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First Flowering of Redemption: An Ethnographic Account of Contemporary Religious Zionism in Israel

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First Flowering of Redemption: An Ethnographic Account of Contemporary Religious Zionism in Israel

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Abstract

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By Nehemia Stern

This study explores the relationships between religious concepts and the dilemmas and challenges that animate those concepts within the everyday lives of Jewish Political Pietists (religious Zionists) in Israel. It argues that religious experience reflects particular modes of political practice. A focus on religious ideas and concepts must rest alongside the political, economic, and cultural factors that motivate or give 'meaning' to the daily lives of religious nationalists.

Using this paradigm, this analysis ethnographically reexamines the category of 'messianism' in relation to contemporary religious Zionism. For many religious Zionists in the era after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, 'Messianic Redemption' referred to a social, religious, and political process that centered on the sovereignty of the State of Israel within the Land of Israel, coupled with the collective presence of the People of Israel on that land. Currently, however, Religious Zionism is being practiced and experienced in ways that do not expressly revolve around collective state sovereignty or messianic redemption.

This study will ethnographically document the ways in which religious concepts and sociopolitical practices interact with one another in the daily lives of religious Zionists in Israel. It will focus on issues of Jewish settlement, Torah study, violence, military service, travel, etc, to point to the ways in which values of collectivity, freedom, and state sovereignty manifest themselves within a political pietistic context. The ethnographic data presented here can be used to clarify certain political and social tensions that are occurring within religious Zionism, and which impact not only the State of Israel, but the region as a whole.

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By

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In his famous work *Orot Eretz Yisrael*, Rabbi Kook wrote:

"יצירה עצמית ישראלית, במחשבה ובתקף החיים והמפעל, אי אפשר לישראל אלא בארץ ישראל."

Many anthropologists go 'out' to their respective fields of ethnographic research. I went home to the Land of Israel, within whose borders rest the future destiny of our People. It is hoped that this work will perhaps offer some small insight into our continued enterprise of homecoming.

ויאמרו נקום ובנינו ויחזקו ידיהם לטובה

נחמיה ב: יח

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Preface

The following chapters offer an intimate ethnographic window into the varied world of contemporary religious Zionism in Israel. They analyze the socio-cultural and theological aspects of a political and pietistic movement that has had a great amount of influence over both Israeli as well as international political discourse.

Religious Zionism is an expansive topic that includes a wide array of different thoughts, streams, and perspectives. From the very beginning of my research I was confronted with a classic ethnographic question. I could have choosen to focus my attention and time on researching one distinct religious Zionist community, and then inductively relate those observations to wider phenomena. Conversely, I could have focused on religious Zionism as a general 'movement' that manifests itself through various different communities within Israel. This option would have, by necessity been multi-sited, forcing me to jump from location to location.

There were advantages and disadvantages to each option. An ethnography that was situated within a single site, or on a small community, would have been more focused as well as more personally involved in the daily lives of informants. On the other hand, such a study would not have captured the theological, political, and social connections *between* communities. The multi-sited approach would have allowed me to analyze such connections at the expense of a certain intimacy, and close familiarity with my subject matter. After consulting with different informants, I chose to follow the latter multi-sited approach. Religious Zionism in Israel is extremely diverse. A focus on one site or one community would fail to capture the diverse story that I want to tell within these pages.

Throughout my fieldwork I struggled with this ethnographic focus. It is hoped that many readers may find this overarching analysis an interesting and useful way to think about particular aspects of Jewish Nationalism, as well as more general issues related to political piety in the Middle East as a whole. Some readers however may come away disappointed that a specific aspect of religious Zionist thought or practice was not given the detailed attention that it may rightfully deserve.

I also realize that this topic is one that is rife with conflict and partisanship. There are many diverse and legitimate opinions concerning Israel and Jewish Nationalism. To write about religious Zionism is to take some rhetorical stand in that conflict. Anthropologists typically use the concept of reflexivity as a method of mitigating the biases that are an indelible part of qualitative social analysis. Here the researcher's own story is understood to color one's analysis. Openly recognizing this tendency allows the reader to understand a little bit about the 'how' and - more importantly - the 'why' of data collection.

I am an Israeli-American Anthropologist who grew up in within a Modern Orthodox and religious Zionist Jewish community in Brooklyn, New York. After high school I studied in an Israeli pre-military rabbinic seminary affiliated with the religious Kibbutz Movement and served in an IDF combat unit during the second intifada. Like many Israeli anthropologists I actively serve in a reserve unit, and that experience is included in some of the ethnographic data within this study.

It is important to mention one final reflexive point. Research among religious Zionists in Israel and the West Bank in many ways precludes ethnographic analysis along

both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Within the following chapters, Palestinians appear as foils for the ethnographic story of religious Zionism (within the West Bank) that I would like to tell. As active agents however, the ‘Palestinian presence’ is very clearly missing. In the fieldwork sites that I frequented, an ethnographer must choose to study either Israelis (settlers) or Palestinians. I recognize this fact, and acknowledge the problems that such an absence presents for qualitative social analysis. At the same time it is hoped that a focus on Jewish religious Zionism in Israel will provide the social sciences with valuable data that may then be used as a source of comparison to other social, religious, and political areas of conflict.

It may be instrumental to keep two central questions in mind as the reader progresses through the chapters of this study. Firstly, what does ‘freedom’ mean in the context of Jewish Nationalism in the 21st century? This is a question deeply embedded in the particularities of the Israeli experience in the modern era. The second question however is much more general and universal. How do people live with deeply held ideological or religious principles? How are these principles assimilated into everyday life, and for what reasons (or to what extent) are people willing to compromise on them? I believe this to be a central question that informs much of the recent social scientific studies of political piety within the wider Middle East. The anecdotes cited in this study are aimed at providing a specific ethnographic context to this issue.

Religious Terminology

Any ethnographic study that focuses on zones of religious and ethnic conflict must deal with issues of terminology. This dissertation makes use of several technical terms whose definitions are important to understanding the ethnographic and political context of the subject matter.

Religious concepts are extremely important to this study, and the following chapters make use of a series of technical terms each with their own definition. I use the term 'theology' to refer to ideas about God (Pg.9). 'Collectivism' (Pg. 9)' and 'transcendental harmony' or 'transcendental sanctity' (Pg. 158) refers to the religious Zionist worldview of Rabbi Kook, his disciples, and students. For these thinkers sanctity meant the unification with the divine presence. Individuals struggle to achieve sanctity by uniting disparate or opposite forces. I use the term 'collectivism' to refer to the political and social ramifications to this idea. Here disparate political parties, ideologies, and Jewish ethnicities must unify to form one holistic (collective) polity in the Land of Israel. This sanctity of the State of Isael is linked to this theological unity and socio-political collectivism. This is a 'progressive' (Pg.165) process. Meaning, ultimate unity does not occur at once, but rather through slow stages through time, where each step in the process builds upon the last.

The last stage is understood to be 'Messianic Redemption' (Pg. 14). This refers to the perceived ultimate unity that will occur around the world when the Jewish people reside in the Land of Israel under the sovereign control of the State of Israel.

This religious Zionist worldview stands in contrast to what I term, 'immanent sanctity' (Pg. 179). This term refers to the ideas of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and their religious Zionist implications. I use the term 'immanence' to refer to a state of sanctity that is produced through human action. Here sanctity is produced, or drawn out using various intellectual and disciplinary techniques.

'Hasidism' refers to a religious movement that stressed a personal and individual connection with divinity. Emerging out of the religious and social upheavals during the 17th century, Hasidism became a mass movement among Eastern European Jewry during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Hasidic thought and influences have now captured the imaginations of many contemporary religious Zionists in Israel.

The terms 'spiritual sensitivity' and 'spiritual neutrality' (Pg. 128) refer to a religious conceptual conflict within contemporary Orthodoxy Judaism. 'Spiritual sensitivity' refers the tendency to view the soul as being extremely sensitive to external experiences and stimuli. That is everyone one does or encounters in life either harms or helps the soul's relationship to God. Neutrality refers to the tendency to view certain experience and stimuli as having a neutral effect on the soul's relationship with God. The individual can choose to participate in these experiences (or not) according to one's own personal desires.

Throughout this work I use the terms 'political piety'. This refers to politically active movements that also (and perhaps primarily) have a religious (or 'pietistic') agenda. Oftentimes scholars see religious beliefs and perspectives as being ancillary to political policies and programs. The term 'political' piety is used here to remind readers that there is often a more complex relationship between religious and political activity.

The term also places this work in conversation with similar ethnographic works that look at the relationship between religious and politics in the Islamic Middle East (Deeb. 2009; Hirschkind. 2006; Mahmoud. 2005).

Finally, I use the term 'political fidelity' (chapter 6) to denote the ways in which individual's experiences, express, and practice loyalty to State structures.

Political Terminology

My choice of political terminology rested on a balance of several factors. These are: historical accuracy, informant usage, and literary ease. I always tried to use the terms my informants used, so long as this did not contradict historical fact. So for example, in place of the "West Bank" I generally tried to use the phrase "Judea and Samaria". That is the term most of my informants used. I also found it to be a more descriptive term than "West Bank"[1]. Jewish settlement practices are widely diverse. There are distinct social, religious, and political differences between settlers and communities in different areas of the 'West Bank'. Samaria generally refers to the geographical area north of Jerusalem. Judea generally refers to the geographical area south of Jerusalem. Using the term 'Judea and Samaria' allows me to highlight these regional differences. In some instances I chose to utilize, 'West Bank', when that term seemed to flow better in a sentence, or when summarizing other scholarly material.

In most cases I chose to use the term 'Palestinian' (rather than Arab) in *my own* descriptions and analysis, as I felt this to be a more politically descriptive and accurate

[1] The term was first utlized after the 1949 armistice lines were drawn up between Jordan and Israel (Newman. 1982: 7).

term. When relaying the sentiments of others however (some settlers or rightist activists), I tended to use the term ‘Arab’. I never used the term ‘Occupied Territory’, or the “Occupied Palestinian Territory’. The latter term is inaccurate, and the former is never used by my informants. The term ‘Occupied Palestinian Territory’ implies a sovereign entity called ‘Palestine’ that was ‘occupied’ by Israel. This is incorrect. Firstly, it does not delineate the exact definition of Palestinian ‘territory’. Secondly, the Green Line that divides Israel Proper from the West Bank was only an armistice line delineated in 1949 between the Israeli and Arab Armies. Jordan took control of all territory east of the armistice line. As a result of the 1967 war, Israel took control (placed under military occupation) the land between the armistice line and the Jordan River.

When describing the Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip and Northern Samaria I used the term ‘disengagement’, rather than ‘expulsion’. Historically this is how it was termed by the Israeli government. Most of my informants however tended to use the term ‘expulsion’.

The terms ‘Settlement’, ‘Community’, ‘Town’ and ‘City’ are always sensitive choices, especially when describing areas within Judea and Samaria. I never used the term ‘settlement’ when describing areas within Israel Proper. I thought this might unnecessarily confuse the reader, since in the popular mindset ‘settlement’ is synonymous with the ‘West Bank’. When describing areas in Judea and Samaria I use the term ‘Settlement’ and ‘Community’ interchangeably. To describe people who live in these areas I use the terms ‘settler’, and ‘inhabitant’ interchangeably. When describing Ariel in Samaria, I chose to use the term ‘city’, which is how it is classified by the State of Israel.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 - Thesis

Jewish Religious Zionists include within their Sabbath services a specific prayer for the wellbeing of the State of Israel. The first line of the prayer reads "*Our Father in Heaven, Rock of Israel and its Redeemer, bless the State of Israel which is the first flowering of our redemption*". This dissertation explores how the meaning of this line relates to the experiences of everyday life among religious Zionists in Israel.

This dissertation is an ethnographic account of contemporary religious Zionism in Israel. It argues that the ways in which religion is experienced reflects political practice and perceptions of national fidelity. I demonstrate this assertion by ethnographically documenting the relationships between religious concepts and the dilemmas and challenges that animate those concepts within the everyday lives of Jewish religious nationalists (political pietists) in Israel.

What people believe, the texts they study, and the ways they study them, influence (and are influenced by) political, social, and even economic factors. People form what Joyce Flueckiger terms 'vernacular' expressions of religious practices and political loyalties. As Flueckiger explained regarding Islam in Southeast Asia, Vernacular Religion:

> [i]s shaped and voiced by individuals in specific contexts and in specific relationships, individuals who change over time in social, economic, and political contexts that also shift. To study vernacular Islam…is to identify sites of potential fluidity, flexibility and innovation in a religious tradition that self-identifies as universal and is often perceived as ideologically monolithic (2006: 2).

