes precise and directed rather than bright and dazzling. This need is the need of the hour.⁵⁶

Speaking at the same rally, Uriel Simon placed the blame for the “lack of direction” and “absence of brakes” on the leaders of the national-religious camp:

They hear their followers’ repeated calls for the death penalty and further brutalization of the military government. They internalize the approach according to which the murder of a girl in her father’s bakery in response to stone-throwing constitutes self-defense and there is no need to help the police find the culprit....The root of all this is a maximalist policy that inevitably leads to the veneration of power, the glorification of war, a disregard for law and justice, a feeling of desperation with the state and a fear of heaven without a fear of sin.⁵⁷

This kind of accusation again came to the fore after the Hebron massacre. Thus, Ezra Fleischer lambasted the “evil rabbis, criminal rabbis and sages of darkness who kindled the strange fire that burned the soul of Baruch Goldstein by misconstruing the words of our holy Torah and distorting its splendid countenance.”⁵⁸ Speaking at a memorial meeting for Rabin, Zvi Mazeh, chairman of Netivot Shalom, made a similar claim with respect to Yigal Amir. After delineating the different strands in the assassin’s ideology, he used an organic metaphor to show how they all derived from wider currents in the national-religious camp: “Yigal Amir did not act in a vacuum. He is not a wild weed....The seeds were planted long ago in the days of the Jewish Underground, and only now are they sprouting. He is the rotten fruit of messianism now, of the disregard for human life and the total lack of respect for Israeli democracy.”⁵⁹

On certain occasions this all-out attack on the religious right has been accompanied by a certain degree of self-criticism. Movement leaders accept that they are partly responsible for the violent turn: while Netivot Shalom had long warned of the dangers inherent in “messianism now,” it clearly did not do enough to

prevent them from materializing. Despite or perhaps because the movement's prophecies of doom had been vindicated, nobody could say "our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it."

A False Prophet

The Netivot Shalom critique of the advocates of the Complete Land of Israel is invariably preceded or followed by a statement to the effect that the two sides are engaged in an internal debate within religious Zionism. As one spokesman put it: "We both wear the same skullcaps,⁶⁰ pray from the same prayer book and learn the same Torah." One group, however, is consistently placed beyond the pale: the late Meir Kahane and his supporters are, and always have been, regarded as total outcasts.

In an interview in *Regard*, the magazine of the Jewish community center in Brussels,⁶¹ Avi Ravitsky, one of the founders of both of the religious peace movements, argued that while Netivot Shalom and Gush Emunim are "two legitimate interpretations of the Torah," the Kahane movement is a completely different matter: "If one day my grandson became a member of Gush Emunim I would be very unhappy and would do my best to persuade and educate him. Nevertheless, he would remain my beloved grandson....If my grandson became a follower of Kahane and his ideas it would be sad and simple: He would no longer be my grandson."⁶²

Although Kahane's speeches, weekly newspaper column, and books were replete with quotes from Jewish sources, Ravitzky⁶³ and other Netivot Shalom leaders took pains to point out that they were all characterized by a disproportionate or exaggerated reliance on the Bible. Kahane thereby extricated himself from "the burden of the generations that often tempered and even overturned the original meaning of the sources." Invariably, therefore, his reading of Judaism is completely opposed to the generally accepted one. To take just one example, whereas Hillel the Elder defined the essence of Judaism as "Whatever is hateful to you, do not unto your fellow man," Kahane preached, and for that matter practiced, exactly the opposite. While he was a member of Knesset, the striking resemblance between his private member's bill for the prevention of assimilation between Jews and non-Jews and the infamous Nuremberg laws offered clear proof of his policy: what they did to us, we must do to others.

