Post Zionism in the National Religious Camp: The “Jewish Leadership Movement”

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Post-Zionism in the Religious-Zionist Camp:
The “Jewish Leadership” Movement¹

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The “Jewish Leadership” movement came about as a result of the public struggle to circumvent the Oslo Accords. The founders and leaders of this movement were galvanized by the complex feelings generated by the reality unfolding before their very eyes. They believed it was necessary, at all costs, to defeat this agreement. To avoid the harsh decree of returning territories to the Palestinian Authority, they demanded a radical course of action, to the point of expressly and openly breaking the law. In facing the moral dilemma of choosing allegiance and obedience to God-given law (as they interpreted it) as against the national law of the land, the answer was clear to them: it is necessary to follow God’s law and not capitulate to those attempting to operate differently.

Beginning with the peace agreements with Egypt (1978), and more forcefully from the period of the Oslo process (1993), religious Zionism – in particular Gush Emunim activists – have increasingly called for an abandonment of allegiance and loyalty

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to the Zionist enterprise and to the State of Israel, and aspired to religious perfection by means of establishing a religious theocracy. The “Jewish Leadership” movement is the organizing and political group consolidating all those who share this standpoint.

This alliance, stemming from the circumstances surrounding the Oslo process, attempts within its political platform to embody extreme religious and nationalistic ideas, and to openly challenge the democratic system of government. The “Jewish Leadership” movement is dynamic and developing, with an active and vigorous volunteer base that works toward implanting itself in the Israeli political arena. The natural inclination is to categorize this movement as yet another movement on the extreme right margin of the political map. However, what clearly distinguishes this movement from most other right-wing movements is its professed revolutionary character and theocratic platform. The movement’s platform is the Torah of Israel, not as an abstract but, rather, as an actively guiding codex. Its leadership is attempting to develop an alternative policy that relates to all aspects of public life. In tracking the establishment, political platform and activities of this movement, it will be possible to learn about the phenomenon of Post-Zionism from the members of the religious Zionist camp.

**Historical Background**

The Six-Day War (1967) created a new reality in the Middle East. In the course of the war, the State of Israel conquered Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. These territories were not annexed to Israel (apart from the Golan Heights, annexed in 1982), but retained the status of conquered territories administered
by Israel until their return within the framework of a peace agreement. For this reason, for the most part, the State of Israel did not initiate the settling of Jews in the conquered areas after the war, apart from in East Jerusalem, which was officially annexed. This principle, however, was not absolute, and several Jewish settlements were established in the conquered territories. The establishment of the first settlement in the West Bank took place in 1967, immediately after the war ended, in Kfar Etzion. The first settlement in the Gaza Strip was Kfar Darom, established in 1970. These two settlements were the exception to the rule, inasmuch as they were founded on the ruins of Jewish settlements that had been destroyed by the Jordanian and Egyptian armies during the 1948 war. After the Six-Day War, the state, within the framework of the Allon Plan, initiated the establishment of several settlements in the Jordan Valley and also Yamit (in the Sinai Peninsula), for security purposes.\(^2\)

The strong momentum for Jewish settlement in the territories began with the establishment of the “Gush Emunim” movement. This movement was founded in February 1974 by a group representing the young leadership of religious Zionism, which championed the extending of Israeli sovereignty over Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip. This extra-parliamentary group managed to bring many public figures from the secular public into its group of supporters; among them the song writer Naomi Shemer and General (Res.) Ariel Sharon, who saw in the settlers the continuation of their brand of Zionism and settling the land. The first act of establishing a settlement was carried out by the movement’s activists, which included many of the graduates of the Mercaz HaRav

yeshiva in Jerusalem, under the leadership of the head of the yeshiva, Zvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook. Without government permission, they established a settlement in Samaria. After repeated evacuations of the settlement, the settlers reached an agreement with Minister of Defense Shimon Peres, which enabled them to move to an adjacent military base. This agreement essentially led to the settlement’s establishment, despite objections by the Israeli government headed by Yitzhak Rabin. With the ascension of the Likud to the ruling governing coalition in 1977, the pace of building settlements quickened and garnered enthusiastic support, with attendant economic benefits, the building of infrastructure and legal protection, all under the coordinating baton of Minister of Agriculture Ariel Sharon. The “Amana Movement” was founded in 1978 as the settlement arm of Gush Emunim. Since then, the number of Israeli citizens living in the settlements has gradually increased. At the start of 2004 there were 250,000 people living in the settlements, and forty percent of lands in Judea and Samaria were subject to the municipal legal jurisdiction of the settlements.

As previously mentioned, the initial core group of Gush Emunim settlers were comprised of graduates of the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva in Jerusalem. These individuals, following in the path of their spiritual leader, Zvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook, maintain a religious outlook that motivates them to political activism. They believe that the return of Jews to the Land of Israel, within the framework of the secular Zionist movement, is an expression of the initial stage of God’s plans for the redemption of His nation. Therefore, the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War is seen as an expression of divine revelation, and consequently is thought to be a more advanced phase in the process of redemption. As a result, these groups demanded the annexation of the territories conquered during the war,
in order to establish facts-on-the-ground and to settle the biblical lands of Israel with Jews.

Moreover, in their viewing the actions of the State of Israel as part of the messianic process, the state then received the status of absolute sanctity. Zvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook went so far as to say: “We must remember now and forever: What is sanctified is sanctified! [...] the State of Israel and the order of government in Israel – is holy. And all that is necessary to perform this commandment, all the tanks and all the other weapons [...] all belong to this sanctity.”

However, not long after the founding of Gush Emunim, theological cracks were discernable, stemming from the failure to implant a religious commentary on the fickle Israeli reality. Beginning with the signing of the peace agreement with Egypt, and the subsequent evacuation of Yamit (1982), a crisis of faith began to take shape among a small group of core activists in Gush Emunim. This crisis found expression in the departure of two of the movement’s members – Yisrael Ariel and Yehuda Etzion.

It is important to expand a little on the positions taken by Etzion and Ariel. Their doubts as to the path of religious Zionism in view of the evacuation of Sinai, and the conclusions they drew in its aftermath, developed over the course of time into a feeling that accompanied a much broader segment of the public.

Yehuda Etzion decided to dissociate himself from Gush Emunim activities after the failed attempt to create a new settlement in Rujib, and the forced evacuation of groups of settlers in Samaria by security forces very soon after the signing of the Camp David

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3 Shlomo Aviner Conversations with HaRav Zvi Kook: Eretz Israel 269 (Jerusalem, Sifriyat Chava, 2005) [Heb].
In the aftermath of the settlement’s evacuation, Etzion became convinced that placing Israel firmly on the path toward God demanded more than just the establishment of settlements. He therefore began to form an underground group whose mission was to bomb the mosques on the Temple Mount, in the hope that this action would forge a path leading to religious redemption. This group, known as “The Jewish Underground,” did not succeed in implementing its original plan due to differences of opinion among its members – and also because it did not succeed in finding rabbinic authority supportive of its actions. But the group did manage to carry out a series of revenge actions against the Arab population. In response to a murderous terrorist attack against Jews in Hebron (May 1980), its members hid explosive devices in the cars of the Arab heads of the “Committee for National Guidance.” The mayors of Ramallah and Nablus lost their legs in the resulting explosions, and a Druse sapper in the service of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was seriously injured while attempting to dismantle a third explosive device. The underground also engaged in a terrorist attack against the Islamic College in Hebron; three Arabs were killed and approximately thirty wounded in response to the murder of Aharon Gross, a student at the Shavei Hebron yeshiva in Hebron, whose life was cut short by an Arab terrorist in July 1983.

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4 For this affair, see Meir Harnoy The Settlers 129-30 (Or Yehuda, Sifriyat Maariv, 1994) [Heb].

5 For a biography of Yehuda Etzion, see Yochai Rodik Land of Redemption 168 (Jerusalem, The Research Institute for the Teachings of R. Avraham Yitzhak Kook, 1989) [Heb].

After the underground was uncovered (1984) and its members placed under arrest for terrorist activities, Etzion published his main critique on the centrist core of Gush Emunim in a series of articles published in the journal Nekuda, the mouthpiece of the settlers, as well as in other independent publications. Etzion believed that Gush Emunim was focusing solely on the establishment of settlements, and was not attempting to seize control of the government and lead the nation toward religious redemption. In this choice, he believed, it was making a serious error; when there is no active progress toward the redemption in all matters relating to “Messianic Laws” – Sanhedrin (law), theocracy (regime), and temple (ritual) – deterioration and retreat are inevitable. The redemption of Israel necessitates active deeds, and Gush Emunim, the standard-bearer of the message of redemption, lacked the tools necessary to bring about this breakthrough.

His criticisms, aimed at the leaders of religious Zionism, were trenchant. The expectation that the secular Zionist establishment, while unaware of the great mission it had been assigned, would carry its enterprise into the heart of the messianic theocracy, turned out to be misguided. The divine mission was being neglected by those intended to carry it aloft; in other words, religious Zionism. Instead of progress there was regression. The desire to maintain a “normal” life brought the messianic attributes into great danger. The first overt expression of this was Israel’s readiness to relinquish the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for a peace agreement with Egypt.

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According to Etzion, the “super-strategy” of religious Zionism was and remains the undermining element in the path toward a messianic kingdom. The tactics, as to how this process could be advanced, required urgent revision. This could be found in religious radicalism and revolutionary theocratic activism. Etzion’s conclusion was that reliance on the secular State of Israel to lead the nation toward religious redemption must end. It was now incumbent on the public to independently initiate the establishment of an activist redemptive movement that would lead toward the end of days.

The administrative leaders of Gush Emunim severely criticized Etzion’s pronouncements, which were published during the 1980s and were thought to be the opinion of a few isolated individuals. With the passage of time, however, these ideas managed to seep into the discourse of certain segments of the religious right, including the members of Gush Emunim. As the political process between Israel and its neighbors intensified following the Oslo Accords, these Post-Zionist attitudes became more prominent.

A similar process of departure took place with Yisrael Ariel, a graduate of the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva. Along with his older brother, Yaakov Ariel, Yisrael Ariel established the Hesder yeshiva – a program combining advanced talmudic studies with military service in the Israel Defense Forces – in Yamit, in 1977. He also served as the rabbi of Yamit. With the announcement of the government’s plans to evacuate the Sinai Peninsula, including Yamit, as part of the peace agreement with Egypt, Yisrael Ariel joined the “Movement to Stop the Retreat from Sinai,” and became one of the more

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8 See, for example, the detailed discussion of the Jewish underground in 75 *Nekuda*, pp. 18-34 (1984) [Heb].
militant members of that group. He did not rule out physical confrontation with the evacuation forces, and he encouraged soldiers to refuse the order to carry out the evacuation. In the end, after he realized that the decisive majority was against acts of violence and that there was no point to the struggle of a few isolated individuals, he didn’t carry out his threats. After the evacuation of the Sinai Peninsula was completed, Ariel left Gush Emunim and focused on his advanced religious studies at the Idra yeshiva in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem. Two years later, in 1984, Ariel founded the Machon HaMikdash (the Temple Institute) in Jerusalem. This Institute was defined as an operative tool in promoting the final redemption, with its ultimate fulfillment to be the building of the Third Temple. When the underground movement was uncovered, in 1986, he was one of their few conspicuous supporters, even establishing the journal Tzfia, which scrutinized the defense of those found guilty and encouraged the anticipation of the building of the Third Temple.