Oftentimes it is these flexible and fluid vernacular modes of practice that tend to illuminate wider experiences of religious, social, and political life. This project focuses on those wider experiences by ethnographically documenting the ways in which theology and practice complement (or perhaps contradict) one another in the everyday lives of practitioners.

This study theoretically expands upon Unni Wikan's (1990) and Don Seeman's (2005) phenomenological critique of anthropological approaches that expressly seek out and analyze the contextual arrangement of ordered cultural symbols. As Unni Wikan writes concerning her research in Bali, "cultural analysis - the paradigm in which prominent Bali research has been framed - seeks to probe the meanings of key cultural symbols which intertwine with others in a coherent structure that can be read much as we read a text" (1990: 15). Analyzing the contextual and coherent arrangement of symbols however "is seductive in that it holds the promise of elegance and order" (1990: 33). The everyday lives of most anthropological informants are anything but elegant and ordered. The 'experience-near' approach advocated by Wikan and utilized in this study, explores the ways in which political and pietistic adherents grapple with "the complexity, uncertainty and ordinariness" of their world (Kleinman and Kleinman. 1991: 276). This dissertation's ethnographic approach resonates with the growing subfield of existential and phenomenological anthropology (Csordas. 1994; Desjarlais. 1992; Jackson.1998; 2005; Seeman. 2005).

Along with its phenomenological grounding, this dissertation adds ethnographic weight to Gidon Aran (1995; 2013), and Shlomo Fischer's (2007; 2011) attempts to approach religious ideologies, experiences, and motivations as independent factors in

analyzing socio-cultural phenomenon. A focus on religious ideas and concepts must rest alongside the political, economic, or even cultural factors that motivate or give 'meaning' to the daily lives of religious nationalists.

Using the example of contemporary religious Zionism in Israel, this dissertation offers several contributions to the fields of Israel Studies, and the anthropology of political and pietistic movements. I argue for a more empirically based and nuanced understanding of the category of messianism within contemporary religious Zionism. I reevaluate the relationship between the messianic idea and the politics and passions of everyday life for Jewish religious Zionists in Israel. Moshe Idel understands 'messianism' to mean "those ideas, concepts and figures, which are related to present or future states of redemption" (1998: 1). As will be explained in greater detail in later chapters, for religious Zionism in the era after the Arab Israeli war of 1967, 'Messianic Redemption' referred to a social, religious, and political process that centered on the sovereignty of the State of Israel within the Land of Israel, coupled with the collective presence of the People of Israel on that land. I am arguing that contemporary religious Zionism in Israel is being practiced in ways that can be characterized as distinctly 'non-messianic' and individualist.

One of the contributions of this dissertation is to alter how scholars understand Jewish settlement practices in the West Bank. Scholarship has generally focused on categories of 'ultra-nationalism', 'religious extremism', and 'fundamentalism' to characterize Jewish settlement in the West Bank (Sprinzak. 1991, El-Or and Aran. 1995, Feige. 2009). The ethnographic data presented in this dissertation aeerts that most new settlement activity is no longer a classically 'nationalist', or a 'statist' endeavor. Instead I

show that current settlement efforts are deeply embedded in the individualistic and personal religious and political motivations of social actors.

Shlomo Fischer (2011) has critiqued the use of the category 'religious fundamentalism' within social scientific analyses. Fischer understands the term to mean a model where, "religious leaders and religious texts are the sole ultimate sources of authority and in which religion makes normative claims regarding the totality of personal and social life" (2011: 91). This understanding however, is simply a mode of adhering to religion, and does not factor in the elements, or experience, of religion itself. Similar to the argument Edward Said made in Orientalism (1978), Fischer claims that grouping all religio-political phenomenon under the term 'fundamentalism' masks the particularities of the religious experience itself.

I will be extending Fischer's argument to the category of messianism as it is applied to contemporary Jewish Nationalism in Israel. The popular media and - as will be explained in in the next chapter - some of the scholarly literature, views settlement activity and Jewish violence as taking place against the backdrop of messianic and redemptive motivations. This perspective may have certainly been accurate in the decades following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Currently, however, it only masks the everyday paths that religious desire and political ambition may follow throughout society. An ethnographic approach that is attuned to a wide array of religious and textual experiences reveals that 'messianism' and collective redemption is not the ultimate motivating factor among a growing amount of religious Zionists in Israel.

Ethnographers, political scientists, and the media have generally missed these connections precisely because they have not been properly attuned to the ways in which ideas about God, the soul, sanctity, and redemption are produced, received, and practiced within this community. As Don Seeman has argued,

> Anthropology has forced scholars of religion and some theologians to recognize that lived practice and lived experience cannot be reduced to what is recorded or prescribed in elite texts and discourses. Local context always matters, and sometimes it is what matters most to an adequate description of the social world. On the other hand, some local contexts can best be understood only with reference to the broad literary or trans-local textual traditions that help to define the horizons of possibility and desire (2010: 12).

Anthropology is an inherently comparative discipline. My dissertation is also situated among the recent anthropological works on political piety within the Islamic Middle East. My ethnography of political piety in Israel deals with the relationship between the individual and broader social, political, and religious structures. This focus is also emphasized by recent anthropological conversations of political piety within Islamic countries. Islamic political piety in Egypt (Lughod. 2013; Mahmoud. 2005; Hirschkind. 2006), Lebanon (Hamze. 2000; Deeb. 2009), Iran (Afshar. 1996; Adelkhah. 2000), Pakistan (Hegland. 1998) and Indonesia (Bowen. 1993) have been used as an ethnographic medium through which to explore the relationship between local religious politics and larger social or state structures. What is absent from this anthropological discussions of Islamic political piety are descriptions of the day-to-day dilemmas that religious individuals make as they encounter difference. My focus on religious Zionism adds to the comparative nature of this conversation by giving detailed accounts of how political piestists live, work, pray, and play among individuals who may be very different

from themselves (chapters 3, 4, and 5). These modes of interactions serve to remind scholars that violence or political dogma are only one part of a much larger religious nationalist phenomenon that also encompasses the everyday and mundane concerns of life.

1.2 - Methodology

I spent two and a half years conducting multi-sited ethnographic research within religious Zionist communities both within Judea and Samaria, as well as Israel Proper. I conducted participant observation in a variety of contexts. These include: text study, Sabbath fieldwork, special events, military service, and travel. Over the course of my fieldwork I spoke to a wide variety of individuals from across the political and religious spectrum of religious Zionism. Most of the people who I spoke to were males, although I was able to interact meaningfully with a handful of females. Most of the characters appearing in this study are presented using pseudonyms. Unless instructed otherwise by my informants, I have not disclosed their names for fear of presenting any details that may compromise their standing in their respective communities.

All of my informants knew of my research intentions. I would usually first introduce myself to a potential contact, and only a little later disclose my anthropological interests. Many people were curious about my project and wanted to hear more about my observations and conclusions. For the most part, people graciously welcomed me into their personal lives. One family wanted to see a copy of the chapter in which they appeared, and suggested corrections to make the data more precise (chapter 5). She noted that in her community children are usually given Biblical names, and are normally not

called by the abbreviated form of the name. Thus, her proper pseudonym ought to be 'Tziporah', and not the relatively more popular 'Tzipi'.

In one instance I met an individual who kept on pushing off my attempts to spend a Sabbath in his settlement. He kept on telling me to call him the following week, and every week he would say the same thing. I finally understood that he did not want to participate in this study and I stopped calling him. As a result I was never able to spend an extended period of time in his settlement. This incident was the only time where I felt my ethnographic presence to be unwelcome, and I respected his wishes.

I was able to interact more directly and freely with laity than with clergy or communal leaders. Additionally, for the purposes of research I was more interested in interacting with the rank and file of Israeli religious Zionism. It is their daily experiences, concerns, and dilemmas that can add the most to a social scientific understanding of Jewish religious nationalism in Israel.

I conducted very few 'formal' interviews. Instead, I spent the majority of my research participating in religious Zionist life, and informally interacting with social actors. I was interested in collecting data about social actors' experiences surrounding selfhood, politics, and religion. I was particularly interested in the daily dilemmas and tensions that may accompany those issues. Interviews, especially with individuals who hold strong ideological positions, are limited in eliciting this kind of data. I found that during interviews individuals were keen to express their political or religious ideologies, and were quick to mask any inconsistencies or uncertainties that they or others may be

feeling. This kind of information is most readily available using the classic ethnographic techniques of participant observation.

1.2A - *Text Study*

Ethnographic fieldwork began in the fall of 2011. It focused on the experience of ‘learning’ in religious Zionist *Yeshivot* (rabbinic seminaries for men). Beginning my research in a yeshiva provided a couple of advantages. Firstly, it allowed me to familiarize myself with the classic texts that form part of the theological world of religious Zionism. Secondly, it proved to be a good way to socialize myself within different strands of religious Zionism.

A focus on textual study, in reality means ‘male textual study’. Both religious Zionist men as well as women study Jewish texts. This study, for the most part however, is performed separately. As a result it was impossible for me to examine (to the same extent that I did for males) the ways in which women also engage with and practice religious Zionism.

I enrolled in an American/Israeli Yeshiva in Efrat, a settlement in the Gush Etzion Bloc south of Jerusalem. Based off of preliminary research in the summer of 2010, I had originally intended to study two different forms of religious Zionism; a pragmatic (American) style that could be found in Gush Etzion, and a more mystical and messianic brand found in Samaria. The Yeshiva in Efrat was meant to allow me entrance into the former style. I lived within a trailer on the seminary’s campus for three months. I quickly realized however, that the two forms of religious Zionism that I had identified during

preliminary research, did not match the theological and social trends that I was observing (and participating in) on the ground. I moved out of the yeshiva campus but continued studying there on a part time basis for six months. While in yeshiva I studied Talmud in the morning, and attended classes on Jewish thought and philosophy in the evenings.

Both in the seminary and after I left, I initiated what are known in Hebrew as *chevrutot* (plural). A *chevruta* (singular) is a traditional Jewish method of study. The term refers to a partner based method of study. This partner based method is thought to foster conversation and debate. I found this method to be ethnographically beneficial. While studying, conversations would often deviate to other topics of cultural or political interest. Furthermore, my study partners would oftentimes invite me over to their homes, where I would participate in family meals or other events. I initiated four partner based study sessions with individuals who I saw as being representative of the wide spectrum of religious Zionist thought and practice.

I set out to study a common subject so as to compare how my different interlocutors related to religious Zionist thought in different ways. I began two *chevrutot* while in Yeshiva in Efrat. The first study session was focused on Rabbi Kook's text 'Lights of Repentance' (*Orot HaTeshuva*). The other session focused on Rabbi Soloveitchik's writings on the same subject entitled 'On Repentance' (*Al HaTeshuva*). I began another *chevruta* while visiting a Yeshiva called Machon Meir. There I studied with my partner Rabbi Kook's classic text 'Illuminations' (*Orot).* Finally, I began a *chevruta* while visiting Mercaz HaRav in Jerusalem. We studied the classic Lubavitch text 'Letter on Repentance' (*Iggeret HaTeshuva*). I met these individuals once or twice a week to study for about an hour and a half through the duration of over a year. At first

after each learning session I took notes regarding our conversations. As time went on, I felt more comfortable with my learning partners, and I was able to record the study sessions. I became acquainted with these individuals through various means. In Machon Meir I called up the administration and asked them to set me up with a partner. In Mercaz HaRav, I simply posted a note on the seminary's bulletin board asking if anyone wanted to begin a *chevruta* on repentance. I met the final two partners in the Yeshiva in Efrat.

Additionally I took part in a weekly *Chaburah,* or a group learning session in Beit HaRav, Rabbi Kook's old residence and the original site of the Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva off of Jaffe Street in Jerusalem. There we studied Rabbi Kook's personal notebooks. Finally I attended weekly gatherings with Rabbis Menachem Froman and Adin Steinsaltz in the settlement of Tekoa as well as in Jerusalem.

1.2B - *Sabbath Fieldwork*

My fieldwork also consisted of spending the Jewish Sabbath with different families from across the religious Zionist spectrum. This offered a close hand view of religious Zionist communal family life, and also allowed me to make comparisons between communities. I have found that opinions often not heard during the week are well represented during the weekly Shabbat meals. Individuals voice their attitudes towards a plethora of issues, from the personal, to the familial, and finally to the political. I found this to be extremely beneficial to my research. Israeli culture is very welcoming and it is usually not considered rude to invite oneself over for a Sabbath meal. If one is unmarried it is usually okay to politely request to be hosted for an entire Sabbath.