On several occasions, and particularly after Kahane's election to the Knesset in July 1984, Netivot Shalom sought to convince Arabs and/or Jews that his teachings constituted a total distortion of traditional Judaism. Thus, immediately after Kahane's post-election rampage through the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, movement members distributed a "letter of brotherhood and peace" to the local population claiming that he did not represent the Torah and promising to fight him and his increasing number of followers. As Kahane took his message around the country, Netivot Shalom followed him and distributed fliers exposing his lies on a wide variety of issues. He was, they insisted, "the false prophet of our age." To drive the message home, Netivot Shalom asked the two chief rabbis of Israel to pronounce that his teachings were "a form of idol worship and therefore had no part or lot in the Torah"; the request, however, fell on deaf ears.

In a similar vein, the movement organized a campaign against the election of Rav Dov Lior to the Supreme Rabbinical Court on the ground that he had issued a *halakhic* ruling that it is permissible to carry out experiments on Arab detainees. In a letter to Avner Shaki, then Minister of Religious Affairs, the movement's secretary-general insisted that the opposition to Lior's appointment was moral-religious and not political. Whereas Netivot Shalom had never objected to rabbis with right-wing views being members of the rabbinical court, Lior's appointment was totally unacceptable, constituting a "deep divisive line" that must not be crossed under any circumstances.⁶⁴

Somewhat paradoxically, perhaps, Kahane was not only regarded as being outside the national-religious camp, he was also accused of negatively influencing those within it. His electoral success and subsequent rise in popularity led to "a breaking of the barrier of shame" and, in turn, to a process of radicalization, or what Yehoshafat Harkabi aptly referred to as Kahanization.⁶⁵ Others on the religious right now resorted to violence and/or came out in support of some sort of transfer of the local Arab population. Thus, instead of leading to a reaffirmation of the existing boundary, Kahane's extremism led to the creation of a new one. The periphery, Netivot Shalom spokesmen contended, was moving toward the center.

Seventy Faces of the Torah

Netivot Shalom and the advocates of the Complete Land of Israel agree that religious Zionism should play an expanded role in contemporary Israeli society. They also share a commitment to the same set of loyalties. Each group, however, has its own hierarchy of priorities. Consequently, they hold different and even diametrically opposed views on a wide variety of issues, and especially on the question of territorial compromise. It is this simultaneous affinity with and opposition to the religious right that prompted the establishment of both religious peace movements. The leaders of Oz Veshalom and Netivot Shalom believed that they, and only they, could enter into a dialogue with Gush Emunim, whereas Peace Now and other secular peace groups, not being members of the same textual community and not speaking the same language, were unable to do so.

From time to time movement leaders have expressed the hope that they will succeed in changing the minds of the Complete Land of Israel supporters and persuade them of the need for territorial compromise. By and large, however, they have set themselves much more limited goals. As the representatives of a cognitive minority, they feel the need to strengthen the identity of their small band of followers. Beyond this immediate objective, they try to denaturalize the stance of the religious right. The movement's main aim is to show that it, too, represents an authentic rendering of Jewish tradition and that its worldview also constitutes one of the seventy faces of the Torah.

Religious doves have not achieved a great deal of success in this regard; the hegemony of Gush Emunim remains intact. Netivot Shalom has failed to reverse the naturalization of the Complete Land of Israel ideology within the national-religious camp. Movement leaders have devoted a great deal of time and energy to reinterpreting privileged texts,⁶⁶ discovering new, or to be more precise hitherto neglected ones, and politicizing the annual cycle of Jewish festivals. Nevertheless, they have not managed to create the cultural resonance⁶⁷ that is an essential prerequisite for success. Netivot Shalom's reading of Jewish tradition has, therefore, fallen on deaf ears.

Movement leaders invariably attribute this lack of success to the inadequacies of their opponents. Time and again they argue that the advocates of the Complete Land of Israel are unable to grasp the complexity of Netivot Shalom's political message and/or are incapable of meeting its moral demands. Failure is due to the shortcomings of those who reject the movement's message

rather than the message itself. Paradoxically, then, losing the struggle for legitimacy is cited as a reason why religious doves do, in fact, deserve to win it.⁶⁸

Accounting for failure is, of course, another round in the on-going battle between the two strands within religious Zionism. Clearly, however, the explanations offered should be examined in their own right. Understanding the reasons for the religious peace movements' lack of cultural resonance is an essential prerequisite for developing new and more successful rhetorical strategies. It is a *sine qua non* in the battle for recognition as a legitimate reading of Jewish tradition and, in turn, for winning this particular "war of the Torah."