In their work toward establishing a Third Temple by means of the creation of a religious theocratic regime, with both the founding of the Machon HaMikdash and the plans to bomb the mosques located on the Temple Mount, Etzion and Ariel presented views that were unusual and even at odds with those of Gush Emunim. These two activists refused to accept the assumption that a state that dismantles Jewish settlements

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9 See Hagai Segal Yamit, The End. The Struggle to Stop the Retreat from Sinai 271-76 (Jerusalem, Sifriyat Bet El, 1999) [Heb].

10 My book contains extensive biographical material on Yisrael Ariel and Machon HaMikdash. See Motti Inbari Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount 38-55 (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 2008) [Heb].

and returns territories to an Arab regime is worthy of the status of “complete sanctity,” as posited by the leadership of the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva, R. Zvi Yehuda Kook (quoted previously). Etzion and Ariel therefore worked toward erecting a theocratic alternative to the secular state. For a long time, they represented a covert movement that was not representative of the majority opinion among the general public. Moreover, their opinions were subject to sharp criticism from groups associated with the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva. However, after the signed peace agreements with the P.L.O. and Israel’s retreat from the territories pursuant to the Oslo Process (1993), these views became more centrist among broader segments of the population. An expression of this change can be found in the activities and relative success of the “Jewish Leadership” movement that embodied a similar ideology, “Post-Zionist theocracy” (to which I will relate later).

Post-Zionism in the National Religious Camp

An understanding of the sources nourishing Post-Zionism in the national religious camp requires a deeper examination of the dialectic perceptions of the religious leadership of religious Zionism, insofar as they relate to the goals of the State of Israel and the ideal of installing a “Torah state” regime. Religious Zionism, almost since its inception, has wrestled with the question of the nature of the national enterprise. Historiographic arguments have raged over the question of whether the founding of the Mizrachi movement – an Orthodox Zionist organization, founded in Europe in early 1902 by

12 For responses to the Jewish underground see 75 Nekuda, pp. 18-34 (1984) [Heb]; also Yehuda Zoldan “The Patience of Redemption” 76 Nekuda, pp. 22-24 (1984) [Heb].
Yitzchak Yaakov Reines – was based on messianic aspirations or on the practical need to rescue the Jews.\textsuperscript{13} It is worth noting, however, that practically since its inception, there has been a “camp” within religious Zionism that calls for action toward the realization of messianism and the founding of a Jewish utopia in Israel in the form of a “religious state,” as part of the concept of redemption at the hands of men.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Dov Schwartz, Yosef Shapira, and Ehud Luz claim that the Mizrachi movement could only have come about as a result of a messianic anticipation of restorative national redemption. But Eliezer Don-Yehiya and Aviezer Ravitzky believe that the Mizrachi movement was founded out of the pragmatic desire to save persecuted Jews. As evidence of this, its support of the Uganda plan is cited. For supporters of the first approach see Dov Schwartz \textit{Religious Zionism Between Logic and Messianism} (Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 1999) [Heb]; Ehud Luz \textit{Parallels Meet} 79-95 (Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 1985) [Heb]; Yosef Shapira \textit{Philosophy and Halakhah According to Rabbi Yitzhak Yaakov Reines} 131-54 (Doctoral Dissertation in Philosophy at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1997) [Heb]. For supporters of the second approach see Aviezer Ravitzky \textit{Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism} 32-34 (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Eliezer Don-Yehiya “Ideology and Policy in Religious Zionism – the Zionist Philosophy of Rabbi Reines and the Policy of the ‘Mizrachi’ Movement Under His Leadership” in \textit{Zionism – Historical Sources of the Zionist Movement and the Settlement of the Land of Israel}, pp. 103-46 (Daniel Carpi and Gedalia Yogev eds., 1983) [Heb].

\textsuperscript{14} According to Dov Schwartz, naturalist messianism challenges the assumption of the apocalyptic end of days as a condition for redemption. They feel that there is no need to lose faith in the present world and its repair, and therefore that there is no need to seek a new world that will rise on the ruins of the current one. This approach directly reduces divine intervention in the redemptive process to its total expropriation from this process. See Dov Schwartz \textit{Messianism in Medieval Jewish Thought} 9-12 (Ramat Gan, Bar-IlIan University, 1997) [Heb]. In the modern era, various philosophers have used the concept of naturalistic messianism as it relates to nationwide and natural redemption. We see that these messianic concepts in the modern era, relying for the most part on Maimonides’ principles for the messianic era that appear in his halakhic work, \textit{Mishneh Torah}, brought about messianic tension and national unrest. See David Berger
According to Dov Schwartz, the affiliation of the Orthodox movement with the Zionist enterprise could not take place as long as the classic definition of Zionism held sway. If, at the outset, the operative assumption is that Zionism’s ultimate goal is to bring “normalization” to the Jewish nation and turn it into “a nation like all the other nations,” and that the complete essence of the goal of Zionism is “building a place of refuge for the Jewish nation,” as presented in these well-known Zionist slogans, then there is a conflict between the definitions of Zionism and Jewish tradition that differentiates between Israel and the gentile nations and the theocratic placement of the State of Israel. Therefore, among those shaping the path of religious Zionism were individuals who, at the outset, understood religion to be part of the Zionist idea. Schwartz believes that these individuals employed a rabbinic-philosophical technique comprising pshat and drash (the literal meaning and a homiletic interpretation) to describe Zionism: outwardly it was accepted as a version of an overall Zionist mission. However, within this approach was the true religious ideal: the renewal of service to God within a broad theocratic framework as part of communal life. The external body operates on the materialistic plane, but its internal aspirations are toward the eternal life of the spirit. This is the “true” basis of its actions and desires, even if it is not yet aware of this fact. The longed-for theocracy is waiting at the portals and will be actualized when the secular Zionist chooses the true path, which is: a complete devotion to serving God. Zionism can then move on to its next stage: a


renewal of the kingdom, a renewal of offering sacrifices on the Temple Mount, and a renewal of the Sanhedrin.

These aspects were not articulated by the ideological members of religious Zionism for tactical reasons. They did not want to alienate supporters or arouse opposition, but they do exist within their broad internal discourse. Therefore, according to Schwartz, the renewal of service to God on the Temple Mount becomes a clear ideological goal, and the return to Israel is a path toward restoring this service to God to its rightful place by means of the administration of a theocratic kingdom.16

These attitudes were, for the most part, marginal in religious Zionism. In the transition to becoming a state, there were those among the leaders of religious Zionism who suggested implementing the vision of a Torah state, as we learn from Asher Cohen’s research. But these leaders quickly realized that, since they constituted a small minority at the time with limited political clout, they would be unable to bring this about – rendering the concept unlikely to succeed. The political goals of religious Zionism then decided to focus on maintaining the status quo that had existed before the state came into being. The vision of a Torah state did not metamorphose into a direct political demand, and the demands that were presented were portrayed as rights to which the religious public was entitled in order to maintain their religious lifestyle. The transition to statehood brought with it the understanding that it was not possible to bridge the gap between the ideal of a

16 Ibid.
Torah state and the Zionist reality. They therefore decided to make do with a secular state that, to a certain degree, maintained a religious character.\textsuperscript{17}

As previously mentioned, the Gush Emunim movement was established in 1974 by the younger members of the \textit{Mafdal}. These individuals settled in the conquered territories as an expression of activism in service of redemption. Nevertheless, the Gush Emunim movement was primarily active in settlements and in the dissemination of religion as a tool for the actualization of the redemption. It had no pretensions to leading the redemptive process into the warm embrace of theocracy. The activism of Gush Emunim also left room for divine intervention, which would complete the national redemption, as the responsibility for only certain aspects of this process was to be placed squarely on the shoulders of mortal men. The Gush Emunim movement viewed itself as part of the Zionist enterprise, and did not attempt to become an alternative to Zionism or to direct the Zionist enterprise.

In light of the messianic goal and the actualization of this concept after the Six-Day War, elements of the religious Zionist camp underwent a crisis following the peace agreements with Egypt and the threatened destruction of the vision of \textit{Eretz Yisrael HaShleyma} (the “Complete Land of Israel”). This situation worsened after the Oslo Accords and the continued partial retreats from Judea and Samaria. The crisis came about as a result of inflexibility: the State of Israel was marching in directions that were at odds with the messianic goals, and therefore territorial or spiritual retreats could not take place.

\textsuperscript{17} Asher Cohen \textit{The Talit and the Flag: Religious Zionism and the Vision of a Torah State in the Early Days of the State} 48-55 (Jerusalem, Yad Ben-Zvi, 1998) [Heb].
The retreats offered proof that the messianic/settlement process was reversible, and this gave way to a feeling of crisis.\textsuperscript{18}

The challenge placed before Gush Emunim supporters as a result of the political processes taking place engendered varying responses. One of them, on which this research will focus, was the formation of a new ideological camp in the national religious community – theocratic Post-Zionism. Supporters of this line of reasoning believed that it was not enough to simply respond to the changing political facts-on-the-ground, but that a more active adversarial stance should be adopted. Their vision encompassed a change of government and the creation of a theocratic solution for the inferior Zionist enterprise, which did not understand its historic goal in the process of redemption and was bringing a catastrophe on the nation as a result of its retreat from portions of the Land of Israel. They felt that only by separating from the Zionist commitment and abandoning “naïve” faith in the sanctity of the state, could the goals of a final redemptive process be achieved.

This is the vision put forward by the “Jewish Leadership” movement, whose path and platform will now be presented.

\textbf{The Founding of the “Jewish Leadership” Movement}

As soon as word of the Labor party’s success in the 1992 elections was made known, Hillel Weiss felt that “something bad” was about to take place. He cut short an academic sabbatical leave in Canada, returned to Israel, and began an acrimonious public opinion campaign against the new government.

\textsuperscript{18} Dov Schwartz \textit{Challenge and Crisis in Rav Kook’s Circle} 72-110 (Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 2001) [Heb].
Weiss was a founder and one of the first settlers of Elkana. He was born in 1945, and graduated from the Zeitlin High School in Tel Aviv. He performed his army service in Nahal Mutznach (Airborne Nahal of the Paratroopers Brigade). He was drawn to literature at a young age, and sought to turn his hobby into his primary profession. His academic achievements were in the fields of literature and law. Although he completed his law degree, he was not drawn to the profession and chose to focus on literature. At Bar-Ilan University he studied with Baruch Kurzweil, the head of the Hebrew Literature department and one of the premier scholars of Hebrew literature.\textsuperscript{19} Over time, he too achieved a senior position at Bar-Ilan University, as an outstanding literary scholar.