I became acquainted with these families through different sources, and I was extremely persistent in my pursuit to spend the Sabbath with as many different types of communities as possible. Firstly, I was invited over for the Sabbath by many of my friends who I have known through my own personal encounters in Israel. This includes my own year in an Israeli rabbinic seminary as well as my military service. Through these friends I became acquainted with other religious Zionists. I also met individuals while attending special events, such as protest rallies, or prayer events. Finally, I made use of a unique service for American Orthodox Jewish students in Israel. This service attempted to give students an opportunity to experience the broad range of Israeli life by placing them in different Israeli households for the Sabbath. A student could request to spend a Sabbath in any number of communities both within Israel Proper, as well as in Judea and Samaria. Despite the fact that I was not the traditional target audience for this program, they were still more than willing to set me up with families.

1.2C - *Special Events and Travel*

I tried to attend as many unique events as I could manage during my fieldwork. These included demonstrations, conferences, political rallies, art exhibitions, special holiday prayers, and even dating events. Generally these events espouse ‘official’ ideology. And it was always useful to compare the ‘official’ ideology to what people practiced, in more informal settings. I was also hoping that something ‘exciting’ or out of the ordinary would happen at one of these events that would provide good ethnographic data. Generally this never occurred. More practically however, these events turned out to

be useful in that they were good occasions to mix, mingle, and get myself invited over to the homes of different families.

The journey of arriving to these *chevrutot* was oftentimes just as ethnographically useful for my project as was the study session itself. As will be explained in greater detail in chapter 9, I did not have a motor vehicle during my fieldwork. I had to find other means of transportation. To attend events and study sessions in Judea and Samaria, I would oftentimes have to hitchhike. I found myself hitchhiking so much that I decided to turn the experience into an ethnographic advantage and use it as data in which to compose a dissertation chapter on the practice.

1.2D - *Personal Life and Military Service*

Finally, my own personal life aided me in my research. I attended prayers, observed Shabbat, and took part in social activities out of personal conviction. My own personal experience in my late teen years in yeshiva, and then the I.D.F. helped me gain some amount of credibility among my informants. Moreover, the connections I made during those young formative experiences proved invaluable in my current research.

During my fieldwork, I also fulfilled my personal obligations as an Israeli. This included serving in the IDF Reserves. During the coure of my fieldwork I twice participated in reserve military service with my combat infantry battalion. The first was a 25 day period in in the northern West Bank about thirteen kilometers west of the Palestinian city of Jenin. There we protected the Jewish settlements in the area by conducting patrols (both vehicular and foot), guart duty, arrests. The second, was a

strenuous two day battalion level live-fire exercise in the Jordan Valley. These experiences allowed me to immerse myself on a very intimate and visceral level with Israeli life. As will be explained in later chapters, my battalion had a strong representation of religious Zionist soldiers. My conversations and experiences with them add a unique dimension to this ethnographic work.

Among Jewish religious Zionists in the State of Israel, experiences of collective and individual selfhood occur amidst a backdrop of political struggle, violence, and a good deal of internal religious conflict. The question here is a simple one, where does individual experience fit into this religious and political drama?

1.3 - Freedom and Sovereignty

Where other scholars have used the category of messianism to organize their data (Myers. 2003; Aran. 2013), I use the concepts of 'freedom' and 'sovereignty'. These are more experience-near categories for my informants. I will argue that my informants see Jewish freedom and sovereignty as moral values which are connected to distinct religious and political experiences.

James Laidlaw has argued that "[a]n anthropology of ethics will only be possible…if we take seriously, as something requiring ethnographic description, the possibilities of human freedom" (2002: 315). The concept of ethics and morality (the two terms are often used synonymously), includes much more than simple human behaviors which may be judged to be right or wrong in particular contexts. By making cultural distinctions between behaviors, humans become active agents in applying social

values to everyday life. As Arthur Kleinman writes, "[m]oral experience is about the local processes (collective, interpersonal, subjective) that realize (enact) values in ordinary living (1999: 71).

Throughout this project I am arguing that there is a particular relationship between religious experience and socio-political attachments. That is, the ways in which individuals' experience 'freedom' or 'sovereignty' will mirror how they also experience divinity. Here the question, 'what does it mean to be free' takes on an almost existential quality, and shapes the moral experience of daily life. These are questions that an ethnographic account of religious and political experiences stands keenly capable of addressing.

Jews talk about freedom in different ways, and place different kinds of moral values on its definition. Certain strands of Hasidic and Ultraorthodox Jews call those who abandon faithful Jewish practice as '*frei'* (Yiddish for 'free') because they 'free' themselves from the bonds of traditional Judaism. By the same token many Orthodox Jews believe that *true* 'freedom' can only be found within those very same strictures (see the discussion on 'Positive Freedom' below).

Secular Jews have also attached a distinct moral ethic towards the condition of 'freedom'. Here one is 'freed' from' the legal and patriarchal boundaries of traditional Jewish life. Franz Boas the German-Jewish founder of Americanist anthropology described his introduction to social analysis as a commentary on freedom. As Boas wrote towards the end of his life, "[i]n fact, my whole outlook upon social life is determined by

the question: how can we recognize the shackles that tradition has laid upon us? For when we recognize them, we are also able to break them" (Boas. 1939: 21).

Secular Jewish Zionists have also mobilized an experience of freedom into a moral value. Israel's national anthem contains the phrase "to be a free nation in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem". The phrase, 'to be a free nation' stakes a claim on Jewish sovereignty that is indelibly linked to a moral ethic of freedom. Here an idea of collective freedom is implicated in a discourse that stresses political sovereignty. Indeed, as will be explained in chapter 6, the early socialist Zionists in the State of Israel organized state bureaucracy under the assumption that sovereignty was a collective value that freed the nation from the travails of life in the *Galut* (Diaspora).

Different streams of Israeli religious Zionism view the relationship between freedom and sovereignty in different ways. For some the reestablishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in the Land of Israel offers a moment where Jews can free themselves from outside (non-Jewish) influences and controls. For others Jewish Statehood offers a more existential and meaningful opportunity.

Isaiah Berlin's dual interpretation of freedom which he detailed in his essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1969), offer a useful lens with which to look at this paradigm. For Berlin, the term 'freedom'[2] included within it two different philosophical concepts. These are 'negative freedom', and 'positive freedom'. 'Negative freedom' can be understood as the extent to which an individual is (or ought to be) freed from outside constraints and interferences. As Berlin succinctly described it,

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[2] He uses the terms 'freedom' and 'liberty' interchangeably

> I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity…if I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree; and if this area is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved (1969:3).

At the opposite extreme rests the notion of 'positive freedom'. Here the individual is 'free' in the sense that he has the capacity to realize his own potential. The individual is 'free for' the particular objective of self-realization. As Berlin wrote,

> The notion of liberty contained in it [positive freedom] is not the 'negative' conception of a field (ideally) without obstacles, a vacuum in which nothing obstructs me, but the notion of self-direction, or self-control. I can do what I will with my own (Ibid: 15).

Religious Zionism in Israel has classically expressed Berlin's 'Positive' model of freedom (Mirsky. 2013). The ability to freely express one's true self (politically, as well as individually) mirrors, and indeed constructs one's experience of the divine. Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook the first Chief Rabbi of British Mandate Palestine and the founding father of religious Zionism (of whom we will speak much more of later) began his famous essay *Orot* (Lights) by defining the connection of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel.

> The Land of Israel is not an external entity, an external acquisition of the nation, just a means to reach a goal of general unity, or a means of strengthening the physical or even spiritual existence [of the Jewish Nation]. The Land of Israel is an independent [Atzmutit עצמותית] unit that is tied with a knot of life with the nation, embracing with internal qualities with her existence[3].

The Land of Israel is an 'independent entity' that is eternally connected to the life of the Jewish nation. '*Atzmaut'* is the Hebrew word for independent. '*Atzmaut'* comes from the Hebrew word '*Etzem'* or essence. It is also related to the Hebrew word '*Atzmi'*

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[3] ארץ ישראל איננה דבר חיצוני, קנין חיצוני לאומה, רק בתור אמצעי למטרה של ההתאגדות הכללית והחזקת קיומה החמרי או אפילו הרוחני. ארץ ישראל היא חטיבה עצמותית קשורה בקשר חיים עם האומה, חבוקה בסגולות פנימיות עם מציאותה

which means ‘the self’ or simply ‘me’. This linguistic connection between (cultural, political, or national) independence and essential positive ‘selfhood’ is not random. Rabbi Kook and his religious Zionist disciples believed that exile from the Land of Israel kept the Jewish people from experiencing a true sense of ‘freedom’. Exile was more than just a political condition of landlessness. For Rabbi Kook and his disciples, exile among the nations of the world necessitated conforming to essentially foreign religious and social standards. Freedom and Jewish sovereignty are moral imperatives that call for a return to what it means to be true to one’s self both individually and collectively.

More recently, other religious Zionists have taken up a religious ethic of ‘negative freedom’. Influenced by Hasidic thought, they express a conviction in an individual experience of divinity coupled with a strong critique of state authority. Although social scientific literature tends to portray political groups as self-contained units, I have found that individualism allows for varied and important relationships among religious Zionists of different political persuasions. The same kind of religious individualism that inspires Jewish violence in the West Bank, also leads others to pursue efforts towards peace. These individuals are connected through social ties, kinship, and military service. They are united through a common emphasis on individual religious experience and a critique of state authority.

1.4 - Anthropology and the Discourse of Freedom

Anthropologists have had a historically complicated theoretical relationship with the concept of ‘freedom’. Cultural Anthropology’s interest in the early 20th century with primitive savage society confronted head on the problem of cultural coercion set against free choice. Were ‘savages’ prisoners of their passions, simple childlike creatures who

instinctually submitted to every whim and desire? Or - on the other hand - were these primitives capable of 'rational' choice? This was an important scientific issue for early anthropology, with a great deal of practical import. It was thought that 'primitive' cultures might have been an appropriate model for understanding contemporary complex society. If this were to be the case, then the ability of 'savages' to act freely (read rationally) in the world held important implications for understanding the structure of contemporary society. At its very core, is western society, and all that goes along with it (mechanization, war, peace etc.) 'Savage' or 'Cultured'? In other words, could western society be understood using rational social scientific terms and standards? This was the central question that motivated early anthropologists like Bronislaw Malinowski – the famous British anthropologist - who strongly came out on the side of 'reason' on the part of savage society[4].

James Laidlaw has argued that Durkheimian social analysis equated society and the 'collective' with moral good (2002). In this way morality could only be located (and therefore studied) within larger social, and collective movements. For Durkheim the demands of the collective social good rested legitimately within the purview of governmental (coercive) regulation. Echoing Isaiah Berlin's warning concerning the totalitarian potential hidden with 'Positive Freedom', James Laidlaw comments,

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[4] In responding to E. Sidney Hartland's 'Primitive Law', Malinowski comments,

> [B]ut when, immediately, we are told that "these fetters are accepted by him (the savage) as a matter of course; he never seeks to break forth" we must enter a protest. Is it not contrary to human nature to accept any constraint as a matter of course, and does man, whether civilized or savage, ever carry out unpleasant, burdensome, cruel regulations and taboos without being compelled to? And compelled by some force or motive which he cannot resist? (Malinowski. 1926: 10)

> this vision of human life, which simply lacks ethical complexity, dilemma, reasoning, decision, and doubt, does not constitute an advance. It is not just that this kind of sociology is a charter for authoritarian corporatism, though that is also true… it is impossible…to see how specifically ethical considerations might be distinguishable from the other causal factors... (2002: 315).

This is a much larger problem for ethnographic social analysis. The Durkheimian relationship between the social collective and moral good limits the role that individual choice (read: freedom) may play in the ethical dilemmas and conflicts of everyday life. Anthropologists have attempted to address the problem of free choice among ethnographic informants by turning to various concepts of 'agency'. Here 'agency' as understood within the anthropological literature, refers to the "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" against overarching social or political structures (Ahearn. 2001:112). This concept is problematic because it tends to only recognize those actions that are distinctly aimed at larger political structures (Laidlaw. 2002: 315).

Laidlaw is extremely critical of a Durkheimian analysis of social phenomenon which erases individual (free choice) from the cannon of moral behavior. At the same time however, one cannot ignore the wise cliché that humans are social animals. Our behavior and everyday actions emerge out of larger social, political, and economic phenomena. As Arthur Kleinman argues, "the person is located in economic, cultural, kinship, friendship, and work activities that powerfully define his or her moral horizon in ways of which he or she is likely to be only partially aware" 1999: 72).