Notes

- * A version of this essay appeared in *Peace in Brief*, No. 5 (January 2001), Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University.
- 1. For a detailed description of this trend, see Tamar Hermann and Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar, "The Peace Process and the Secular-Religious Cleavage," *Peace in Brief*, No.1 (1998).
- 2. Meimad, a more moderate religious party, ran independently in the 1988 elections but failed to gain 1.5 percent of the vote—the minimum necessary to gain a seat in the Knesset. In 1999 it became part of the Labor party-dominated One Israel bloc, and is now represented in the Israeli parliament and government by Rav Michael Melchior.
- 3. Dan Horovitz and Moshe Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 58.
- 4. Shlomo Deshen, "Doves, Hawks and Anthropology: The Israeli Debate on Middle Eastern Settlement Proposals," in Gisli Palsson, ed., *Beyond Boundaries: Understanding, Translation and Anthropological Discourse* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), p. 61.
- 5. Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1970), pp. 5-8.
- 6. Jack D. Douglas and Frances Chaput Wacksler, *The Sociology of Deviance: An Introduction* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), pp. 364-367.
- 7. These terms are borrowed from Leslie J. Miller, "Claims Making from the Underside: Marginalization and Social Problems Analysis," in Gale Miller and James A. Holstein, eds., *Constructionist Controversies: Issues in Social Problems Theory* (New York: Aldine/De Gruyter, 1993), pp. 153-180.

8. For an earlier attempt to analyze this aspect of the religious peace movements, see David Newman, "The Religious Peace Camp in Israel and the Struggle for Legitimation," unpublished paper, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 1990.
9. Myron J. Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions: Cultural Change and Political Conflict* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1989), pp. 113, 119.
10. Movement leaders therefore regarded being invited to take part in certain national-religious forums as an achievement regardless of whether they convinced anyone present of the rightness of their cause.
11. Uriel Simon, *Newsletter*, No. 6 (Fall 1988/5749), p. 14.
12. Netivot Shalom spokesmen do occasionally praise Gush Emunim for its idealism despite their criticism of the direction it takes.
13. The platform of Oz Veshalom included a similar clause: "The ethical religious teaching expressed in the verse 'And thou shalt do what is right and good in the eyes of God' and the Halachic principle 'for the sake of peace' must guide us both in our daily lives and in the political life of the nation."
14. Uriel Simon, opening remarks in "Separate Thyself, I Pray Thee, from Me," in *Political Compromise for the Sake of the Security of Israel* (Jerusalem: Netivot Shalom, n.d.), p. 3.
15. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19-27.
16. This point is based on midrashic interpretations and Rashi's commentary on Gen. 32:8.
17. For almost two decades the religious peace movements' opposition to the Complete Land of Israel ideology was expressed in the most general terms. They emphasized the need for territorial compromise but were careful not to stipulate exactly what areas should be relinquished. It was only in 1995 that Netivot Shalom drew up a specific peace plan that was based on the establishment of a Palestinian state and the incorporation of three-quarters of the Jewish settlers in the West Bank into the State of Israel. For further details, see "A Wise Peace," *Paths of Peace*, No. 7 (Shevat 5757), pp. 15-17.
18. Richard C. Martin, "Striving in the Path of Allah: Toward an Understanding of Religious Violence in Text and Context," paper presented at the international conference on "Terrorism," University of Aberdeen, 1986, p. 5.
19. Determined to show that the pursuit of peace in general and the willingness for territorial compromise in particular is grounded in Jewish tradition, Netivot Shalom consistently opposed joint activities with non-Orthodox groups such as Rabbis for Human Rights. It is only recently that the two movements have begun to work together on a number of issues, and particularly against house demolitions in East Jerusalem and on the West Bank.