Even though he was part of the original group that had helped to establish the settlement movement, Weiss was involved with ideological disputes within that camp from the outset, and always preserved a position of independence. While active in many of the movement’s more right-wing activities, he was not beholden to any particular institutional approach, but solely to the link of ideas. He preferred to be in the position of an “outsider,” which enabled him to be flexible in his various activities, to belong to parallel organizations and, through them, to advance his operative ideas. He therefore attempted to unify all the movements established for the purpose of founding the Temple

\textsuperscript{19} Kurzweil often warned against the Canaanite ideas that were seeping into Israeli culture in place of Jewish sources. Weiss, therefore, is continuing in the path of his teacher. While his fundamentalist worldview is quite different from that of his teacher, whose opinions were more moderate and who negated the identification of the Zionist enterprise with messianism, Weiss offers similar criticisms of the current literature. For Kurzweil’s outlook on the question of messianism, see David Ohana \textit{Messianism and National Interest: Ben-Gurion and the Intellectuals between Political Vision and Theological Politics} 369-81(Jerusalem, Ben-Gurion Institute, 2003) [Heb].
under one umbrella organization,\textsuperscript{20} and was actively involved in renewing the institution of the Sanhedrin.\textsuperscript{21}

The Labor party victory under Rabin’s leadership in the 1992 elections resulted, in part, from the fragmentation into small parties of the right-wing voters. This result pushed Weiss to immediately and indefatigably start working toward unifying the forces of the right. In 1993, together with MK Moshe Peled (\textit{Tzomet}), he initiated an extra-parliamentary organization intended to unite all the right-wing political parties under the banner \textit{Tnuat HaTikvah} (“The Movement of Hope”), but this attempt was unsuccessful. Another attempt at extra-parliamentary organization took place during the intermediate days of the \textit{Sukkot} holiday in 1995; this attempt also failed.\textsuperscript{22}

The sense of devastation wrought in the right-wing camp by the Labor party’s victory in the 1992 elections was too much for Weiss to bear. It drove him to use ever more strident rhetoric against the new government. For example, under the heading “Evil Spirit: Out!” (September 1992), Weiss described the roaring of his heart, which refused to believe that Rabin had won the election and that a threatening political process was poised at the threshold. In an article he wrote for the newspaper \textit{Hadashot}, and which was given the banner headline in the newspaper, Weiss employed images from the world of witchcraft to portray the new government and its intentions. He labeled it an evil spirit,

\textsuperscript{20} This attempt can be reviewed in Sarina Chen’s research \textit{Central Themes in the Rhetoric and Praxis of the Temple Admires} (Masters Thesis in Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 2001) [Heb].

\textsuperscript{21} See Yuval Yoaz “The Renewed Sanhedrin” \textit{Haaretz} 3 November 2005, p. 33 [Heb].

\textsuperscript{22} See Hillel Weiss \textit{King’s Way} 409-16 (Tel Aviv, Ariel Institute, 2003) [Heb].
and a hostile takeover by demons of the soul, which would bring about the obliteration of the Jewish nation in its land:

I have already ceased to look at the lips of the prime minister. In the days before the Yom Kippur War I learned in the IDF, when there still was an IDF: Once a liar, always a liar. Now I watch his feet. I do not believe that he is the leader. Perhaps Ashmedai is seated on his chair. Ashmedai is dressed in his clothing, as in the legend of King Solomon and Ashmedai, the King of Demons ascended the throne without the people realizing the switch that had taken place. Only one aspect differentiated Solomon from Ashmedai – Ahsmedai’s clawed, webbed chicken feet. However, since Rabin has lately been wearing new German boots, I could not see his feet.23

Weiss went on to describe the government in demonizing terms, with Shulamit Aloni, leader of the Meretz political party and a member of Rabin’s government, referred to as “Lilith” – the queen of demons in Jewish mythological tradition, who is identified with the cosmic forces of evil.24 “There is no need to wait until Rabin takes off his boots. Lilith is at his side, and she does not have to take off her shoes or anything else. She is as she always was.” Weiss ends the article with the sentence: “The government of Al-Ardad

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23 Hadashot 23 September 1992 [Heb], also in Weiss King’s Way, supra note 22, p. 17.

24 For an elaboration of this image, see Joseph Dan “Samael, Lilith, and the Concept of Evil in the Early Kabbalah” 5 AJJS Review, p. 17 (1980).
(initials for Aloni-Rabin-Deri-Darawshe), go in peace, in honor, of your own free will, before the nation shows you the door. Evil spirit – out!”

Weiss identified the peace process as a weakness stemming from the infiltration of ideological, post-modernist ideas into the Zionist discourse. These elements aimed to sterilize the symbols of their historic significance, erasing identity and privatizing consciousness. Adopting a Post-Zionist worldview leads its proponents to an understanding of Judaism as universal, with no attendant claims to the Land of Israel. Weiss claimed that post-modernism, by means of the democratic mechanism, erases communal and national rights in favor of individual rights. Therefore, the political process is not just a process of bringing about peace between enemies, but rather a spiritual process for Jews whose “Jewishness is a nuisance and they do not understand its meaning, alongside Arabs anticipating the end of Jewish Zionism.” The process is possible as long as the sense of alienation from Judaism and hostility toward the world of the religious and haredi Jews strengthens.

These processes must come to an end. The solution to the crisis can be found in strengthening the momentum for redemption – wherein Zionism began, but took a wrong turn because of the post-modern distortion.

As long as Zionism makes no correcting effort to see in itself a continuing movement and legal heir to meta-historical Judaism, a Judaism that believes in the original mission of the return to Zion, the ingathering of the exiles as a prophetic

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process, a commitment to preserve the commandments of the Torah and the many traditional concepts of Judaism and its expressions in history as revealing God’s work in the world – the break will not heal, but will only become worse.27

Weiss therefore demanded, in February 1995, that a religious candidate be presented to head the government. He called on *haredim* and religious Zionists to support such a candidacy. With this demand, he presented his claim that the era of “the first step of our deliverance,” with its attendant, passive anticipation of redemption, was over, and that now was the time to actively undermine the status quo and work toward a life based on the laws of the Torah.28

The “changing of the guard” concept and the sense of an urgent need to enter the political party system in order to create a revolution was also taking place at this time in the minds of Moshe Feiglin and Motti Karpel, individually and each in their own way. The Oslo process affected Moshe Feiglin deeply and dramatically, and he found himself becoming more and more involved in the public protests against the Oslo Accords. Feiglin lives in the settlement of Ganei Shomron. With Rabin as head of the government, Feiglin felt that the settler community was being demonized by the government, and that the Israeli media was not helping the public to see its pain or its protest. These feelings impelled him toward public action, even as he neglected his day-to-day occupation as the owner of a company that maintained high-rise buildings. He initiated a plan for the overnight establishment of dozens of new settlements, in order to embarrass the Israeli

27 Ibid.

28 *HaTzofeh* 10 February 1995 [Heb].
government in the eyes of the world. He formulated his plans, and established a committee in his own neighborhood. Feiglin, along with his neighbor Shmuel Sackett, a new immigrant from the United States, prepared a plan of action and turned to the Yesha Council – the umbrella organization of the settlements – with an operative plan, ready for implementation. In hindsight, it became clear to Feiglin and his friends that Aharon Domb, the spokesperson of the Yesha Council, opposed the idea – and it was repeatedly deferred. The group became embroiled in a public confrontation with Domb and the council, and decided to put the plan into action by themselves, without the support of the settlers’ establishment. On 26 January 1994 Mivtza Machpil was inaugurated. After their break from the Yesha Council, they were left with few supporters. They therefore decided to establish one new settlement every night, each time in a different location. People living in Kiryat Arba participated in establishing the first settlement; on the second night the members of Bat-Ayin participated, and so on. IDF forces arrived at the location of every outpost and evacuated them. The media followed the story and there was a substantial amount of press coverage, which intensified its impact. The participants were arrested, the spirit of enthusiasm waned and the “Zo Artzeinu” movement was launched.29

After their campaign ended, Feiglin and Sackett decided to continue their protest activities, with an underlying premise of nonviolent citizen revolt, without coordinating their campaign with the established institutions. They chose to focus on road intersections throughout the country, within the Green Line, and to generate nonviolent protests. They

29 In his autobiography, Feiglin describes at length the activities of Zo Artzeinu. See Moshe Feiglin Where There Are No Men (Jerusalem, Masada, 1998) [Heb].
began on 8 August 1995, when they simultaneously blocked eighty intersections throughout the country, leading to a complete shut-down of highway traffic in the state. Hundreds of participants were arrested. Moshe Feiglin was brought to trial the following day, and sentenced to a six-month suspended sentence with a fine of NIS 10,000 (about $2000). The success of the initial operation brought about a string of similar actions, shutting down roads and highways. These demonstrations continued for about a month and a half. The operations brought thousands of people into the streets, and there were angry mass demonstrations against the Oslo process. After about a month and a half, in light of the harsh government response, the leaders of the movement sensed the exhaustion of those supporting their protests, and the protests stopped.³⁰

With a limited budget and staff, Feiglin succeeded in bringing masses of protesters into the streets; people who were upset by the Oslo Accords and were seeking a way to express their frustration. After Rabin’s assassination on 4 November 1995, a police inquiry began against Moshe Feiglin. He was indicted, found guilty, and charged with sedition.³¹ Shmuel Sackett and Benny Elon were also found guilty. Feiglin was sentenced to six months of community service and an eighteen-month suspended sentence. Benny Elon avoided conviction by virtue of his having been elected to the Knesset as a member of the Moledet party. Feiglin’s conviction prevented him from entering the Knesset as a member of the Likud in the Knesset elections of 2003, due to a clause requiring a cooling-off period of seven years.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 118-65.

³¹The sedition charges were protested by leading jurists, with Mordechai Kremnitzer calling for their abolition and replacement by broadening the legislation against incitement. See Mordechai Kremnitzer and Khalid Ghanayim Incitement, Not Sedition (Jerusalem, Israel Democracy Institute, 1997) [Heb].
The mass protest movement, Zo Artzeinu, moved onto a trajectory outside the political-parliamentary framework as a result of Motti Karpel and Moshe Feiglin’s membership in the movement. Karpel is the ideologue of “Jewish Leadership.” His biography includes a process of *chazara bitemshuva* (returning to a religiously observant lifestyle) that began, in his opinion,\(^\text{32}\) after the Yom Kippur War (1973), when he served as an officer in the *Egoz* reconnaissance unit. Philosophy studies at the University of Haifa after the war motivated him to delve more deeply into Jewish thought. The process of becoming a *chozer bitemshuva* led him to study the doctrine of Rav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook of the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva and also of the Chabad movement. In Haifa, Karpel was active in establishing institutions for *chozrim bitemshuva*. He then left Haifa and moved to Jerusalem, where he immersed himself in religious studies. Some time later he moved from Jerusalem to the settlement of Bat Ayin. For five years (1991-96) he was the administrator of the Machon HaMikdash\(^\text{33}\) in Jerusalem, and, since the establishment of “Jewish Leadership” (1995), has opened a modest public relations office in the settlement where he now lives.\(^\text{34}\)

\(^{32}\) Interview with the author, at his home in the settlement of Bat Ayin, 4 November 2003.