The anthropological debate between Laidlaw and Kleinman mirrors the political conflicts that are implied between the notions of 'negative' and 'positive' freedom. More importantly, these academic debates are expressed ethnographically in the ways in which contemporary Jews (and specifically religious Zionists in Israel) confront the political, intellectual, religious, and personal challenges that characterize daily life. What is the relationship between freedom, individual choice, and collective pressures in the construction of everyday local moral worlds? Religious Zionists stake claims to this question as they go about their daily lives. As will be shown, when a yeshiva student opens a text, or when a family chooses a school for their children, they are in so doing making certain moral, political, and religious claims of freedom and collectivity.

1.5 - Chapter Overview

Chapter two locates religious Zionism within the broader history of the Zionist movements. In doing so, it offers an overview of its major theological and political currents. This chapter further places my research within the broader scholarship on religious fundamentalism and political pietistic movements in the Middle East.

The third chapter begins with a description of the aesthetics of religious Zionism. It describes the ways in which people dress, along with their personal grooming choices. It then relates those styles to larger religious and social concerns. It goes on to describe what religious Zionist communities look like (in terms of appearance, economic class, and social institutions). It finally traces the educational tracks that religious Zionist youth choose to follow from childhood into adulthood. Through these descriptions, I argue that aesthetics is about much more than what religious Zionists *look like*. Aesthetics also

includes what religious Zionists think *looks right*. By dressing in certain ways and by choosing certain educational or service paths, religious Zionists stake competing claims on how community and Jewish peoplehood ought to be structured.

The fourth chapter will show how theological conceptions, as well as social and political affiliations are intertwined with the strategies that different religious Zionists use to categorize normalcy. By exploring how religious Zionists demarcate between the 'mundane' and the 'exotic', we get a glimpse into the ways in which they understand and interpret their own goals, fears, and desires (socially, politically, and theologically). Along the way it is hoped that my ethnographic vignettes in this chapter will serve to deepen the picture of everyday religious Zionist life in both Israel Proper and within Judea and Samaria. This is a life where the physical risks of existence at times serve to reinforce visions of a free Jewish society.

In chapter four, 'normativity' was viewed through the lens of physical violence and the sense of fear and danger that surround the specter of violence. Simply put in the previous chapter, physical danger has a big role to play in how religious Zionists interpreted 'normal' life. Chapter five will highlight other kinds of dangers that are more related to popular religious conceptions concerning the nature of the individual self, than to fears of physical harm. Here we find individuals and communities struggling with what it means to take an active part in the wider Israeli society. Through this process we find them negotiating between their spiritual obligations as religious adherents and worshippers of God on the one hand, and their own individual hopes, dreams, and desires on the other.

Chapter six will broaden the theological discussion by focusing on the classic theological understandings of ‘sanctity’ current among religious Zionists in Israel. I argue that religious Zionist thought and practice in Israel has typically been characterized by *transcendental* and *immanent* views of sanctity. The chapter will specifically trace the theological and political aspects of messianism, collectivism, unity and harmony that are an important part of the transcendental view of sanctity. Here ‘freedom’ within the Land of Israel is understood in collective terms. This transcendental understanding of sanctity has become less popular among religious Zionists of recent years.

Chapter seven will explore the wider social, political, and religious context of Gush Emunim and the Israeli settlement project. It will do so by making a counterintuitive comparison between The Jewish Community of Hebron and Kibbutz Reishit, an urban religious Zionist collective in the Kiryat Menachem neighborhood of Jerusalem. Each community interpreted differently what it meant to repair and rejuvenate both Israeli as well as the wider Jewish society. They each defined differently the responsibilities incumbent upon a ‘free’ Jewish society in the Land of Israel. The differences between these communities can highlight some of the tensions that characterize Jewish political piety in Israel. In so doing it makes a case for an ethnography that is sharply attuned to the ways in which religious texts and concepts impact daily life.

Chapter eight will ethnographically demonstrate how a turn towards theological individualism has challenged classical religious Zionist thought. This challenge comes in the wake of recent (and not so recent) political events. After the Oslo Peace Accords and the 2005 Disengagement from the Gaza Strip many religious Zionists are using the

individualistic tenor that exists within a good deal of Hasidic thought to question the collectivism and State loyalty of classical religious Zionism.

Chapter nine uses the practice of hitchhiking among religious Zionists in Israel to posit a theory of ritual that highlights the ambiguities of everyday life. Anthropologists have classically looked at 'rituals' as acts that produce meaning, or as practices that achieve some definitive goal. In either instance informants tend to know with certitude what that meaning or goal is. There are, however, some types of rituals that are very different. This chapter views hitchhiking as a ritual aspect of the larger commandment to settle the Land of Israel. For the young adults who hitchhike, 'freedom' implies the ability to travel freely throughout the entire Land of Israel and specifically within the territories of Judea and Samaria. At the same time however, hitchhiking in Judea and Samaria acts as one ritual site wherein religious nationalists confront and actively negotiate the political, moral, and theological ambiguities that exist around them. The ambiguities that are a part of everyday life are mirrored in the ambiguities inherent in the work of ritual. By studying one (ritual) we get a privileged glimpse into the other ('culture').

Chapter 2 - Historical Background and Literature Review

2.1 - History

In Medieval Europe the Jewish *Kehilla Kedosha* (or *Holy Congregation)* was understood to be a semi-autonomous ethnic as well as religious community. The European Enlightenment and the rise of the Nation-State in the eighteenth century complicated this somewhat holistic understanding of Judaism and Jewishness. In attempting to carve a space for itself within the framework of the enlightened Nation-State, the European Jewish community (primarily in the West) was forced to politically separate the practice of religion, from culture, and nationality (Katz. 1986).

The European Enlightenment however did not solve the Jewish question. The ideological calls for universal human values or equal citizenship did not erase antisemitism from the European continent (Hertzberg. 1970: 27-28). Zionism approached this problem by attempting to alter the relationship between 'Jews' 'Judaism' and the 'Nation State'. If emerging nation states had a problem with the *Judenfrage* (Jewish Question), then the answer would be a *Judenstaadt* (Jewish State). Zionism, a movement of Jewish national self-determination,

> was seen as a vehicle for national liberation in all its aspects: a base for expressing Jewish identity, for developing the national culture and language, for building new social and economic institutions, and for enabling Jews to live the life of a normal people that had been denied to them in the Diaspora" (Kelman. 1998: 48).

Zionism offered an attractive national answer to European Jewish suffering in this new era of state nationalism.

In the early 20th century Jewish thinkers emphasized both the political as well as cultural aspects of Jewish self-determination. For some, like Theodore Herzl, the very real threat of antisemitism (particularly in Czarist Russia), underscored the need for an immediate national homeland, regardless of location. For others, such as Asher Ginsburg[5], Jewish self-determination was meaningless without a specific emphasis on Jewish culture. For them, a Jewish national home could only be located within the Land of Israel, the historical and spiritual homeland of the Jewish people. The echoes of this debate between Jewish State sovereignty and Jewish culture are still heard concerning most political and social issues within the contemporary State of Israel. Most importantly, for both of these competing forms of Jewish Nationalism, the Jewish *faith* were only ancillary aspects of State sovereignty.

The Jewish religious reaction to both political, as well as cultural Zionism was paradoxical. On the one hand, the importance of the Land of Israel, the ingathering of the exiles, and Jewish self-sovereignty, has always been tenets of the Jewish faith. On the other hand, it was considered troublesome by many that such lofty and sacred goals were to come to fruition through the efforts of secular Jews and via secular means (Ravitzky 1996: 10).

There were Orthodox Jews, however, who were quite receptive to Zionist principles and goals. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries some rabbinic figures adopted different ways of assimilating Zionist tenets into traditional Jewish religious worldviews. These historical methods are indicative of the theological and social conflicts occurring within contemporary religious Zionism.

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[5] Known under the penname *Ahad Ha'am* or *One of the Nation* (or *People*).

2.1A - Mizrachi and Rabbi Jacob Reines

Mizrachi[6] was one early movement of religious Jews who also happened to be Zionists. Founded in 1902 and led by Rabbi Jacob Reines (1839-1915), the Mizrachi movement offered a pragmatic approach towards the relationship between Zionism and traditional Jewish practice. For Reines, the physical security of the Jewish People was the ultimate goal of Zionism. For example, the Mizrachi movement voted with Herzl and the Political Zionists in favor of the controversial Uganda proposal. In 1903 the British offered their Uganda colony as a temporary home to Jews fleeing pogroms in Europe (Penkower. 2004: 199). Though opposed by half of the Zionist Congress[7], for both Herzl and Reines, Zionism offered a pragmatic means of securing the safety of the Jewish *people*. As Reines wrote "In any case we agreed to the African proposal because we paid attention to the needs of the nation which are dearer to us than the Land [of Israel] (Heymann. 1970: 180).

2.1B - Messianic and Mystical

Rabbi Reines' pragmatism was itself a response to an earlier form of religious Jewish Nationalism that was deeply influenced by messianic and mystical values. The nineteenth century was a crucible of nationalist fervor. It was also a moment of great change for European Jewish society. At this moment of social and theological upheaval new voices began to be heard concerning Jewish Messianism. Messianic Jewish Nationalism was an integral element in the Jewish relationship with modernity (Myers. 2003: 2).

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[6] A pun on the Hebrew acronym for *Mercaz Ruchani* (spiritual center). Mizrachi also means 'Eastward' [towards the Land of Israel]

[7] Surprisingly the Russian contingent, those who directly suffered from the pogroms walked out of the conference in tears (Penkower. 2004: 199).

Messianism has always had an ambiguous position within the broad spectrum of Jewish thought. On the one hand, traditional Jews pray daily for a speedy and ultimate redemption in the land of Israel. On the other hand Jewish sources warn repeatedly against hastening the end of days.

In an era marked by great changes in society (emancipation, nationalism, etc.) there were rabbinic personalities who did articulate a messianic return of Jewish sovereignty to Zion. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874) was one figure who would become rather influential for later religious Zionists. In his view, Messianic Redemption was not so much an 'event' as it was a 'process'.

> Do not think that suddenly God blessed be his name will come down from heaven and tell his people 'go out' [to the land of Israel], or will send his anointed one from heaven to blow his great trumpet on the dispersed of Israel and gather them in Jerusalem…very slowly will come the redemption of Israel. Very slowly will the light of salvation blossom (Kalischer. 1919: 11b).

For Kalischer there was no messianic *moment*, as much as there was a messianic *age*. It was the mystical progressive view of the messianic age that Rabbi Reines and the Mizrachi movement took issue with.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries this kind of Progressive Messianism would be taken up by Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook (1865-1935). Kook was an Eastern European rabbi with familial roots in both the Lithuanian and Hassidic traditions. He affiliated himself with the Zionist movement, becoming the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine in 1921. Rabbi Kook wrote prolifically, and with a Kabbalistic bent,

concerning the Jewish people, the Land of Israel, and redemption. Like Kalischer, Kook understood settlement in Palestine as one step in a long process towards an ultimate redemption.

Kook's understanding of redemption was one that envisioned a mystical unity between God, the Jewish people and humanity in general. In this view the world becomes redeemed when the Jewish people have obtained sovereignty over the Land of Israel, and have organized their personal and social existence around the Torah of Israel. A monistic principle rests behind Rabbi Kook's philosophy. For Kook, all reality has its roots in divinity. In this view the differences between 'religious' and 'secular', 'pure' and 'impure', and perhaps even 'evil' and 'righteousness', were only surface deep. Reality was far too complex for such binaries (Singer. 1996: 10).

For Rabbi Kook, the secular socialist pioneers played an (albeit unwittingly) central role in the redemptive process. In his kabbalistic-theological view, ritual transgression takes on redemptive significance. For Kook, as redemption draws near, human nature becomes audacious and angry. There is discord and sin. The meek, the moderate, and the pious become intimidated by this phenomenon. This contrary energy, however, has the capacity to animate not just the Nation of Israel, but humanity as well. Eventually the energy that causes transgression invigorates the righteous and produces a truly sacred phenomenon (Ravitzky. 1996: 102). This is only one formulation of Rabbi Kook's theological and kabalistic thinking. But it highlights his distinctly dialectical approach. Redemption is a process that leaves room not just for secular transgressors, but for the inevitable 'bumps in the road' towards a straightforward redemptive process.