20. This term was coined by Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun*, in "A New Strategy for an Israeli Religious Peace Movement," *Newsletter*, No. 3 (Tishri 5748), p. 13.
21. Significantly, the names of both of the religious peace movements are derived from the Bible. *Oz Veshalom* is taken from Ps. 29:11; *Netivot Shalom* is based on Prov. 3:17.
22. They included Rav Chaim Halevi, chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, and Rav Shaul Yisraeli, a member of the Supreme Rabbinical Court. However, very few rabbis have come out in favor of territorial compromise (Newman, "Religious Peace Camp," pp. 8-9).
23. Rav Ovadia Yosef, "The Return of Parts of the Land of Israel and the Saving of Lives," in *The Return of Territories, the Rights of Minorities* (Jerusalem: *Oz Veshalom*, n.d.), p. 7.
24. Khachig Tololyan, "Narrative Culture and the Motivation of the Terrorist," in John Shotter and Kenneth J. Gergen, eds., *Texts of Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1989), p. 101.
25. Uriel Simon also pointed to the fact that Abraham allowed Lot to choose which part of the Land of Israel he wanted, thereby providing an example of "the munificence of the strong."
26. These quotations are from Gen. 13.
27. See Gen. 23.
28. This phrase is taken from an interview with Moshe Halbertal, one of the founders and a past chairman of *Netivot Shalom*. For further details of how such an experience convinced him of the need for territorial compromise, see *Ha'aretz*, April 4, 1995, p. B4.
29. See, in particular, Uriel Simon, "Religion, Morality and Politics," *Forum* 28/29 (1978):108-110.
30. *Netivot Shalom* spokesmen often stress the centrality of this theme in biblical prophecies. Over twenty years ago, O'Dea observed that "as opposed to the messianic consciousness which they see as driving members of Gush Emunim towards concentrating upon the external political question, members of *Oz Veshalom* stress the prophetic consciousness which directs them towards the ethical issues, the problems of the quality of internal life in Israel and Israeli treatment of others." Janet O'Dea, "Religious Zionism Today," *Forum* 28/29 (1978):116.
31. *Orot Hakodesh* 2:318.
32. This development is by no means limited to Orthodox Jews. The Conservative and Reform movements, as well as a number of secular organizations, have begun to hold study groups and publish pamphlets on the weekly Torah portion.
33. *Shabbat Shalom*, No. 12.
34. These terms are taken from Joel Best, "Rhetoric in Claims Making: Constructing the Missing Children Problem," *Social Problems* 24:2 (1987):116-117.

35. On this point, see Gerald Cromer, "Images of the Other in Haredi Interpretations of the Weekly Portion of the Law," in Rela Mintz Geffen and Marsha Bryan Feldman, eds., *Freedom and Responsibility: Exploring the Challenges of Jewish Continuity* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1998), pp. 149-159; and "Amalek as Other, Other as Amalek: Interpretations of a Violent Biblical Narrative," *Qualitative Sociology* 24:2 (2001):191-202.
36. *Shabbat Shalom*, No. 6.
37. David Newman, "Synagogues are Occupied Territory," *Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1999, p. 8.
38. It is envisaged that a selection of the weekly pamphlets will be published in book form after the completion of the fifth annual cycle in September 2002.
39. *Shabbat Shalom*, No. 1.
40. *Shabbat Shalom*, No 227.
41. This reaction is based on a reading of the responses sent to the editor. They were all published on the movement's website and some of them appeared in *Shabbat Shalom*, Nos. 229-231.
42. *Shabbat Shalom*, No. 229.
43. *Shabbat Shalom*, Nos. 227 and 231. The chairman of Netivot Shalom published a similar statement in the latter issue. He also apologized to any readers who, like him, had been offended by the letter.
44. This and the following paragraph are based on the protocols of Netivot Shalom executive meetings on March 13 and April 4, 2002. A number of people did, in fact, stop distributing *Shabbat Shalom* on their own initiative, or at the request of their synagogue committee or neighborhood rabbi. However, this kind of response was much less widespread than Leizer's critics had feared.
45. In accordance with Netivot Shalom's antimessianic stance, movement spokesmen often quoted Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai's maxim: "If you have a sapling in your hand and they tell you that the messiah has arrived, plant it and then go to meet him."
46. *Newsletter*, No. 10, Shevat 5742.
47. *Tisha B'Av: National Soul Searching* (Jerusalem: Netivot Shalom, n.d.), p. 10.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 5. Moshe David Herr, another speaker at the rally, emphasized the renewed relevance of a traditional Tisha B'Av prayer: "For twenty-one years it has been difficult to utter the words 'the city that is mourning...despised for the loss of her glory...sitting with her head covered in shame.' Have we now, twenty-one years after the unification of Jerusalem, reached the point at which Jerusalem and Israel are, in fact, despised and their head covered in shame, not because of what the Gentiles are doing to us, but because of what we are doing to them and to ourselves?"
49. Since the assassination, the annual Beit Midrash Leshalom (House of Learning about Peace) that is always held the week before Tisha B'Av has been named after Yitzhak Rabin and has concentrated on