\(^{33}\) Machon HaMikdash is an educational institution that operates a training college for high school curriculums, a museum, a publishing house, a yeshiva for young men, a yeshiva for teenagers, and an enterprise for creating and reconstructing Temple instruments. The Institute is located in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City in. Its founder is Yisrael Ariel, one of the leading activists of the “Movement for the Preparation of the Temple” and an important ideologue in the Post-Zionist trend in religious nationalism.

\(^{34}\) Interview with the author, supra note 32.
On Motzei Shabbat (the conclusion on Saturday night of the Sabbath), 4 November 1995, the idea of establishing the “Jewish Leadership” movement began to materialize. Members of Bat Ayin, under the leadership of Motti Karpel, traveled to Moshe Feiglin’s home in the settlement of Ganei Shomron and presented him with the idea of establishing a political body that would offer an alternative to the Israeli political system. Feiglin accepted the idea, inasmuch as he was interested in taking the tremendous energies that he had managed to corral from his past protest movements and channeling them into a “movement for building and creating.”35 That very same evening, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. This coincidence made a strong impression on the activists.

Karpel’s ideology, together with Feiglin’s organizational and leadership skills, as well as the public support of Hillel Weiss, brought about the establishment of the “Jewish Leadership” movement. While Feiglin was the recognized and prominent public figure, the movement is collectively administered by Karpel, Feiglin, and Michael Puah, who serves as the director general of the movement.

Before addressing the establishment and activities of the movement, I would like to present the worldview of its founder, Motti Karpel. I will do this by analyzing his book “The Faith Revolution – the Eclipse of Zionism and the Rise of the Alternative of Faith”36 – wherein his activist Post-Zionist opinions are articulated, and which serves as a kind of political platform for the movement.

35 Moshe Feiglin Where There Are No Men, supra note 29, p. 248.

The Faith Revolution – The Ideology of the “Jewish Leadership” Movement

Karpel acknowledges that his ideological world is a synthesis of three philosophers: Rav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook, the followers of Chabad, and Shabtai Ben-Dov. The Chabad-like approach in his writings is influenced by the opinions of Yitzhak Ginzburg, head of the Od Yosef Chai yeshiva, where Karpel was a keen follower.

The book opens with the basic assumption that there is a continuing breakdown in Zionism. The army’s power has weakened, Israel’s international status has been undermined, the political leadership is deteriorating, the social gaps are growing wider, relations between the religious and secular populations are getting worse, and more. The process of returning to Zion is stuck at a dead-end.

Zionism constituted a revolt against traditional society. Karpel claimed, however, that Zionism did not possess a sufficiently positive aspect or aspire toward possessing meaningful content, inasmuch as it was not founded on the concept of a return to Zion.

37 Shabtai Ben-Dov is a back-stage Lechi member who prepared an operative plan for bringing about a religious theocracy within the borders of the State of Israel. The parameters of this plan rely to a large extent on the ideas of Italian Fascism promulgated by Mussolini. My book devotes a broad discourse on the image and activities of this man. See Motti Inbari Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount, supra note 10, pp. 56-67.


39 Ibid., p. 25.
an essentially traditional concept. Its sources were rooted in a different background – the ideas of an alienated secular enlightenment.

Zionism’s Western ideology brought with it a universal value system. This sum total of values is alien to traditional, historic sensibilities. Therefore, while this may have sufficed for a detail-oriented approach, it was insufficient to respond to the problems of the period when these problems were tested by their position in a system of values relative to the messianic goals of the nation in its land.\(^{40}\)

Karpel is influenced by Hegel’s concept of the “cunning of reason.” According to this system, there is a transcendental force guiding history. The central idea is a dialectic – human advancement is the by-product of the struggle between the existing order and its contrast. Following this line of reasoning, Karpel claims that traditional Judaism is undergoing a dialectic process. It has abandoned its principle stance in favor of Zionism, becoming its antithesis. The next phase will be the synthesis of tradition with Zionism, which will once again restore tradition to its preeminent position, but in a new and improved form.\(^{41}\)

Karpel’s criticism of Zionism is a critique from both the right and the left. All the Zionist trends share the same “defect.” The term “safe refuge” is a classic Zionist concept, whereby security concerns override the idea of the complete Land of Israel. Zionism was not meant to liberate the land, but rather to grant the Jews a state, and not necessarily in every part of the country. In Zionist terms, the land is a means, and not a value, and Zionist ideology will always choose peace over territory. Therefore, every

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p. 29.

\(^{41}\) Interview with the author, supra note 32.
struggle over the wholeness of the land that stems from Zionist values is destined to fail. Consequently, there is another basis for discourse, wherein the wholeness of the land is an absolute value.\(^{42}\) And so, for example, the “Jewish Leadership” movement did not support Benjamin Netanyahu’s candidacy to head the government in the 1996 elections, and warned that Netanyahu would follow in the wake of the Oslo Accords and continue to return territories to the Palestinian Authority. The movement explained that Netanyahu could not be trusted, since the sum total of his ideological essence was to be found in the name of his book – “A Place Under the Sun,”\(^ {43}\) which itself constitutes a play on words of the Zionist concept of “safe refuge.”\(^ {44}\)

**The Principles of “Faith Consciousness”**

Karpel claims that Zionism will be replaced by “faith consciousness,” which is in essence a Hegelian synthesis. The principles of this approach, as articulated by Karpel, are as follows:

\(^ {42}\) Motti Karpel *The Faith Revolution – The Eclipse of Zionism and the Rise of the Alternative of Faith*, supra note 36, pp. 51-52. Lilly Weisbrod also believed that the Gush Emunim movement chose to use secular language to justify its religious claims, in order to increase public support for its cause; in so doing, it set a trap for itself. She feels that this approach emphasized the values of pluralism, individuality, and human rights. In the wake of the Oslo Accords, it was precisely these values that posed a stumbling block in the attempt to garner support for the wholeness of the land. Lilly Weisbrod “Gush Emunim and the Israel-Palestinian Peace Process: Modern Religious Fundamentalism in Crisis” 3(1) *Israel Affairs*, p. 86 (1996).

\(^ {43}\) Benjamin Netanyahu *A Place Under the Sun* (Tel Aviv, Yediot Aharonot, 1995) [Heb].

\(^ {44}\) 4 *Lechatchila* (1987) [Heb].
The first principle rests on historical initiative and responsibility. Zionism restored the value of historical initiative and bears the responsibility for the return to Zion to the Jewish discourse. This in no way contradicts the foundations of Judaism. The Diaspora created the distortion that in turn generated Jewish passivity, and it is this that Zionism has come to correct. Therefore, “faith consciousness” will preserve this mental revolution that has permeated through Zionism. “Traditional consciousness must, in contrast, separate itself from the approach that redemption is only a waiting period and that historic initiative is forbidden.”45

The second principle determines that “faith consciousness” adopts the position that human initiative must receive divine blessing, so that an independent outlook is not necessarily heretical. The muting of Halakhah, as something cut off from modernity, necessitates reinvigoration by means of change and adaptation. Conservatism, according to Karpel, is a positive value, but it cannot be allowed to prevent any and all renewal. “Faith consciousness” must be a synthesis of traditional conservatism and renewing talent, without the concept of heresy.46

The third principle deals with building up the culture of the Third Temple. This culture is the result of the meeting between Jews and Judaism. Believing in historic determinism, Karpel claims that opening the dialogue to the essence of Judaism in our times offers the possibility of bearing original, honest, and quality results. The divine spark hidden in every Jewish soul will know how to lead the soul to its destination.


46 Ibid., pp. 62-66.
Karpel suggests no possibilities other than those outlined above.\textsuperscript{47} In the process of *chazara biteshuva* he finds the proof he needs that this is an inevitable process and that its outcome is clear.\textsuperscript{48}

**The fourth principle** determines that “faith consciousness” is a messianic consciousness. Identifying the Zionist enterprise as the beginning of the process of the redemption leads him to the conclusion that deliverance is already at hand, and is likely to be fully realized according to its traditional designs. “Faith consciousness” is the activism of redemption, of the true historic action placed on the individual, and not just prayer and longing: “Here we see the revolutionary side of faith consciousness. It adopts the basic Zionist element of a return to history from the point of a willingness to assume responsibility for historical acts and initiative on a national scale.”\textsuperscript{49}

According to Karpel, the messianic concept is a national redemptive one. His understanding is that the messiah does not necessarily arrive as a mortal, but can also be the expression of an era: “The messianic idea is a rational and historic idea, materializing according to the laws of nature, as determined by human consciousness.” Miraculous redemption is rejected outright, and is portrayed as “a mystical approach that has seeped into folkloric Judaism under the influence of Christianity.” “The original Israeli messianic concept is not one of wonders and miracles that relieve us of the obligation to

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., pp. 68-72.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., pp. 85-97.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p. 106.
grapple with difficulties, doubts, finding our way and all the other human activities […] this is the way of Maimonides and it is his path that we follow.”

The fifth principle determines that, in addition to commitment to the concept of redemption, there is also a commitment to attempt to actualize the concept. Following this line of reasoning, Zionism appeared as a result of “the awakening of the Israeli soul to return to itself and to its natural place.” Teshuva, therefore, is also a reflection of the soul’s yearning to return to the essence of Judaism. Consequently, there is no need to see in Zionism, as there is in chazara bíteshuva, the end result of external processes. Their source is found, rather, in internal, metaphysical processes leading toward the redemption of Israel.

Karpel concludes that Israeli historic consciousness faces toward the future, toward deliverance, and here too the processes must be judged by their internal aspirations and intentions. This is the source of his criticism of religious Zionism, which views the concept etchaltah degeula (the beginning of redemption) as a type of “blank check,” affording the possibility of sitting with arms crossed while awaiting the redemption that will materialize by itself or by other means.

Karpel therefore determines that whoever believes that the nation is currently in the process of redemption must act to bring about its full realization. It is then incumbent upon the public to follow the laws of hilchot mashiach (messianic laws), which are

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50 Ibid., pp. 106-107. Karpel relies on the two final chapters of Maimonides’ halakhic treatise, Mishneh Torah, wherein the messianic era is presented in human parameters. For a broader examination of Maimonides’ study of the messianic era, see David Hartman “Maimonides’ Approach to Messianism and its Contemporary Implications” 2-3 Daat (1978/9), pp. 5-33.
involved in the revival of the nation and its institutions, the Sanhedrin and Jewish law, the commandment of establishing kingship and the building of the Temple. Ignoring these commandments is indicative of “the moral slackness of religious consciousness. Faith consciousness does not negate these commandments but rather the opposite; it seeks to examine what can be fully included.”