It is difficult to overestimate Rabbi Kook’s influence over religious Zionism in Israel. His books can be found in every religious Zionist seminary, and his poetry is sung in many households during the Sabbath. In 1924 he established Yeshivat Mercaz Harav, which for many, serves as the ‘flagship’ institution of the religious Zionist movement. Rabbi Kook died in 1935, missing some of the seminal low and high points in 20th century Jewish history. We do not know for example, how he would have responded to the tragedy of the Holocaust. Though we have his Zionist writings, we really do not know specifically how he would have reacted to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Additionally, like many of the progressive visionaries of his age, his written work tends to be rather vague concerning the everyday practicalities of a national existence. We do not know how he would have mobilized his dialectical and messianic thinking in the day-to-day workings of a nation state. This coupled with the fact that stylistically his writing are very difficult to comprehend (even for native born Hebrew speakers) allowed for some very different interpretations of his views (Singer 1996). For example, regarding redemption, one wonders if the end goal is a kind of pluralistic universalism, or a very particular Jewish Nationalism. Is state sovereignty, settling the land, or universal principles the ultimate objective of this influential and complex theology of religious Zionism?

2.1C - Practical, Political, and Progressive Messianism

Rabbi Kook’s son, Tzvi Yehuda (1891-1982), became arguably the most popular and influential interpreter of Rabbi Abraham Kook’s thought. Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook was also instrumental in bringing his father's written work to public life. As Mirsky

(2010), Rosenack (2007), and Jacobson (2011) have shown Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda collated, edited, and then published his father's written materials (both while he was alive and posthumously). Unlike his father, Tzvi Yehuda lived through the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel, and of course the 1967 Six-Day War. His responses to these events, helped shape the theological and political outlook of contemporary religious Zionists.

In 1974 a group of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda's students formed what became known as Gush Emunim or the Bloc of the Faithful. Gush Emunim's political goal was the retention and development of land conquered in 1967 (Newman. 2005: 194). Its ideological impetus emerged as a response to the general sense of malaise felt after Israel's very narrow victory in the Yom Kippur War. As the movement put it,

> Our aim is to bring about a large movement of reawakening among the Jewish people for the fulfillment of the Zionist vision in its full scope…The sources of the vision are the Jewish tradition and its roots, and its ultimate objective is the full redemption of the Jewish people and the entire world. (Cited in Sprinzak. 1991: 114.)

Where Rabbi Kook the father espoused a messianic Zionist *vision*, Rabbi Kook the son brought messianism into the practicalities of everyday statehood (Ravistky. 1996: 124; Taub. 2010: 40). Where Rabbi Kook the father seemed to merge universalism with Jewish particularism, his son's focus seemed to rest on Jewish national and theological particularity.

It is important to remember however, that Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook was far from a monolithic rabbinic thinker. He had many students who span the religious and political spectrum. For these thinkers, and the social movements they created, the State of Israel was the "foundation of God's presence in the world" (Ravitzky. 1996: 5). At the same

time however, the State is also a real-world political (and secular) entity. Political pragmatism does not always coincide easily with theological vision.

Within religious Zionism the desire to unify the Jewish nation (and the world at large) through the settlement of (and sovereignty over) the Land of Israel often conflicts with the political realities of the Middle East. A good portion of the Biblical lands of Israel are inhabited by Palestinians who have their own political and cultural claims to the same territory. International relationships and interests limit the ability to extend Jewish sovereignty over the entire Land of Israel. Moreover, religious Zionists are also restricted by internal Israeli politics, and their ability to influence the national narrative is obviously limited by the democratic process. The Arab-Israeli peace process and the 2005 disengagement from the Gaza Strip were ruptures that brought into sharp focus these limitations. The political, social, and theological dilemmas that emerged out of these ruptures serve as the background for the following dissertation. The history of religious Zionism, its theology concepts and political crises are experienced on a daily basis by its diverse practitioners.

2.2 **- Literature Review**

Academic scholarship has fallen short of accurately engaging with the complexities and multiplicities of religious Zionist life in Israel, and religious nationalism in general, for three central reasons. Firstly scholars have not taken seriously the theological underpinnings of politically active pietistic movements. Ideas about God, the soul, redemption etc. appear in the literature as ethnographic curiosities (if they appear at all) rather than analytic concepts that are instrumental in the ways in which individuals

choose to organize their lives. The political literature on religious Zionism does factor in religious or theological experience. Yet this literature rarely correlates such concepts to the ways in which they are practiced by individuals. As a result a good deal of the political scholarship has been disacociated from the everyday lived experiences of Jewish religious Zionists in Israel.

Secondly scholars (particularly in the social sciences) find themselves encumbered by political beliefs, principles, and obligations that make it difficult for them to properly engage with religious Zionists. Scholars of Middle Eastern political movements tend to be critical of Jewish political pietistic movements on the one hand, and sympathetic to Islamic political pietistic movements on the other. As a result the scholarship to date has not holistically engaged with either manifestation in a way that illuminates complexity, and highlights the ambiguities that are a part of everyday life.

Thirdly scholars have tended to focus their ethnographic energies on the exotic and violent aspects of Jewish religious Nationalism, rather than on how religious Zionism as a movement manifests itself in a variety of contexts throughout Israel. In other words nearly all of the current literature focuses exclusively on Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria. In this way they have difficulty in grasping the larger tensions and dilemmas that are occurring within Israel as a whole.

2.2A - Theology Taken Seriously

A poignant example of the ways in which ethnographic accounts of religious experiences skirt around the issue of religion itself can be found in some of the anthropological literature on Islam and Islamism. I find comparing studies of Islamism

and Religious Zionism analytically beneficial. Firstly, both movements coexist within the same geographic region. Beyond that obvious analogy, the conflict between the two movements includes similar and familiar issues surrounding modernity, piety, and modern politics.

For example, An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon (2006) by Lara Deeb, explores political religious piety in a Muslim Shi'ite context. Deeb's text analyses the category of modernity among Shi'ite women. Firstly Deeb explores how Shiite women in in Beirut deploy discourses of modernity. Here women place an emphasis on both spiritual as well as material progress as being necessary in producing 'modern-ness'. Secondly, Deeb offers an ethnographic description of what publicly performed acts of piety look like among her informants. Deeb marshals ethnography to "understand the local dynamics of what has been variously called "Islamization", "Islamic fundamentalism", "Islamism", and so on" (2006: 5).

As Deeb explores the ways in which piety and gender is expressed and practiced throughout society, she tries to offer her readers clues into the theological experiences of her informants. Consider the following; "Many people in the community [of Shi'ites in the al-Dahiyya neighborhood of Beirut] believed that piety should infuse one's entire life. In their view, each person has "an account (hisab) with God that would gain and lose points and be tallied upon death, determining the course of one's afterlife" (2006: 103). This is an important principle, one that seems to echo certain Jewish understandings of spiritual sensitivity that will be reviewed in chapter five of this study. On the other hand, we never learn how it may relate to other Shi'ite religious or even political concepts in Lebanon. Other than being an interesting ethnographic observation, Deeb never reveals

what the precise relationship may be between an image of the afterlife, and Shi'ite political modernity in Southern Lebanon. Here, understandings of the afterlife act as an ethnographic detail, almost indistinguishable from any other cultural factor. One wonders, if there is anything unique about the 'religious' experience of these Shi'ite women.

A similar example in a religious Zionist context can be found in Michael Feige's Settling the Hearts: Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories (2009). For Feige, the basic problem of contemporary religious Zionism has been their inability to instill their theological and political goals into the heart of Israeli discourse. The title of his text, 'Settling the Hearts' is a phrase borrowed from Rabbi Yoel bin-Nun, a leading and controversial religious Zionist figure. Bin-Nun claimed that while religious Zionism has settled the Land of Israel, they have failed to settle into the hearts of the People of Israel. With this in mind Feige's book "concentrates on deciphering the basic meaning of the settlement project and the nature of the dialogue between the movement and Israeli society" (2009: 4). Feige's text focuses on the symbolic actions and the discursive strategies that West Bank settlers use to construct a sense of national home.

Feige includes a designated section on the theology of Gush Emunim, the non-governmental organization that initiated settlement in Judea and Samaria in the early 1970's. Feige describes the influence of its central rabbinic personality Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook. This section, however, is separate from his more ethnographic, political, or historical chapters. This tendency is perhaps most apparent in his descriptions of the "Hilltop Youth", whom he understand as "the young settlers who complement their settlement activity with a radical drive against all forms of

establishment, including the bourgeois home of their parents" (2009: 237). Feige relates the Hilltop Youth more to the new age counterculture of the 1960's, than to the popularity of Hasidism that is currently sweeping through religious Zionist circles (2009: 238). It is not that Feige is completely incorrect. He offers a powerful ethnographic argument comparing the new age movement to the counterculture exhibited by younger religious Zionist settlers. The point however is that by not focusing on the relationship between theology and practice, Feige misses a persuasive and powerful force in the daily lives of many religious Zionist individuals throughout Israel.

Joanna Steinhardt in her essay *American Neo-Hasid's in the Land of Israel* (2010) offers another ethnographic account of political pietism that does not include an autonomous space for religious experience. Like Feige, Steinhardt relates individualist and spiritual modes of religious Zionist practice more to the counterculture of the 1960's than to religious concepts of God, the soul and redemption that are taken very seriously by her informants. Despite her title, Steinhardt is able to claim, "that American Jewish youth living in Israel have replicated and recontextualized styles and attitudes of the 1960s hippie movement to signify their allegiance to a spiritualized worldview and way of life in the 2000s" (2010: 24). If Steinhardt were to have analyzed the actual content of her informant's thought (and yeshiva studies) she would have discovered that present day Hassidism is just as much an active force in their daily lives as Woodstock of 1968 might be.

Ethnographic literature has been very good at describing and analyzing the religious practices of social actors, but has been less successful in engaging with religious experience itself. The political literature on religious Zionism presents with a similar

lacunae from the opposite angle. The classical political text on Israeli Right Wing politics is Ehud Sprinzak's, The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right (1991). The Radical Right in this study is a "combination of ultranationalism, militarism, ethnocentrism, and religiosity" (1991: 21). Sprinzak's exhaustive study of the history and ideology of the political Right in Israel leads him into an analysis of what he understands to be the Jewish fundamentalism, and messianism of Gush Emunim (1991: 17).

Sprinzak generally confines himself to the political, historical, and theological influences and implications of Gush Emunim. He is certainly aware that these are not abstract concepts, but rather modes through which everyday people experience their lives. Sprinzak hints at this social complexity by correctly pointing to the fact that people did not simply 'join' Gush Emunim, but were rather acculturated 'into it'. "People become part of the Gush usually because they *grow up* into it. The long process of socialization often starts at home, and continues through kindergarten, religious primary school, high school yeshiva, Yeshivat Hesder, or advanced yeshiva". (1991: 108). What Sprinzak is describing here is the educational process of Israeli religious Zionism in general, and not just of Gush Emunim. Despite this explanation Sprinzak does not look too closely into the daily lives of the settlers whose ideology he describes.

My study of religious Zionism attempts to move away from Sprinzak's outlook. I want to explore the production of theology as well as its reception as daily experience. By 'theology' I am referring to Jewish ideas concerning the relationship to the divine. Notions such as redemption, messianism, and the soul are all concepts that resonate with the everyday experiences and dilemmas of individuals. These concepts are practiced

through Halacha (or Jewish Law). That is, laws that govern the daily life of Orthodox Jews are inherently related to theological principles. This relationship within Judaism between daily practice and theory makes it a fertile ground for ethnographic research.

Secondly, I try to eschew descriptive terms that signify a particular understanding of 'normativity'. Terms such as 'ultra', 'radical', 'extreme', 'hard-core' and even 'fundamentalist', all make claims on normative behavior. In many cases, it is unclear what that 'norm' is based on. It may be based on a statistical marker. In other words, one might empirically show that there are statistically more people who subscribe to belief 'X', than those who subscribe to belief 'Y'. In this case 'X' serves as the norm, and 'Y' serves as the extreme. The signification may also be based on a more subjective analysis. Belief 'Y' may simply seem (from a particular perspective) more 'extreme' than belief 'X'. I think both positions are valid, only when they are accompanied by accurate descriptions and an appropriate amount of evidence. In this dissertation, however, I tend to prefer ethnographic descriptions of a phenomenon rather than terms that describe the 'normativity' of a phenomenon.