- the need for greater tolerance toward political and cultural opponents.
50. The decision to organize these two events is particularly interesting in light of the ongoing debate as to whether Rabin's assassination should be commemorated according to the Georgian solar calendar (November 4) or the Jewish lunar one (12 Cheshvan). For an analysis of this controversy, see Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, "Yitzhak Rabin's Memorials: The Commemoration of a Difficult Past," *American Sociological Review* (forthcoming).
 51. Moshe Halbertal quoted a rabbinic statement that suggests that a similar process occurs on the individual level: "If a person commits a sin and repeats it a second and third time, it becomes permissible."
 52. Ezra Fleischer, "The Path from Darkness to Life," in *Torah, Zionism, Peace* (Jerusalem: Netivot Shalom, n.d.), p. 19.
 53. Joseph R. Gusfield, "Moral Passage: The Symbolic Process in Public Designations of Deviance," *Social Problems* 15:2 (1967):180-182.
 54. This argument was backed up by references to the laws pertaining to the beheaded heifer (Deut. 21:1-9) and the betrothed maiden (Deut. 23:13-21).
 55. Members of the Jewish Underground and their supporters invariably put the word "underground" in quotation marks because they felt it was inappropriate. Netivot Shalom put the quotation marks around the word "Jewish" to express their belief that the resort to violence was a clear violation of *halakhah*.
 56. Aaron Lichtenstein, "Adherence to and Abandonment of the Halacha," in *How Did We Come to the "Jewish" Underground?* (Jerusalem: Netivot Shalom, n.d.), pp. 13-14.
 57. Uriel Simon, "The Soul Searching of Gush Emunim," in *How Did We Come to the "Jewish" Underground?*, pp. 25-26.
 58. Ezra Fleischer, "Outcry," *Ha'aretz*, March 25, 1994, p. E1.
 59. Zvi Mazeh, "For Three Transgressions of Israel, Yea for Four I Will Not Reverse It," *Paths of Peace*, No. 3 (Tishri 5747), p. 15.
 60. In fact, many members of Netivot Shalom have taken to wearing plain knitted skullcaps in order to differentiate themselves from members of the national-religious camp who invariably wear embroidered ones.
 61. An English translation of the interview was published in *Oz Veshalom English Bulletin*, No. 7/8 (Summer/Fall 1986), pp. 28-29.
 62. Ravitsky also avowed that he would accept his grandson if he became an atheist.
 63. Aviezer Ravitzky, "The Ideological Aspect," in *The Ideology of Meir Kahane and His Supporters* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 1986), pp. 16-20.
 64. Although Rav Dov Lior was not formally connected to Meir Kahane or the Kach Party, Netivot Shalom regarded his *halakhic* rul-