The sixth principle is organic nationalism. Karpel adopts an organic approach that unifies the individual with the public to achieve a perfect oneness.

The individual and the group are not separate one from the other. Just as the human body is the sum total of its parts, so is the nation. The Israeli nation is a living organic creation, the sum total of one wholeness, which does not lose its elements but is revealed by them. All the elements have one common essence, and this essence is metaphysical, internal, the soul of the nation. If you wish it – the Knesset of Israel.

Moreover, this unity is not just for the present day, but it is the unity of all Jews throughout the generations.

The seventh principle is the organic union between the nation and the land. Just as the individual and the group are joined in one organic entirety, so too are the nation and the Land of Israel joined in this union. Moreover, the Land of Israel is a living being:

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52 Ibid., p.134.
The nation and its land are one. Immoral behavior on the part of the nation is likely to cause the land to reject and eject the nation from the land. The land is not an object to be traded, to slice it up, to hand it over to strangers. The land has a soul, and it feels, breathes and responds. The land is aware of the nation residing in it and responds accordingly. It refuses to accept any other nation and does not answer to them. [ … ] The relationship between the nation and the land is as one organic union. The nation cannot flourish outside of this unique Land of Israel [ … ] in order to express its life fully the nation needs its natural ecological habitat – all of the Land of Israel. The land needs the entire nation in order to blossom and the nation needs all of the land in order to flourish. This is the perfect union.53

The eighth principle demands an abandonment of Western culture. According to Karpel, Western culture is the source of ideas such as “a state like all the other nations.” Karpel suggests creating a different hierarchy of values, one where conquering the land is not only an historic right, but rather a divine commandment. This commandment also involves a commitment to territorial expansion and turning the state into a regional power. Karpel claims that divine protection has driven the State of Israel to widen its borders. As proof, he says, all the battles the state found itself involved in were fought reluctantly, against its will. The confrontations with its neighbors were always the result of the neighbors’ aggression. Therefore, the process of a return to Zion and expanding the borders of the state is being done by a guiding hand, and it is necessary to listen to its

53 Ibid., pp. 144-48.
instructions. The passage from Zionist consciousness to “faith consciousness” will enable this to take place.\textsuperscript{54}

The ninth principle, and the final one, concerns the universal significance of the return to Zion. Completing the national mission will prepare the nation for its universal mission. The significance of this mission is in correcting the distorted Christian morality that brings about the decline of humanity with its existential degeneracy and decadence. Accordingly, the entire world is waiting for the qualitative-moral message to be broadcast from Israel. Modern anti-Semitism rests on this same basis: anti-Semitism, according to Karpel, is a result of the cosmic rage of the nations of the world because Zionism is not fulfilling its role, offering instead a pathetic, cheap imitation of gentile culture.\textsuperscript{55}

A Changing of the Guard

After presenting the principles of faith, Karpel turns to an analysis of historic dramatism and an identification of the process of a faith revolution. He believes that the Zionist elite is in a process of decline. In contrast, the community of believers, defined as those residing in the settlements, has captured the momentum of the atrophying Zionism, particularly with the establishment of Gush Emunim and the settlement enterprise.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., pp. 144-49. The approach that seeks to repudiate Western culture for the purpose of creating a counter-culture based on traditional religion is one of the foundations of modern fundamentalism. This can be subject for a broader discussion, as for example Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby & Emanuel Sivan \textit{Strong Religion – The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World} (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

While the efforts of the community of faith stemmed from Zionist motives, they were expressions of an internal Jewish-messianic momentum. Karpel feels that the sense of inferiority of religious Zionism also impacted on Gush Emunim. The settlement leadership was unable to regard itself as anomalous in the classic Zionist course of events. This weakness engendered a paralysis that took hold in light of the Oslo Accords.

The Israeli left sought to beat down anyone posing a challenge to them, and the ideology of peace was invented to eradicate the alternative presented by the settlement enterprise. The failure of the Oslo process brought about the elimination of the left and the transfer of government to the Likud party; the party poised to take the reins of the historic, political leadership.56

Karpel believes that the new oligarchy and the alternative to the left will come from among the members of the settlements, and from immigrants, both from the former Soviet Union and from the United States. This community, he says, does not have the pliancy and subordination of the national religious public. Another more important factor is the fact that the new leadership comes from those who are chozrim b'iteshuva: “They have the self-assurance of the secular, the leftist and the working pioneer, and they have the ability to implant this mentality onto the authentic basis of the tradition of Israel.”57

The Goals of Redemption

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56 Ibid., pp. 199-232.

57 Ibid., pp. 237-38.
According to Karpel, there is a string of long-term and short-term goals in realizing redemption. Faithful to the approach of Maimonides in his “The Laws of Kings and Their Wars,” he lists five basic goals to be aspired to:

1. The establishment of a Jewish state – Maimonides’ claim for kingship is understood not in the sense of a mortal leader, but rather in the leadership of the spirit of the Torah of Israel. Karpel then differentiates between state, regime, and government. The state represents the government and “the beginning of our redemption,” and is therefore regarded in a positive light. The parliamentary regime, according to Karpel, is in conflict with the heritage of Israel. Israel’s heritage promotes unity rather than separation, whereas parliamentarianism represents different voices competing in their representation of the public. The regime also represents a Western democratic hierarchy of values, and is therefore disqualified. Karpel notes, in all honesty, that – at the present moment – he is unable to present a different form of government as an alternative to democracy. He acknowledges that Halakhah does not possess the tools for administering affairs of state. To achieve the goal of reinvigorating Halakhah and adapting it to today’s world requires more generations of study and thought. There is nothing improper in opposing the government, Karpel says, because of its democratic parliamentary system that always includes the opposition.58

2. The war to liberate the land – the instilling of the concept of the consciousness of war and the sanctity of militarism. Zionist ideology justified wars on the basis of “there is no other option,” but God’s wars can be used for offensive action. In contrast to the Zionist

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58 Ibid., pp. 244-63. Karpel does not mention a limit to the opposition; however, the conduct of the movement suggests that it does not intend to use violence.
concept, which views the army as “an army of defense.” Karpel claims that God’s wars have a religious mission that does not necessarily make do with self-defense. 59

3. Building the Temple – according to Maimonides (Sefer HaMitzvot [the Book of Commandments], commandment #20), building the Temple is a mitzvat aseh (positive commandment), and should be a strategic goal for a faith-based leadership. Zionist consciousness chose not to deal with what is sacred. Consequently, traditional consciousness is also unable to deal with the issue, both because of its passive inclination and also due to the halakhic restrictions placed on entering the Temple Mount in light of the rabbinic injunction against it. 60 Karpel lists the problems of unity on this issue: a) halakhic difficulties: it is possible to find a halakhic solution for every halakhic difficulty; b) intellectual issues: halakhic literature can provide many justifications for inaction for the sake of the Temple. The mentality must be changed in order to assume responsibility for national action; c) cultural difficulties: the building of the Temple must be linked to spiritual development. Therefore, progress on this issue can only come about as a result of existential need. When the generation will be prepared, the Temple will come too. 61 On this point, Karpel appears to retreat, and align himself with the ideas espoused by the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva, characteristic of the stance of Zvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook and

59 Ibid., pp. 265-68.

60 For the halakhic discussion on the question of entering the Temple Mount, see the discussions on this topic in the journal Torah She B’al Peh (Yitzchak Refael ed., Jerusalem, 1968) [Heb], as well as Shaul Shefer Temple Mount – Our Glorious Crown 61-68 (Jerusalem, Yefay Nof, 1969) [Heb].

his students, whereby progress on the issue of the Temple must be the result of the nation’s spiritual elevation. 62

4. The ingathering of the exiles – Historic Zionism changed the order in the scenario for redemption according to Maimonides, in that the ingathering of the exiles took place before building the Temple rather than after. According to Karpel, when a spiritual message is lacking and there is no religious rule, the nation sees no need to assemble in all of Israel. This is the correct order of events for the ingathering of the exiles. 63

5. Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) in the kingdom of God – after completing the operative goals of the national redemption, the Torah of miraculous redemption will arrive; a change in nature and its laws that will bring about a moral adjustment for all humanity. 64

Modes of Action

Karpel feels that while the democratic regime does not represent the spirit of Judaism, it is important to operate within its framework. The reasons for this, as he has already pointed out, are that there is no other Jewish administration available at this time. Moreover, the democratic regime is flexible and affords various modes of action, “However it is clear that we will have to switch governments.” And yet, it must be noted

62 See Shlomo Aviner To Your Temple, Return (Jerusalem, Sifriyat Chava, 2000) [Heb].
64 Ibid., pp. 280-82.
that Karpel does not rule out a situation of refusing to follow government rule. On this he states:

The spirit of our actions is revolutionary and messianic. Precisely because the internal energy meant to lead us is thus, we should (at least attempt) try to achieve it peacefully […] the paths of peace require patience, to use the existing frameworks and not break them […] let us not forget that we are talking about the dear State of Israel where we want to change the regime but not lose it ourselves.

[…] the obvious conclusion is that it is **worthwhile to attempt** to realize [the revolution] by means of the current regime. However, we must emphasize that we identify with the current regime and see ourselves as committed to it, **but only up to a certain point**.65 [Bold print in the original text.]

Karpel understands that he does not have the ability to enforce his views on the state and on society, and therefore sees himself as committed to educational efforts that will create the revolutionary development.

In conclusion, Karpel’s worldview is a revolutionary ideology that seeks to lead to a Torah-based regime. He acknowledges its weakness, but this awareness does not create apathy in him, but rather compels him to actively attempt to find solutions. An essential component of his approach is the influence of the writings of Rav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook on the topic of dialectic historic dramatism. Also, in line with this approach, the historical process cannot be judged by its subjective momentum, but only

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65 Ibid., p. 286.
by the objective significance of the act itself. Karpel, however, goes beyond the positions of the school of thought of Mercaz HaRav. While he does accept the dialectic, intellectual format, he injects a few other elements as well. He suggests a plan of action to establish a movement for redemption in accordance with the goals of national redemption. His approach entails a mystical vision of an organic union between the individual and the group, and an organic union between the nation and its land. The universal dimension of redemption, appearing at the end of his article, is considerably played down and undeveloped. His attitude toward this era employs the use of the messianic redemptive concepts of changing the laws of nature, and there is no way of knowing what these changes entail until they take place. The emphasis in his writings is on the unique Jewish messianic phenomenon from within a fundamentalist existence.