2.2B - Scholarly Engagements

The tendency to utilize the 'language of normativity' is one element that is linked to the ways in which personal political engagements are sometimes mobilized within the literature. Joyce Dalsheim has noted how scholars are quick to point to the problematic relationship between western liberalism within certain forms of Islamic religiosity, yet reticent to do so when studying Jewish settlers (2010: 600). Indeed, while there are many scholars who are quick to defend, (or remain uncritical) of forms of violence and inequality that emerge out of Islamic political piety, there are few who are willing to offer

a similar benefit of the doubt to forms of Jewish political piety. To put simply, scholars tend to be more critical of Jewish pietistic nationalism than they are of the Islamic variety. To understand this disjuncture further, one might note the similarities and differences between Deeb's account of Shi'ite women in Lebanon, to that of Tamar El-Or and Gideon Aran's account of Jewish religious Zionist women in Samaria.

In *Giving Birth to a Settlement: Maternal Thinking and Political Action of Jewish Women on the West Bank* (1995), El-Or and Aran describe the very individual passions which surround religious Zionism. Female activists established Rechalim on the site of a roadside terror attack where a mother of seven was murdered. El-Or writes of the changes these women made to the discourse surrounding life in the West Bank.

> A novel element is the act of founding Rechalim was the women's lack of shame in verbalizing their fears for the safety of their children and the settlers in general. Their actions, they claim, originated in a mortal fear for the lives of their children. They introduced fear into the discourse of the settlers' community, a subject absent from male ideological discourse, and thus denied" (1995: 70).

This is an insightful ethnographic observation; mortal fear has an important role to play in both politics (feminism, Zionism) and piety (religious Zionism).

The terms that El-Or, Aran and Deeb use to describe their subject matter however, are very different. El-Or and Aran are studying 'fundamentalist' women (1995:73). Deeb only uses the term as a critique of Western attitudes concerning Islam. For Deeb, there is nothing inherently 'extreme' about Hezbollah. As she states, Hezbollah "may not simply be dismissed as an extremist or terrorist group" (2005: 83). This is due to the fact that Hezbollah has limited itself to resisting the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, as well as the fact that Hezbollah is now a legitimate Lebanese

political party. While both of these observations can be disputed[8], Deeb's general tenor is clear, religious nationalist Islamic extremism is not all that extreme. For El-Or and Aran on the other hand, the Jewish women in Rechalim are indeed fundamentalists, and their work adds to the literature on religious extremism.

This difference between El-Or, Aran, and Deeb's characterization of fundamentalism, points to the different ways that Jewish religious nationalism and Islamic religious Nationalism are contextualized. Neither construction is an accurate reflection of reality. Deeb, seems to overlook the very real ways in which violence intersects with piety, while El-Or and Aran seem to overlook the impact that religious experience may have on political and social structures.

To narrow the argument however, ethnographers of Jewish pietistic movements tend to critique their subjects in a way that scholars of Islamic pietistic movements do not. Lara Deeb, for example, never criticizes (and indeed defends) Hezbollah's violent activity. As an example, she cites a list of terrorist attacks that have been associated with Hezbollah. These include the 1983 bombing of a US marine barracks in Lebanon, the 1985 hijacking of a TWA flight to Beirut, and several bombings of Israeli and Jewish institutions in Argentina[9]. Deeb states, "However Hizbullah's involvement in these attacks remains unclear" (2006:83). Later she writes, "Hizbullah's military activity has been committed and confined to one major (and legal) goal: ending the Israeli Occupation of Southern Lebanon (2006: 84).

[8] She published her book before Hezbollah launched hundreds of rockets into Israel's interior and kidnapped two soldiers.
[9] One should note that Deeb only mentions "Israeli targets in Argentina" (2006: 83) when one of the targets was a Jewish Center. One wonders why she left out the word 'Jewish'.

Compare this strong defense of Hezbollah to Ehud Sprinzak's critique of Gush Emunim.

> The study emerged from a specific interest in the radicalization of Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful) an Israeli messianic movement committed to the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank (biblical Judea and Samaria). It was especially triggered by the exposure and arrest, in April 1984, of a terror group composed of highly respected members of the movement who since 1980 have committed several stunning acts of anti-Arab terror in the West Bank (1987:194).

Sprinzak (unlike Deeb) never questions the veracity of Jewish violence, nor does he ever defend the phenomenon. Violence is a part of both Jewish as well as Islamic political pietistic movements. Yet it seems as if only studies of Jewish political piety critique its manifestation.

Another example can be found in Saba Mahmoud's Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject (2005). Mahmoud critiques the ways in which Islamism is labeled 'backward' or 'fundamentalist'.

> Movements such as these have come to be associated with terms such as fundamentalism, the subjugation or women, social conservatism reactionary atavism, cultural backwardness, and so on – associations that, in the aftermath of September 11, are often treated as "facts" that do not require further analysis (2005: 5).

In contrast, Michael Feige in his definition of Gush Emunim, does not take any issue with using the term 'fundamentalist'. "Gush Emunim is a religious Fundamentalist movement with a certain brand of messianism and an ultra-rightist political outlook" (2009: 5). Larab Deeb never seems to critique Hezbollah's violence, and Mahmoud does not mention some of the reactionary positions of the Islamic Revival Movement in Egypt (particularly regarding Jews).

An analysis by Juliana Ochs of Israeli security practices begins with a stated critique. Security and Suspicious: An Ethnography of Everyday Life in Israel (2011) looks at the various ways in which security and suspicion in Israel are basic elements in one's everyday life. Ochs makes three arguments. Firstly, a "national discourses of security and suspicion are reproduced at the level of bodily practice" (2011: 4). Secondly, people naturalize their suspicions, viewing them as beyond politics. This allows them to ignore "the structural logics of exclusion that discourses of fear and security serve to reproduce" (ibid). Thirdly fantasies of threats are modes through which Israelis embody security. Ochs' argument however, is framed around a critique of Israeli security practices.

> This book adopts a critical approach to Israeli politics and practice, not by suppressing Israeli voices, or avoiding Israel as an object of study…but rather by focusing intensively on Israeli subjectivity and experiences (2011: 15).

A mutual error connects the critiques of Feige, Sprinzak, and Ochs on the one hand, and the defense (or lack of critique) of Deeb and Mahmoud. Both extremes fail to properly confront the tensions, complexities and ambiguities that are simply a part of the human condition. Within the general research on political and pietistic movements in the Near East, individuals come across as being so "certain" of their theological beliefs, and moral underpinnings. That individuals, however, may be ambivalent regarding strongly held theological or moral beliefs, is not something that the anthropology of nationalist and pietistic movements has (so far) been able to properly assimilate. The need to critique or defend one's subject matter does not help this issue.

My purpose here is not to critique or defend scholars of Islamism or of Jewish Nationalism per-se. I am rather trying to highlight some of the ways in which morality

and ethics are framed and perhaps justified within ethnographic research. The ways in which violence and inequality manifest themselves within the ethnographic literature concerning nationalistic piety, tends to stress a certain politically correct moral and ethical discourse. Within that discourse one is forced to either critique a phenomenon or defend it, with very little middle ground between those two poles. These discourses also mask the daily political, social, and theological tensions that people may feel as they encounter acts of violence or inequality. The inability to see tension and complexity has also led scholars of Jewish religious Zionism to focus on particular aspects of that movement, namely the settlements in Judea and Samaria.

2.2C - Singular Focus on Settlements

Virtually all of the literature on religious Zionism subsumes the movement under radical right wing politics or the Settler Movement. The inability to take seriously the ways in which people's everyday lives are deeply embedded in religious experience, may lead scholars to overlook the complexities and tensions that are a part of everyday experience. Studies of religious Zionism overlook the vast tensions and complexities within the movement itself. In other words, while settlement in Judea and Samaria as well as right wing politics are very important, they are not the only part of contemporary religious Zionist life.

The lives of Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria are studied in almost complete isolation of wider religious and cultural phenomenon occurring within Israel. This practice is inaccurate and does not properly reflect the ways in which people and ideas move throughout a region. Individuals may grow up and live in Israel Proper, but choose to attend school or yeshiva within Judea and Samaria (the opposite is also true). They

may live in Judea and Samaria but work within Israel Proper. They may also drive through Judea and Samaria everyday on their way to work. This is done by people who, for example, live in the city of Modi'in but work in Jerusalem. To best understand the details and approach the complexities of everyday life, religious Zionism must be viewed as a holistic movement that is expressed differently in different parts of Israel.

One academic text that approaches the topic of religious Zionism in this manner is Tamar El-Or's Next Year I Will Know More: Literacy and Identity among Young Orthodox Women in Israel (2002). El-Or explores the ways in which young religious Zionist women engage with Jewish texts, and what the increase in literacy means to Orthodox Judaism in Israel. Religious Zionism and not just the Settlements is the content of her analysis. This allows her to focus on complexities and dilemmas surrounding literacy that highlight much larger social and theological phenomena.

This dissertation attempts to address the lacunae within the scholarly literature concerning these three points. Firstly, it focuses distinctly on the relationship between what people believe, how they study, and what they do. In so doing, it takes seriously the religious concepts that are a crucial element of one's social and political experience of the world.

Secondly, this dissertation attempts not to critique or defend the data. When a critique is offered it is always preceded or followed by a reflexive statement that outlines my own position on the issue. In this way I try not to patronize my audience by forcing upon them my own judgments. A reader of this ethnography is free come to his own ethical or moral conclusions based on the descriptions provided. I hope that supporters as

well as critics of religious Zionism in Israel, as well as the settlement project in Judea and Samaria, may find the content of this dissertation both worthwhile and informative.

Finally this dissertation looks at the settlement movement as just one aspect of religious Zionism. It focuses on the theological, social, and political vernacular manifestations of that national pietistic movement throughout Israel as a whole. In this way I try to accurately present the lived experience – the ambiguities, tensions, and dilemmas - of religious Zionism that emerges out of larger religious concepts.

Chapter 3 - Srugim: The Aesthetics of Religious Zionism in Israel

3.1 - The Aesthetics of Experience

Sitting in at a gathering in the home of Yoel Tzur a leading settler personality in the community of Beit El north of Jerusalem, a New York Times author did his best to describe the people and ideology that surrounded him.

> Mr. Tzur spoke in the large living room of his house in the Jewish settlement of Beit El, near the Palestinian city of Ramallah, where he was one of the original settlers in 1978. His many children listened, rapt. The girls were dressed in the long dresses of the religious; Mr. Tzur and a son wore the knitted yarmulkes of religious nationalists. Almost all the books on the shelves were religious, and there was no television….The mix of religious and military imagery is not chance. Mr. Tzur was a company commander in the paratroopers and still serves in the reserves. He speaks of the army with almost the same awe as he speaks of Jewish destiny, noting with pride the growing number of religious soldiers who wear knitted yarmulkes under their battle helmets. (Schmemann. 1998)

In the social scientific study of human experience, the power of description is one of the most important tools an ethnographer can marshal. What people look like, how they dress, forms of entertainment, intellectual pursuits, and professions are all essential details in accurately describing the day-to-day lives and passions of informants. The trick, however, is to accurately relate the details of everyday life to the ideological (or in this case theological) context which serve as their background. This chapter will describe the aesthetics of religious Zionism in Israel. What it looks like, on the street and in people's homes. It will explore what men and women commonly wear, the types of head coverings they choose, and the styles of modesty they abide by.

As Joanne B. Eichner writes, "[d]ress is a coded sensory system of non-verbal communication that aids human interaction in space and time" (1999: 1). A religious Zionist female informant echoed this academic claim when she asserted that styles of

clothing are the first thing that people see. They are the easiest way to categorize individuals within society. Along with attire, this chapter will explore physical appearance, such as common hair styling for men and women. The goal of this chapter will be to show how religious Zionist principles and appearances manifest themselves in different ways throughout Israel. This chapter however will attempt to move beyond the simple decoding and interpretation of symbols that can be found within dress and material culture. Dress, and appearance are more than just symbols, they also touch upon the pressing dilemmas and tensions that are expressed within religious experience. As Arthur Kleinman points out,

> [S]ome things really do matter, matter desperately, [and this] is what provides local worlds with their immense power to absorb attention, orient interest, and direct action. Moreover, it is these local worlds that have the power to transform the transpersonal and subjective poles of experience. (1997: 327).

This section will lay the groundwork for an ethnography that touches upon the theological tensions and political ambiguities that emerge within a world where choices of dress and appearance really do matter.

Along with material culture this chapter will review some of the life choices different religious Zionists make regarding education, housing, volunteer, and military service. In many ways choices surrounding these issues are 'aesthetic' in nature. That is, they shape the experience of religious Zionism for individuals and provide a framework for how different individuals and communities view each other.

Describing the aesthetics that color people's daily lives - including life choices- is meant to accomplish two goals. Firstly, these descriptions are essential for contextualizing the ethnography which will be presented in the coming chapters.

Secondly, the topic of aesthetics is about much more than just 'what people look like'. Aesthetics is also about what people *feel should* look right. These difficult to articulate notions about what 'ought to be' expand the moral possibilities of 'peoplehood' and help to delineate experiences of collectivity and individuality. The way people dress, how they style their hair, their educational or service choices allow people to form religious and social bonds with one another. In other words, aesthetic expectations (what looks right, what ought to be) for religious Zionists help individuals decide what is proper and what is not. They are elements in people's decision to identify with or separate from communities. From a religious perspective, aesthetic expectations are deeply implicated in attempts to actualize a vision of what a sacred Jewish society (and perhaps even the world) ought to be. The following descriptions are meant to highlight those kinds of sacred visions.

3.1A - Dress - Males

Clothing and attire are important markers of not just identity, but also of the ways in which people interpret theological concepts and religious injunctions in Israel. What people wear, how they choose to wear it, its color, and style all mark the ways in which individuals and communities relate to theological, political, and social frameworks. This is particularly true of head coverings. As Susan J. Rasmussen has noted, "Many societies display a concern with the human head as central to personal and social identity" (1991:101).

Probably the most poignant sign of religious nationalism (religious Zionists) in Israel is the knitted yarmulke – or in Hebrew the *Kippa Srugah*[10] - worn by males. The knitted yarmulke (*Kippa* in Hebrew) is so ubiquitous that an Israeli television show describing the tempestuous lives of religious Zionist singles in Jerusalem is called *Srugim* or "knitted". As an ethnographer when I saw a knitted yarmulke, I knew I was not in the company of *Chareidim* (the Ultraorthodox, who wear large black yarmulkes), or secular Israelis (who do not wear yarmulkes), but rather with religious nationalists of some form or fashion. The size and style of these knitted yarmulkes can impart a great deal of social and theological information to observers[11].

The knitted yarmulke is a circular cloth cap between 3.5 and 5 inches in diameter. Many styles have a solid color in the center (most commonly white and blue) and a decorated border. This style can most commonly be found in the more established religious Zionist settlements in Judea and Samaria worn by middle aged men. They are also commonly worn by students in the larger yeshivot, such as Mercaz HaRav in Jerusalem, or Har Etzion in Alon Shvut. It is commonly said that larger yarmulkes of this style of associated with greater levels of religious observance.

Some knitted *kippot* have swirled colors and designs in place of the solid background. I noticed that most religious Zionist rabbinic students choose to wear the

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[10] In 1995 the New York Times, in an article about the Rabin assassination claimed, "wearing the knitted blue yarmulke that is a symbol of settler militants…" (Kifner. 1995). This is incorrect.

[11] The relationship between headdress and social (or religious) status is not unique to Judaism, or to religious Zionism. Susan J. Rasmussen has noted how headdress among the Moslem Tuareg of Northeastern Niger acts as a metonym for property. It "remind[s] the wearer of the need for caution and self-control, underline status, and highlight what is at stake over the long term" (1991: 102).

solid background style. Both of these styles are commercially produced by hand or by machine. The hand made *kippot* may cost upwards of 70 shekels ($18), while machine made *kippot* may cost as little as 15 Shekels ($4).

There are also much smaller and flatter styles of knitted yarmulkes. These are often times knitted by a female family member or friends. Suzanne Baizerman has pointed to the social function of *kippa* knitting. The knitting of a *kippah* serves to connect adolescent or young adult religious Zionist males and females (1993). Additionally Baizerman claims, "a man in public with a crocheted kippa lacking in detail suggests an isolated person with insufficient social ties" (1993: 100). I have not found this claim to be ethnographically current. Most young women do not possess the technical skill to knit an elaborate *kippa*. A young man with a simple homemade *kippa* suggests that he is not isolated and does have social (most likely female) ties.

These *kippot* are either fastened to the head with plastic of metal clips, or an individual is able to simply balance the item on his head. Because of how they are made, it is often times difficult to keep these *kippot* securely fastened to one's head. On a windy day, or while playing sports, such head coverings are liable to fall off. In these conditions many wearers simply take them off. This is particularly true in the military, where those who wear smaller (hand-made) *kippot*, tend to remove them during long marches or operational activities. Why they do this is an individual choice, but it is oftentimes seen by others (rightly or wrongly) as a certain weakening of religious commitment. For example on patrols and night marches I used to place my own *kippa* in my pocket. Once a fellow religious soldier gently reminded me that, "a *kippa* is also like a helmet".   I only had one *kippa* with me, and if it fell off in the dark, I would never be able to find it again!

These styles of *kippot* are generally associated with classical streams of religious Zionism. Over the past ten years however, other forms of knitted *kippot* can be seen on the streets. These are larger, and fit over almost the entirety of the head, sort of like a bowl. They often come in a variety of colors and designs. They are popularly associated with the settler “Hilltop Youth”, but I have seen them in a wide variety of locations, both within Israel Proper as well as in Judea and Samaria. These *kippot* seem to point to Hasidic influence within religious Zionism. Hasidism was a religious movement that emerged out of the theological, political, and social catastrophes that affected Jews in the 17th century. Hasidism “created a unique sort of pietism that captured the imagination of the masses of Eastern European Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (Rossman. 1996: 1). It generally places a stress on an individual and personal connection with divinity. The people who wear this style of *kippa* tend to study Hasidic thought, and read Hasidic texts. They also tend to wear their side locks (or in Hebrew *peyot*) very long. Long side locks in general have become popular within religious Zionism, and also attest to the influence of Hasidism on the movement. As will be discussed in later chapters, this influence does not necessarily imply a specific political allegiance as much as it does a general orientation towards State authority.

Figure 1 Large Kippa with long sidelocks

These large bowl-like knitted kippot coupled with long sidelocks are almost always correlated with Hasidic influence. For example while on reserve duty in Northern Samaria I had the opportunity to spend some time in a small settlement known as Mevo Dotan Bet. Of the five families living in the community four are religious, and

most of the men sport the large *kippot* and long side locks. While on patrol one day, I happened across one of the wives – Shayna – who was busy feeding their many sheep. I asked her how the religious couples in the community identify religiously. She shook her head and said “it’s impossible to categorize it….but we connect more to Hasidut”.

While long *peyot* and large *kippot* are emblematic of Hasidic influence among adults, one commonly sees this style among young religious Zionist children. This is specifically surprising when the children’s parents do not seem to be influenced by Hasidism at all. I noticed this phenomenon in many different types of communities. It never seemed to make any sense. In the least Hasidic of families I would invariably find very young children running around with large colorful *kippot* and long swaying *peyot*.

In accordance with the biblical verse (Numbers 15:38), Orthodox Jewish males wear what are known as *tzitzit*. These are fringes that are attached to the corners of a white undergarment. These fringes are generally not tucked into the pants and may reach the top of ones knees. It has been common of late to see religious Zionist males including in their fringes a blue thread, known as *tekhelet* (Fig 12). The relationship between *tekhelet* and larger religious concepts is complicated. One is biblically mandated to place the blue dye on the *tzitzit*. It is commonly believed however, that the knowledge to create the blue dye has been lost over the years, but will be rediscovered once the Messiah arrives. To include blue dye in ones *tzitzit* is also to act upon to certain messianic impulses. That’s not to say that these impulses are lacking in those who do not wear *tekhelet*. There is however, more behind the blue thread than the simple fulfillment of Halachic precepts.

During my fieldwork, I often wondered to what extent men “play” with the ritual garments they wear. It may seem somewhat difficult, in communities that are overtly ideological (or theological), to find individual expression. For example the two pieces of clothing that is variable, and open to fashion, in Ultraorthodox communities (among men) are glasses and ties. One cannot help but notice the shockingly colorful ties and very fashionable glasses that some Ultraorthodox men wear over their dark suits and white shirts. The same may be true within religious Zionist communities as well.

Religious Zionists may find individual expression specifically through ritual dress.*Tzitzit*, for example are usually worn on an undergarment that is placed under the shirt. The commandment for tzitzit however, applies to all four cornered garments. Rabbi Yoel bin-Nun a one-time settler leader in Alon Shvut, and my Rosh Yeshiva in the Religious Kibbutz Movement’s seminary in Ein Tzurim , would attach the strings of the *tzitzit* to his four cornered suit jacket. During my fieldwork I wondered to what extent are the colorful kippot, long side locks, and tzitzit (worn differently), also a means of simply expressing individuality.

3.1B - Dress – Females

Religious Zionist women also have their specific styles of attire. The most poignant style of dress for religious Zionist females is the head covering (known in Hebrew as a *mitpachat*) worn by married females. It is customary for married orthodox Jewish women to cover their hair. The meanings and methods attached to these hair coverings differ between communities as well as between individual women. At the same

time however, different styles oftentimes point to differing ideological and theological affiliations.

One should note the distinct difference between male and female head coverings within Orthodox Judaism. Male head coverings are not meant to 'conceal' hair in any way. Rather they are a marker of Jewish identity, and of divine fidelity. While women's head covering also mark identity to a non-Jewish public, they are distinctly designed to conceal hair.

The many Halachic questions regarding hair covering are complex. While there is an obvious relationship between these Halachic issues and social practices in the field, the particulars are somewhat beyond the scope of this dissertation. In general, there are those who believe that a married women's hair is considered sexually arousing (or in Hebrew *Ervah*) and thus the hair is required to be covered. There are others who believe the notion of arousal is culturally situated. For them the covering of a woman's hair is only a custom. To take the matter further, if one believes that a married woman's hair is sexually arousing, all or most of the hair must be covered. On the other hand, there is an opinion that a hair covering is only to signal that a woman is married, and so one only needs a partial hair covering. The difference between a partial hair covering, and a full hair covering, and how much hair a woman may reveal with a full covering is one that is rife with social tension. For many religious Zionist women theological allegiances and identities are formed and forged around these differences.

Most religious Zionist women cover their hair using a square or triangular cloth called a *mitpachat.* This practice is in contrast to Ultraorthodox women who – generally

following Ashkenazi custom - cover their hair using wigs and/or hats. According to one rabbi I spoke to the use of cloth as a hair covering is indicative of Sephardic influence within religious Zionist circles[12]. While very few religious Zionist women choose to cover their hair using a wig, it is still not unheard off. In mid-2013 a well-known female religious Zionist parliamentarian got married. A day after her wedding she released pictures of herself sporting an expensive wig. The wig very much resembled her real hair and so this became a topic of considerable gossip for religious Zionists in the days following the wedding.

The decision of how to cover one's hair is an extremely important one. On the one hand it is an expression of how the woman herself views Jewish legal practice, and her own encounter with theological and ideological principles. On the other hand methods and styles of hair covering within religious Zionist communities are a fashion like anything else. Indeed there are privately owned businesses and larger companies which cater to this niche market. As a fashion, hair covering also acts as an expression of a woman's social circle. If a woman's entire social circle wears a partial cloth hair covering, it would be awkward if she were to suddenly decide to wear a wig. Additionally some husbands want a say in how a woman covers her hair. In those cases the style of *mitpachat* turns into an expression of a family's religious experience.

My ability to gather data in this area was obviously limited. It simply felt awkward for a single male to ask married women (many of whom were my own age)

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[12] Indeed the subject of the Sephardic role within religious Zionism is one that is hotly contested. Some claim that religious Zionism (or the settlement movement in particular) excludes Sephardic Jews both ideologically and practically. An examination of *mitpachot* calls this assertion into question. Currently the vast majority of religious Zionist women cover their hair using cloth.

about their hair covering practices. Despite this limitation I was able to ask several friends, as well as some potential dates about the methods they used (or plan to use) to cover their hair. I learned that despite the social and religious importance of a hair covering, most women decide on the specific style and method of covering either right before, or right after their marriage.

These decisions are not set in stone either. A sister of a good friend of mine decided to fully cover her hair when she got married (following the practice of most of her social circle). She soon found this to be annoying. It was hot during the summer, and she felt the *mitpachat* was just too annoying to wrap every day. She then started to wear only a partial hair covering, just a thin narrow piece of cloth she tied on the top of her hair. When I saw her at her nephew's circumcision a few years after her marriage she was not wearing any hair covering.

Another friend of mine upon her marriage decided to wear a full hair covering that revealed a *tefach* or a handbreadth of hair in the front. This is a very popular and fashionable style in many religious Zionist communities. I met her randomly on the bus one day about a month after her wedding. She was then wearing a cloth *mitpachat* but one that covered all of her hair. Later that night I asked her on Facebook if there was significance to the change. She said that really a woman is supposed to cover all of her hair. Leaving some hair exposed in the front is just *b'dieved*[13], "and I'm not a *b'dieved*

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[13] A posteriori. In the practice Jewish law there are two general ways to fulfill an obligation, *L'chatchila* and *B'dieved*. The former expresses how an obligation ought to be fulfilled in ideal circumstances. The latter expresses how an obligation may be fulfilled when circumstances are not ideal

kind of girl". To change a style of *mitpachat* is to alter how one is perceived, by friends and family…and perhaps even by oneself.