The Activities of the “Jewish Leadership” Movement

The new reorganization began “on a small flame.” A year passed after the meeting between Karpel and Feiglin before they began a biweekly distribution of the movement’s newsletter, Lechatchila. The movement’s distribution network was started in November 1996, and its ideas began disseminating among the religious public, who met in synagogues that received copies of the newsletter. To date, approximately 140 issues have been published, creating a central platform for the expression of the movement’s

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66 On the dialectic of the philosophy of Rav Kook, see Ravitzky Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism, supra note 13, pp. 79-136; Shlomo Avineri Varieties of the Zionist Idea 216-26 (Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 1991) [Heb].
worldview. Karpel’s significant involvement in articulating these worldviews led him to develop a business of design, advertising, and dissemination of materials to the religious public. After seven years of distributing the newsletter, its circulation reached approximately 70,000 issues. Moreover, the movement began operating an Internet site, packed with information and opinions, along with weekly email announcements to their subscribers. The group has managed to create for itself an alternative network for information and marketing.

The movement’s first political venture took place in 1997, when the announcement of President Ezer Weizman’s resignation signaled the start of a race for the presidency. The newsletter stated that “With Weizman’s departure from the institution of the presidency, the time has come for a president who will represent the Jewish character of the state and not its Israeli one [...] a president of faith.” The movement began searching for an appropriate candidate for the presidency. Professor Yirmiyahu Branover, a follower of the Chabad movement, agreed to become the movement’s candidate, and the campaign to garner parliamentary support for his candidacy began. This effort ended in a resounding failure. In order to participate in the election for president, the candidate required the signatures of ten members of Knesset, announcing that they supported his candidacy. Branover failed to pass this minimal threshold.

With the approach of the general elections in 1999, the movement began to prepare to compete independently. It announced the beginning of a “faith campaign,” with a candidate for prime minister to be presented on behalf of all the right-wing

67 15 Lechatchila (1998) [Heb].
movements. In this election, the voting for the prime minister and the voting for the Knesset list were separate. The movement felt that the religious political parties could not deliver the message of a faith revolution. It therefore planned to circumvent these parties, and initiate a new leadership for the religious public by presenting its own candidate to head the government. The sudden announcement of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he was resigning, with the ensuing speedy timetable for new elections, drastically reduced the movement’s preparations for the campaign. Even though they anticipated that Netanyahu would win the election over Ehud Barak (the Labor party’s candidate), they felt that it was right to continue with the campaign, because, with Netanyahu remaining faithful to the ideology of Zionism, he was incapable of properly representing them. However, it then became clear that they had no candidates ready to compete for the position of prime minister from among their list:

The campaign was stopped as a result of the elections for the Knesset and also due to the lack of willingness of individuals to compete at all, claiming that their role is to guide people spiritually […] no group and no individual will offer us leadership and if we wish to see Jewish leadership materialize in the State of Israel, we have to do it ourselves. We understood that a candidate to lead the government can only come from within the Jewish Leadership movement.

68 Lechatchila (1999) [Heb].

69 Clearly a mistaken assessment; Barak won over Netanyahu by a wide margin.

70 Lechatchila (1999) [Heb].
The idea of a campaign was abandoned and it was decided not to present a candidate to lead the government. A political party was established instead – “Lechatchila – Jewish Leadership” – which participated in the elections. Israel has a multi-party system. The new political party announced at the outset that it could not present a candidate to lead the government in the coming elections, but that it would do so in subsequent elections. It further announced that, if it became apparent that the movement had no chance of attaining the minimum threshold for election to the Knesset, it would remove its candidates rather than waste the votes of the right-wing public – which is what happened in the 1992 elections, leading to Rabin’s victory.

Due to budgetary restrictions, the party used the commercial time slots for campaign advertising that it received from the Yesha Council. This led the left-wing parties to feel that the party was essentially fictitious, its sole intention being to give the right wing a few extra minutes of election propaganda.71

The party presented six legislative principles:

1. The State of Israel is the state of the entire Jewish nation, and every Jew has the right to citizenship, with all that that entails.

2. The goals of the State of Israel are the realization of the complete redemption, as it is understood in the Torah of Israel and in historic sources.

3. Jewish law will replace the current system of law.

4. The State of Israel is first a Jewish state, and then a democratic one.

5. The borders of the State of Israel are the borders of the Land of Israel as determined by the Torah of Israel.

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71 See Nadav Shragai “Running for the Knesset, Dreaming of the Temple” Haaretz 30 April 1999 [Heb].
6. The State of Israel, as a Jewish state, will aspire to have all its citizens be only Jewish.\textsuperscript{72}

   The movement removed its candidates for office before the elections, as promised, to avoid wasting votes.

   Prior to Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s departure to a summit meeting in Washington (2001), there were increased misgivings that he would sign a permanent agreement with the Palestinians that would include additional territorial compromise and the evacuation of settlements. The movement’s threshold of expression was raised. In their newsletter, they wrote that the evacuation of settlements, and, in their language, “the expulsion of Jews from the Land of Israel,” was not legitimate. It was therefore acceptable to rise up against it.

   Whoever tries to expel Jews in the Land of Israel by means of the laws of the State of Israel, does not make this action legitimate, but undermines the moral validity of the legal system in the State of Israel and its commitments to its citizens based on this system. […] if the government of Israel wanted to sharpen the discrepancy between Israeli law and the morality of Israel and the laws of the Torah of Israel, there should be no illusions as to who will be a loyal and knowledgeable Jew and who will see themselves as morally obligated. A knowledgeable Jew is obligated first and foremost to the commandments of the God of Israel and only then to the laws of the State of Israel.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{72} 50 \textit{Lechatchila} (1999) [Heb].

\textsuperscript{73} 58 \textit{Lechatchila} (2000) [Heb].
The movement called for nonviolent civil disobedience and for a populist rebellion along the lines of Zo Artzeinu. They believed that these were legitimate democratic tools: “Nonviolent civil disobedience is one of the foundations of every democracy and an inseparable part of the democratic tradition.” And yet, a national referendum that obligated Prime Minister Barak to a retreat from the Golan Heights, if a political agreement was reached with Syria, was viewed by them as an anti-democratic principle, since a state does not have the right to destroy an individual, his home, and his life’s work: “For the most part, no one has the right to expel a man from his home.”

From the beginning, the “Jewish Leadership” movement emphasized an ideological development leading to the revolution of consciousness it sought to bring about. Hillel Weiss took upon himself the establishment of a concept-oriented group whose goal was the examination of, and discourse on, the questions of the day from within the prism of a faith-based fundamentalist approach. This is how the Mekimi Institute – the Center for the Advancement of Jewish Leadership was established. Hillel Weiss was chosen as chairman, and Ohad Kamin, an enthusiastic supporter of Meir Kahane, the head of the Kach movement, a self-defined artist and intellectual, was appointed secretary.

74 59 *Lechatchila* (2000) [Heb].

75 62 *Lechatchila* (2000) [Heb].

76 Kach is an extreme right-wing Jewish movement whose goal was to transform Israel into a halakhic state. The movement advocated the expulsion of Arabs from the “Complete Land of Israel,” and the denial of their civil rights. In 1994, the Israeli government declared Kach to be a terrorist organization. Its leader, Meir Kahane, was assassinated in New York in November 1990 by an Arab assailant. More information on
Moshe Feiglin described this arm of the movement as a merger between those who deal with Halakhah and academicians, and that, together, they would examine all the aspects of the state under religious leadership. The purpose of this group was “to bring the Torah of Israel out of its provincial, religious exile.” Hillel Weiss characterized this group as one that “includes philosophers, economists and jurists, sociologist and planners, anthropologists and of course Torah followers, who will give their opinions in an organized fashion on all the political questions of the day and not just as a committee of smart people quibbling on into the night, but as a committee that comes to challenge Israeli society.”

This group conducted meetings for about two years. One of the interesting discussions I attended was when Amotz Sarig, a teacher from the yeshiva high school in Gush Etzion, asked to meet with members of this forum pursuant to a notice published by the Zo Artzeinu movement in the press. This notice called for the murder of Arafat, the head of the Palestinian Authority. The meeting took place in September 2001. Sarig is not one of the members of this forum, and he asked to meet with them based on his personal friendship with Moshe Feiglin.

Sarig attacked the notice, and said that he had decided to cancel his membership dues to the movement. What angered him was not the language of the notice itself, but

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Ehud Sprinzak Between Extra-parliamentary Protest and Terror: Political Violence in Israel 92-130 (Jerusalem, The Jerusalem Institute for Research Studies, 1995) [Heb].

4 Lechatchila (1997) [Heb].

11 Lechatchila (1997) [Heb].
the fact that it was not signed by any sanctioned rabbinic authority. He felt that the “Jewish Leadership” movement should base its decisions on the Rabbinate, which would guide it every step of the way. He therefore proposed that the movement establish a type of “Council of Torah Leaders.” The panel’s response sharpened the distinctiveness of the “Jewish Leadership” movement. Oded Kitov\textsuperscript{79} responded by saying that, according to Halakhah, establishing kingship precedes renewal of the Sanhedrin, and this is the appropriate relationship between the movement and rabbinic authority; Shaul Nir\textsuperscript{80} said that there is no \textit{Shulchan Aruch} (code of Jewish law) for Jewish leadership, and that the Rabbinate is, therefore, not superior to ordinary people; Dan Be’eri \textsuperscript{81} claimed that there are rabbis who are not all that knowledgeable about Halakhah, whereas there are religious scholars who are far superior to them, so that for him there is no significance to rabbinic sanction. He feels that the Zionist process reflects the will of the nation to step into history. The Rabbinate cannot be a party to this process because, since the destruction of the Temple, the Rabbinate constitutes an a-historic body; Moshe Feiglin said that to understand and analyze reality, there is no need for a Chief Rabbi, and perhaps the Rabbinate itself is an obstacle and not an advantage; Mordechai Nissan\textsuperscript{82} said that the fact

\textsuperscript{79} A Chabad member close to Yitzchak Ginzburg.

\textsuperscript{80} An indicted member of the Jewish underground who was involved in the murder of students at the Islamic College of Hebron in the early 1980s.

\textsuperscript{81} He was also a member of the Jewish underground.

\textsuperscript{82} An academic active in the movement.
that Jewish leadership does not come from within the rabbinic world teaches us about the weakness of the Rabbinate.\textsuperscript{83}

This discussion, the basic elements of which I have presented, teaches us about the nature of this movement and of the opinions discussed in this organization. While it is loyal to the Torah of Israel and seeks to establish the Torah as the law of the state, it lowers the status of the members of the Rabbinate and men of Halakhah. They represent, to this movement, an impediment whose authority needs to be circumvented. The Rabbinate is symbolic of the degeneration of religion and its irrelevant status. This is also their view of the religious parties, which they tried to bypass, who have lost the authority to represent the religious public. In his book, Motti Karpel does not present his views as being in conflict with rabbinic authority, but his group understands that their revolution is only possible by means of skipping over the authority of the leaders of Halakhah, and by building a new and different religious essence wherein religion can be fully realized. Therefore, based on their understanding, the return of the status of the Torah must be accomplished without the Rabbinate. The movement therefore attempts to impart the concept of a religious revolt that will take Judaism out of its Diaspora framework and lead it to a more activist approach, by abandoning the religious hegemony that isolates itself within the patterns of the Diaspora.

\textbf{The Entry into the Likud}

\textsuperscript{83} The meeting took place at the office headquarters of the “Jewish Leadership” movement in Jerusalem, 6 September 2001.
Barak’s political failure and the collapse of his government led to general elections in 2001. Taking advantage of a loophole in the Likud constitution, which opened it up to all sectors of society, the group tried to use the Likud party apparatus to advance their own agenda. On 4 August 2000, Moshe Feiglin announced his candidacy to head the Likud in the internal party elections. His candidacy was an anomaly, but the entrance of “Jewish Leadership” into the Likud party turned out to be quite significant. After campaigning in the Likud, the movement garnered a significant amount of power in the party’s institutions.

Before Feiglin’s candidacy for prime minister, the movement initiated a mass polling in the Likud. While it was unable to get organized before the Likud primaries in 2001, the movement polled about ten thousand individuals as the internal Likud primaries approached in 2003. The polling did not signify commitment; an individual who presents himself as a Likud supporter does not necessarily have to vote for the Likud. This is how the religious public managed to garner political power within the ruling party and, at the same time, to vote traditionally for other parties. This is what the “Jewish Leadership” functionaries did. For example, the Yizhar settlement gave the Likud just two votes in the general election, whereas ninety-five individuals were polled as Likud supporters. In Bat Ayin, the movement’s source of power, only five percent of the voters voted for the Likud (ten votes). Approximately fifty percent went to “Herut,” with the candidacy of Baruch Marzel, identified with the Kach movement. In essence, the leaders of the
movement encouraged a broad polling from the outset, while at the same time clearly stating that voting for the Likud was not obligatory.\textsuperscript{84}

The intended goal of the polling was to accumulate power within the local party branches. In the internal elections in the local branches for the Likud Central Committee, the movement garnered approximately 130 delegates out of a total of 2,000. This faction was thought to be the strongest and most monolithic within the Likud Central Committee. It is worth noting that not everyone polled by them voted for them. In Feiglin’s campaign to head the party in the open primaries in 2003, he won about 4,870 votes. In other words, assuming that most of those polled did indeed come out and vote, only about half of them supported Feiglin’s candidacy to head the Likud.

Moshe Feiglin did not get onto the Likud list for the Knesset. He did, however, get onto the thirty-ninth spot of the Likud list, which was a realistic spot for entry into the Knesset. He was pushed to the bottom of the list, however, among other reasons, by “deals” made against him among the various groups in the Central Committee, apparently at the behest of the party leaders who feared that, were he to get into the Knesset, he would not faithfully follow the party line. Moreover, a petition by MK Naomi Chazan of Meretz to the Central Elections Committee led to a disqualification of his candidacy on the Likud list because of the conviction on sedition charges that had been successfully brought against him as a result of his activities on behalf of Zo Artzeinu.

\textsuperscript{84} 78 \textit{Lechatchila} (2000) [Heb]. In a press interview, Hillel Weiss said that in the 2003 elections he had voted for “Herut.” This despite the fact that he was a “Jewish Leadership” candidate for the Likud in his settlement of Elkana; he was not elected. See Avi Garfinkel “Redemption, Oh Redemption” \textit{Haaretz} Weekend Edition 30 January 2004 [Heb].
It is possible to learn about the group’s political power within the Likud from a conference that the movement held in early 2004, at the Binyaney HaUma Convention Center in Jerusalem. This was a show of power, and approximately 1,500 people attended. Among the respected invitees were Internal Security Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Natan Sharansky, members of Knesset and members of the Likud Central Committee. The conference received the blessings of religious authorities (Shmuel Eliyahu, the Rabbi of Safed, and Dov Lior, the Rabbi of Kiryat Arba), and speeches were given by the movement’s leaders – Motti Karpel, Moshe Feiglin, and Michael Puah. The conference was led by Adir Zik, a member of the Arutz Sheva radio station. Natan Sharansky, a notable former soviet dissident, gave the keynote address.

The participation of guests from the Likud leadership generated several anomalies. The minister of the interior, for example, listened from the stage, at length, to complaints by members of the movement against the police because of the administrative detention of Noam Federman, considered to be active in the Kach movement, and suspected of involvement in terrorist activities. The crowd called out angrily at Hanegbi, but the conference organizers did not give the minister the right to respond. Druze Knesset member Ayoob Kara heard calls from the stage for the expulsion of all non-Jews from the territory of the State of Israel. He was also not given the right to respond. It is worth noting that Hanegbi and Kara did not get up and leave the auditorium when these things were said. As mentioned, the keynote address at the conference was given by Natan Sharansky, who congratulated the participants on the opportunity that the “Jewish Leadership” movement created for an ideological discussion within the framework of the Likud. He spoke at length about how he as a minister had fought against Prime Minister
Barak’s proposal for territorial compromise, and demanded more democratization in the Arab world before the retreats continue. Sharansky’s presence engendered a paradox. Sharansky had fought against the totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union. His communal activism was dedicated, among other things, to the advancement of democratization throughout the world. Yet, Sharansky gave the keynote address before a political body that sought to abolish Israeli democracy and replace it with a theocratic regime – a group that views individuals as subordinate to the overall wellbeing of the nation, similar to the totalitarian regimes he had fought against so strongly. It could be that he was unaware of the movement’s worldview, but the fact is that he agreed to be the keynote speaker at the conference. This event is indicative of the success that this faction achieved within the political system.

The final paradox was highlighted toward the end of the conference. One of the movement’s proposals is to abolish the national anthem, “Hatikvah,” and replace it with the words “I believe in the coming of the messiah.” Therefore, at the end of the conference, the national anthem was not sung and the closing of the conference was announced. A singer came up to perform Hasidic melodies for those wishing to remain and dance along to the melodies. A murmur passed through the crowd. Adir Zik took notice of this murmuring and saved the moment by directing the singer to first sing “Hatikvah.” After the national anthem had been sung, the singer immediately continued with “I believe in the coming of the messiah.” Apparently, even the committed public is not yet ready to relinquish the national anthem, and certainly not at a conference where government leaders – ministers and members of Knesset – are participating.

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85 28 Lechatchila (1998) [Heb].
The movement’s struggle to fasten the party leaders to the Likud Central Committee’s decisions constitutes an additional paradox. While “Jewish Leadership” calls for “changing the disk” of the public (a term that Adir Zik used in defining his goals for “Jewish Leadership”) by various means within the Likud itself, the movement is also attempting to block all other internal developments within the Likud, or any other “changing of the disk.” They furiously attacked Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Minister of Trade and Industry Ehud Olmert on account of the political plan for unilateral action in building the separation fence and evacuating the settlements. “Jewish Leadership” claimed that, by so doing, they were representing the position of the “extreme left,” and not the position of the Likud. They then suggested imposing parliamentary discipline on Likud representatives in the government and in the Knesset.

**Is Deception a Worthy Jewish Act?**

The political success of the movement engendered controversy within religious Zionist circles. A commentator in the journal *Nekuda* revealed a sense of internal unease and resistance within these circles to the movement’s chosen path. The attacks against the movement from right-wing political elements were to be expected. Effi Eitam, the leader of the Mafdal, and Uri Ariel of Tekuma called on the public to choose to remain with their own parties. The sharpest attacks, however, came from the religious authorities, who claimed that the movement’s actions are in conflict with Judaism. It is superfluous to point out that such an attack is a moral blow to a movement that purports to operate in the service of the religion of Israel.
Shlomo Aviner\(^{86}\) said that the movement was immoral and deceitful: “A man must be honest. If he identifies with a political party, he can participate in all its decisions. But if he does not identify with it but instead buys a spot in it with money, this is dishonest.” Yaakov Ariel\(^{87}\) said that advance polling to choose a different party constitutes deceit. Zalman Melamed\(^{88}\) commented that it is forbidden for someone to sign a commitment that he has no intention of fulfilling. Yuval Sherlow\(^{89}\) went further, and claimed that this act constitutes a desecration of God’s name, and is perhaps even an example of “committing a foul deed in the name of the Torah.”\(^{90}\)

The members of “Jewish Leadership,” however, published notices of their own rabbinical support. Dov Lior\(^{91}\) announced that he saw no problem, halakhic or otherwise, in polling for the Likud by “Jewish Leadership.” Shmuel Eliyahu,\(^{92}\) Eliezer Rabinovitz,\(^{93}\) and Yosef Sharabi\(^{94}\) agreed with him. It seems that each side managed to find supporters for their cause.

**“Jewish Leadership” and the Disengagement Plan**

\(^{86}\) The Rabbi of the Bet El settlement and head of the Ateret Cohanim yeshiva.

\(^{87}\) The Ashkenazi Rabbi of Ramat Gan.

\(^{88}\) The Rabbi of the settlement of Bet El Aleph.

\(^{89}\) The head of the Hesder yeshiva in Petach Tikva, and among the young leadership of religious Zionist rabbis.

\(^{90}\) See 271 *Nekuda*, pp. 38-43 (2004) [Heb].

\(^{91}\) The Rabbi of the Kiryat Arba settlement.

\(^{92}\) The Sephardic Rabbi of Safed.

\(^{93}\) The head of the Hesder yeshiva in Maale Adumim.

\(^{94}\) See www.manhigut.org (the movement’s website).
The year 2005 was pivotal in the history of the movement. The disengagement plan was realized during that year, obligating its members to organize a struggle against it. Later in the year, it began its activities for the elections for the Likud Knesset list, and this also demanded energetic political activity.

In the struggle over the disengagement plan, wherein the state unilaterally evacuated the settlements in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria during the summer of 2005, the “Jewish Leadership” movement was not prominent. This was in contrast to the period of struggle against the Oslo Accords, when Zo Artzeinu was one of the leaders of the protests. The reason for this, according to Moshe Feiglin, was embedded in the fact that “there is no point to struggling in the field, without creating an alternative.” But the transition to an ideological stance was a political calculation, by which all anomalous action on the part of the movement in the struggle would lead to a political attempt to remove its members from the Likud, and perhaps even bring about the administrative imprisonment of its leaders. This would have compelled the Likud party’s institutions to reject Moshe Feiglin’s candidacy to lead the party. Therefore, Feiglin avoided all protest actions that were outside legal sanction.

However, the movement could not stand on the sidelines. The movement published a pamphlet – “A Clarification of the Obligation of Disobedience” – and encouraged the refusal to obey evacuation orders. Moreover, it indirectly encouraged

95 Moshe Feiglin “If We Desire Life” www.manhigut.org, 31 August 2005.

96 After the pamphlet’s publication, several Likud activists demanded of the party’s institutions that the leaders of “Jewish Leadership” be removed from the movement. See www.nrg.co.il, 24 January 2005.
the most acrimonious militant activity against the plan. Two of its activists – Ariel Weingruber and Shai Malka – founded the “HaBayit HaLeumi” (National Home) movement as an independent organization not affiliated with “Jewish Leadership,” and they were the ones who blocked the roads throughout the country.\(^97\) While this protest was easily checked by the police, and also did not receive sweeping public support,\(^98\) there were only a few participants. This was in stark contrast to similar actions that had taken place during Zo Artzeinu’s protest demonstrations against the Oslo Accords during 1995, which drew crowds of protestors.

Throughout the critical period before the implementation of the disengagement plan, the press often quoted Moshe Feiglin, who, on 7 June 2005, announced that the disengagement would not take place “simply because we will not let you.”\(^99\) In hindsight, Feiglin acknowledged that he had made a mistake when he made that pronouncement.\(^100\) Feiglin joined in with similar pronouncements by Mordechai Eliyahu, one of the most important religious leaders of the national religious camp, in predicting that the disengagement plan would not take place, “It shall not be!”\(^101\) Eliyahu thus

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\(^97\) For more on the activities of this movement, see its internal publication, A Summarization and Assessment of the Situation 2005 (Jerusalem, 2005) [Heb].

\(^98\) The Yesha Council did not encourage action, and even believed that this type of activity would harm the struggle against disengagement. But, on the other hand, they also did not condemn it. See “The Yesha Council Acknowledges: The Hug Was a Mistake” www.a7.org (the Internet site for Arutz Sheva) 14 November 2005.


\(^100\) See Moshe Feiglin If We Desire Life, supra note 95.

\(^101\) The pronouncement appears in “Questions and Answers of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu” www.moriya.org.il, 18 July 2005 [Heb].
encouraged the residents of the settlements slated for evacuation not to respond to government requests to agree to conditions and terms of a “voluntary evacuation.”

The Post-Zionist Narrative in the National Religious Camp

During this period of struggle against the disengagement, the narrative of “Jewish Leadership” appears to have seeped more and more into the discourse of the mainstream of religious Zionism. Calls for refusal to obey army orders to evacuate settlements, for which members of the movement had called as far back as the struggle against the Oslo Accords, became more prominent. Avraham Shapira, the head of the prestigious Mercaz HaRav yeshiva, publicly called for noncompliance, and another seventy religious Zionist rabbis joined this call.102 The call for nonviolent civil disobedience became the core party line of the settlers in Gush Katif and northern Samaria. They refused to evacuate their homes under the evacuation orders and quietly, with no physical violence, waited until they were forcibly evacuated by IDF soldiers.

Nevertheless, the cardinal element in the “Jewish Leadership” approach that permeated more into the religious Zionist discourse can be found in the call to establish a “Torah state,” one that will replace the Zionist state that uproots settlements and destroys synagogues. Therefore, after the disengagement ended, voices in the religious Zionist leadership were increasingly heard, calling for a more vigorous move toward changing the government in the State of Israel and installing a religious regime.

102 A list of all those who signed the announcement appears on www.a7.org, 24 November 2004.
I will now present two such instances, even though there are many more examples of this controversial doctrine. The weekly Torah portion pamphlet *Me ’ainay Hayeshua*, for example, was distributed every Sabbath in the synagogues of the religious movement. After the evacuation was completed, it changed its format and, instead of the regular op-ed columns that appeared on the front page of the pamphlet, the following proclamation appeared in shades of black and white:

We will never forget – we will never forgive
The anger and the insult within us,
The great sense of frustration that we must turn toward one direction only –
A mass brain-washing.
To gain control over the mechanisms of government, to slowly gain control of the State of Israel. To turn the state from “the first step of our redemption” into a true and active redemption.
To change the state from “The foundation of God’s place is in the world” to “God’s place is truly in the world.”
We will remember the “little by little,”¹⁰³ so as not to fall into the trap of end calculating but we will demand of ourselves nothing less than a total effort to fulfill “the speedy arrival in its time.”¹⁰⁴

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¹⁰³ The gradual national advancement toward redemption.

¹⁰⁴ The meaning here is taken from the sayings of *Chazal* from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 98a, which determine that if Israel has the right to be redeemed, then “the speedy arrival,” and the redemption will hasten to come; if they do not merit this – the redemption will still arrive, but only “in its time,” which has been predetermined.
With God’s help, we will merit to build the temple and truly restore the Shechina (God’s presence) to Zion.\textsuperscript{105}

Hanan Porat, one of the founders of Gush Emunim and a right-wing member of Knesset (1981-2003) similarly portrayed his impressions of the failure to prevent the implementation of the disengagement plan. In the opening column of the weekly Torah portion pamphlet, \textit{Me’at Min Ha’or} ("A Bit of the Light"), Porat comes to the conclusion that the failure to prevent the disengagement necessitates the seeking of new government horizons. He called on all the religious streams – haredim, religious Zionists and traditionally observant Jews – to appoint from within their ranks an agreed-upon leader who could contend for the position of leading the government:

And now, dear friends, let us ask ourselves, has the time not come for all those who believe in Israel to make a tremendous effort and seek out a candidate worthy of leading the nation, one about whom we will be able to say as Maimonides says; “The one whom your God will choose” […] in light of the overwhelming calamity that is upon us, is it not finally the time to rise above all that separates us and above all the petty personal differences, to unify our strengths and parties and to suggest the most suitable individual under the present circumstance for the leadership of the government?\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{105} 211 \textit{Me’aynay Hayeshua} 1 (22\textsuperscript{nd} of Av 2005) [Heb].

\textsuperscript{106} 311 \textit{Me’at Min Ha’or} 1 (5\textsuperscript{th} of Elul 2005) [Heb].
The increasing centrality of the movement was tangibly evident in its success in the early elections to head the Likud, when Moshe Feiglin won approximately twelve percent of the votes cast. Feiglin’s power had risen by about a third. In absolute numbers, Feiglin had gone up from 4,870 votes in the internal elections in 2003 to 6,734 votes in 2005. Feiglin announced that he would not compete for a spot on the Likud list for the Knesset in the coming elections, after he secured a promise that he would not be barred from competing for the election lists taking place later on because of his previous conviction. Michael Puah, who competed for an earmarked spot as the cooperative Israeli settlement representative, failed in the elections. In the early elections that were held in August 2007, Feiglin obtained twenty-three percent of the votes. However, honest observation reveals that he only received about 2,000 additional votes from 2005. The big rise in the voting percentage was due to the lack of general attendance in the election.

Another example of the increasing influence of the movement was revealed in the appointment of Motti Karpel, the movement’s ideologue, as editor of the settlers’ journal Nekuda. This appointment was announced in December 2005, and highlighted the sharpening of the ideological stance within the settler community.

However, internal processes had begun within the movement that undermined its foundations. Inasmuch as they were part of the political game, an attempt at deviating from the party line began among the more radical public that had always supported them. Opinions were raised within the founding group, claiming that the very act of participating in the parliamentary arena grants legitimacy in hindsight to the existing political path, and therefore disqualifies this course of action. Consequently, in their view, the only way to wrestle with the existing parliamentary system must be by
complete dissociation, and not by working from within. This dilemma was described to me by one of the more prominent activists in the movement, who told me privately that he was debating whether to remain as a member of the organization. He felt that in order to be true to himself he might well have to leave the group.

Summary

The “Jewish Leadership” movement is an active, dynamic force, increasingly influential among religious Zionist groups.

The movement began its political involvement as an independent group, but quickly found its way into the Likud party. This was a brilliant strategy, as the movement became a significant, all-important power; a central player in the current Israeli arena.

The movement inserted truly “heretical” ideas into the internal discourse of religious Zionism. The first is the loss of faith in the determinism of redemption and the denial of the “first step of our redemption,” by replacing it with active national messianism. The second – weakening the stance of halakhic leaders in favor of independent fundamentalist commentary. The movement actualizes the vision of Yehuda Etzion, to establish a sweeping movement for redemption that will present a theocratic alternative to the secular political system, and thereby promote processes intended to hasten the end of days.

The “Jewish Leadership” movement began amassing real power only after 2000. The political context created at that time, with the outbreak of the second Intifada (September 2001), also afforded a new phase of public activity wherein there was no
need for restraining actions against additional concessions from Israeli governments. This
difficult period, when more than one thousand Israelis were murdered in horrifying
terrorist acts perpetrated by Palestinian terrorist organizations, permitted the entry of new
theological ideas brought by the movement.

The “Jewish Leadership” movement also embodied core elements of “ideological
religious nationalism,” as defined by Mark Juergensmeyer. There is a dissatisfaction
with modern Western culture, and a “loss of faith” in the ideology of secular nationalism;
there is an outlook that says that politics is a religious affair, and not secular. It is
different from Juergensmeyer’s definition, in that it does not employ all-inclusive tactics
against those who oppose it and does not label them enemies of religion. Its position
toward those who oppose them is “missionary” – they have not yet seen the light; have
not yet uncovered the metahistoric truth. It is quite possible that the messianic concept in
which they believe, which anticipates progressive and national processes, constitutes a
moderating element, in that this theological approach does not identify those who oppose
it as cosmic enemies. Therefore, “Jewish Leadership” is not inclined to violent
confrontation with them on the basis of their identification with absolute cosmic evil.

It is quite possible that it is precisely the relative success of their political
activities that also serves to create a moderating factor. From the outset, Motti Karpel
claimed that revolutionary activity must be accomplished from within the democratic
platform and from within the educational arena. “Jewish Leadership” does indeed operate
within these parameters. But, it is important to point out that this is an opportunistic tactic

that distorts the principle of the right to oppose government, and is exploited by them in order to justify a general revolution. This is how Motti Karpel articulated the idea in his book:

Yehuda Etzion once made the following statement about Shabtai Ben Dov: “He debated whether to be loyal to the state in its current format or whether to generate a revolution, and after a philosophical discussion he concluded that we must be loyal to the state based on our generating a revolution against it.” We cannot improve on this dialectic version.108 [Bold lettering in the original text.]

This movement looks forward to many more challenges that will put its principles and cohesiveness to the test. In any event, it operates in the internal political arena toward broadening its power by continued mass campaigning for the Likud. However, this activity could generate an internal counterreaction in the Likud, in order to weaken the power of those thought to be a fifth column (as indeed happened after internal elections in the Likud in December 2005; there was an attempt at that time to remove Feiglin from the party based on the principle that someone found guilty of a criminal act cannot campaign for a spot on the Likud Knesset list). Then, the movement may well be put to the test. This will also take place if the political arena changes. Only time will tell how this movement will develop and what its influence will be.