One commonly sees two general styles of *mitpachot* within religious Zionist communities. One is a cloth covering (or a series of cloth coverings) that are brightly designed and which cover all a woman's hair aside from a small amount – defined as a *tefach* (handbreadth) in the front. How much hair is revealed and how much is covered is technically dependent on how a woman defines a 'handbreadth'. In practicality though, it may simply be a matter of fashion. The second method is a *mitpachat* which covers only a portion of a woman's hair. Usually these are wrapped around the top of the head, and leave the front and back portions of the hair revealed.

Some *mitpachot* are simple pieces of cloth that are wrapped around the hair. Others are more elaborate and decorated. They may consist of several layers of decorated cloth that are wrapped one over the other. From my experience it seemed as if these more elaborate headscarves were found (almost exclusively) in certain settlements in Judea and Samaria which are heavily influenced by Hasidic thought.

Many unmarried religious Zionist women tend to refrain from wearing their hair loose. They may bind their hair (sometimes tightly) into fashionable buns or pony tails. I once asked an Israeli girl who grew up within religious Zionism about this practice. She said that among the more religious girls, it is considered somewhat immodest to let ones hair flow freely.

One thing that struck me about women's religious Zionist fashion in Israel was how different it was from its counterpart in the United States. I particularly took note of

the different standards of modesty. I grew up in a religious Zionist, modern Orthodox household in Brooklyn New York. With one younger sister I became somewhat attuned to the standards of modesty that were expected of her in our community. In Israel young religious Zionist women oftentimes wear clothing which in my community, would be deemed scandalous. For example in my Modern Orthodox, religious Zionist community in Brooklyn a woman's shirt always covered, at least, her collar bone. In Israel, one commonly sees religious Zionist girls (some of whom would be considered very religious in terms of Halachic observance) wearing shirts that reveal their collar bones. It is not uncommon to see shirts which reveal even more.

One also commonly sees body piercings among religious Zionist girls, specifically nose studs. This was very shocking for me, as it is just never done among orthodox Jewish girls in the United States. I was told that at first nose studs were reserved for the more "hippy" or Hasidic oriented religious Zionist girls. Now however, it is simply becoming more fashionable. I would often stand at hitchhiking stations and marvel at the girls who were traveling to or from religiously zealous settlements with nose studs. I asked a friend of mine who spent five years studying in a settlement in Samaria about the phenomenon. In his rabbi's opinion, if a girl wore a nose stud out of a sense of social fashion, or peer pressure, then it is a practice that should be frowned upon. If a girl however finds a nose stud to be personally fulfilling, then it is a practice that is harmless.

This ethnographic observation, that religious Zionist females in Israel tend to interpret the Jewish laws of modesty in a more liberal fashion, seems to contradict a commonplace anthropological claim. Mary Douglas, in her work Natural Symbols:

Explorations in Cosmology (1996) asserts a relationship between social and bodily control.

> [B]odily control is an expression of social control – abandonment of bodily control in ritual responds to the requirement of a social experience which is being expressed. Furthermore there is little prospect of successfully imposing bodily control without the corresponding social forms (Douglas. 1996: 74).

Namely, the extent to which a community attempts to define its social and cultural boundaries will mirror their attempts to control the physical bodies of community members. Ways of covering or exposing ones physical body are viewed as being 'symbolic' of social, cultural, or perhaps most importantly here, national fidelity. Simply put, the more interest a society expresses in protecting its cultural and social boundaries, they more effort they would put into bodily control. This is, at least, what one would expect to find following a symbolic interpretation.

The case of religious Zionist females in Israel not only critiques the universality of this symbolic argument, but more importantly calls into question the accuracy of symbolic interpretations more broadly. Among religious Zionists in Israel it is not uncommon to find very 'nationalistic' women wearing articles of clothing that are quite revealing. Nor is it unique to find young nationalistic (and even pious) women with nose piercings. A strong sense of nationalism, peoplehood, and concern with political and social boundaries, does *not* always walk hand-in-hand with an extremely strict sense of modesty. The complicated relationship between nationalism, piety, and the management of society forces must cause anthropologists to rethink the classic relationship between the 'symbol' and its supposed socio-cultural 'meaning'. One can say however, that styles

of clothing and bodily comportment may echo the very pressing dilemmas and tensions that occur within a particular social context.

Styles of dress especially in very ideological communities present a challenge to the anthropologist. To what extent are styles of dress correlated with conviction (personal or communal)? And how is one to measure that conviction? These are difficult questions, and in truth, the relationship between conviction and appearance is not always clear. Anthropologists can, however, point to tendencies. Large knitted *kippot*, and turban style *mitpachot tend* to be correlated with Hasidic thought. Blue thread in *tzitzit tends* to be (though certainly not exclusively) correlated with messianic impulses.

There is a distinct relationship between physical aesthetics (dress, appearance etc.) and the personal choices people tend to make throughout the course of their lives. Choice of housing, subsistence, and national service, are all linked to the ways in which people relate to the aesthetics of their (and others) bodies. The extent and the character of this relationship were made apparent to me one Saturday evening when an informant tried to set me up on a date with one of her friends.

I was spending the Shabbat in the quiet Tel Aviv suburb of Yehud, with my good friends Ari and Rivka. Saturday evening several community members (with an anthropologist tagging along) went to the local park to have the traditional third meal picnic style. I guess one of the ladies saw me kicking around a ball with Rivka's one year old son. On the way back to Ari and Rivka's apartment, I was told that this lady had a friend that she wanted to set me up with. In religious Zionist circles, this is how a good

deal of dating tends to work. People actively try to set their friends up with people whom they know, or have met. I asked Rivka to give me a few days to think about it.

A few days later I called Rivka back and asked her to tell me about the girl. She told me all the dry details (where she lives, what she does), and a lot about her personality. She then said (I remember it because I found it so interesting) "religiously she wears skirts, recently she started wearing pants now and then, and she doesn't mind wearing sleeves above the elbow which I like. I don't know if that means anything to you, but it says a lot to me." I told Rivka, “"it's very interesting how these little details about shirt sleeves can give us a huge amount of information about a person’s entire worldview". Rivka said "it definitely does".

Now in the end we never went out, but all those little details really did tell me a lot. Those little details about pants and sleeves made it possible for me (with a little knowledge of religious Zionist life and society) to categorize a complete stranger. Those details offered clues as to what kind of high school she went to, her educational path, along with the kind and length of her national service. I imagine that if I was a native Israeli those details would have told me even more. In the end I have no way of knowing if these details offered an *accurate* representation. I do know however, that religious Zionists believe that they do. The information that Rivka gave me was meant to impart certain social and theological information.

The choices people make in dress and appearance are thought to (and perhaps they really do) mirror the choices they make regarding education or national service. These are both two kinds of aesthetic choices that reflect upon each other. They color

how people are seen by others, and how they see themselves. In the following section I hope to thicken the descriptions of dress and appearance by describing the communities, the socioeconomic standing and educational practices of religious Zionists.

3.2 - **Family, Housing, and Employment**

The spectrum of religious Zionist thought and practice is exceptionally diverse. Religious Zionists often discuss how diverse they are, the differences between them, and the issues (political, socio-economic, and theological) that separate them. Like most of the country, the vast majority of religious Zionists live along the coastal plain in the center of Israel between Hadera and Gedera. There is also a large population in Israel's capital city, Jerusalem. Most towns within Judea and Samaria are also affiliated with religious Zionism[14]. Religious Zionists are of both European and Middle Eastern extraction.

The State of Israel in general is a difficult place to find gainful employment. As most individuals want to live in the center of the country, housing prices there are exceptionally high. Indeed, my fieldwork in Israel began as massive social protests were occurring surrounding the issue of housing prices. It should come as no surprise then that in religious Zionist households (even in the most religiously conservative of them) it is extremely common to find both spouses working. Most religious Zionists, at least in the larger cities, hold professional jobs (medicine, law, finance). In the smaller towns and settlements, particularly among the more religiously observant, education is a major field of employment for both men and women.

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[14] Notable exceptions include; Ariel – which is a secular city, and Beitar – an Ultraorthodox City.

3.3 - **Singles**

Religious Zionists tend to have large nuclear families. During my fieldwork I rarely saw middle-aged couples with less than four children. This is true in both the large cosmopolitan cities, as well as for smaller rural settlements. Although it is quite common for religious Zionists to marry young, it is important to note that there is also a large and vibrant religious Zionist singles scene. It is known in slang as the *bitza* or swamp. There are large *bitzot* (pl. for *bitza*) in Jerusalem, most notably in the neighborhood of Katamon, as well as in Givat Shmuel next to Tel Aviv. Here singles generally pray in the same synagogues, and invite each other to Sabbath meals. On any given Friday evening one may spot young adults wandering around Katamon and the German colony with large pots of food that are intended for these communal meals.

I remember going to the Ramban Synagogue in Jerusalem, one of the major gathering spots in the Jerusalem *bitza* one Friday night. There were massive crowds at the end of services hanging out in front of the building where singles would talk with their friends, mingle with those they want to be friends with, and stare at the various options available. The experience was anthropologically fascinating, but trying to dodge an ex-fling was personally too overwhelming. I do not believe my experience to be unique.

The liberal religious nature of these *bitzot* has garnered a fair amount of controversy. Religious Zionists tend to marry young, and relationships (friendly or more) between the sexes are frowned upon. Recently, the issue of sexual relations among religious singles has become an important topic of discussion. In the secular world, singles in their 20's and 30's have sex. To everyone's shock and dismay however even some religious Zionist singles conduct sexual relationships. This is a topic which

characterizes some of the personal dilemma's national religious singles face[15]. On the one hand many grow up in very religious and ideological environments, where sex is something that is enjoyed within the context of a Jewish family. On the other hand it is not easy to halt the passions of young adulthood, and some do not.[16]

3.4 - Settlements

In contrast to the religiously liberal singles in the *bitzot*, there are also National religious Israelis who span the spectrum from the religiously liberal to the very zealous (in terms of Halachic practice) living in settlements within Judea and Samaria. Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria is far from the monolithic enterprise that is sometimes depicted in the media (and even in the scholarly literature).

Jewish settlement in what is commonly known as the West Bank is generally divided into several sections. North of Jerusalem is commonly called Samaria; South of Jerusalem is commonly called Judea. East of Jerusalem running from the Dead Sea in the south to Beit Shean in the North rests the Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley. Within Judea there is the settlement bloc known as Gush Etzion that rests between Jerusalem to the north and Hebron in the south. South of Hebron rest the settlements located in the Southern Hebron Mountains (Sussiya, Carmel, Beit Chaggai, Otniel, Eshtamoa, Maon etc). Samaria itself is commonly divided up into several sections, each bearing the name

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[15] For a more complete discussion of intimacy and dating among Religious Zionist singles See Ari Engelberg 's *Seeking a 'pure relationship'? Israeli Religious-Zionist singles looking for love and marriage* (2011) in Religion Vol. 41, No. 3, Pp, 431–448

[16] For more on sexuality among religious Zionists see Tzvi Zohar (2006). *Relationships According to* Halacha *Without* Chuppah *and* Kiddushin [Hebrew]

of a biblical tribe that traditionally resided in that area. These names are used by the Jewish inhabitants of the area, but are also names given to the military commands that are in charge of each area.

Settlements are planned communities. They are usually located on the tops of hills or along a range of hills. Most are fenced for protection, but some communities refuse to fence themselves in. The latter claim that a fence only exacerbates tensions with neighboring Palestinians, as it signals that all land excluded from the fence does not belong to the settlement (thus inviting confusion and tension). The former, cite security reasons in support for building a fence. In terms of security most settlements have a civilian readiness team directed by what is called a "Ravshatz", this is a Hebrew acronym for Coordinator of Military Security. An individual in this position coordinates issues of security between the inhabitants of the settlement and the military.

Weapons are a rather common sight in Israel in general and even more common within Judea and Samaria. Most soldiers receive a rifle in the army, and most combat soldiers are required to take them home on leave[17]. Additionally aside from the weapons given to the readiness team by the military, many civilians in Judea and Samaria receive firearms permits and purchase their own pistols. Most firearms in Israel are located within Judea and Samaria[18]. The everyday nature of firearms within Israeli society is something that is usually immediately noticed by American or European tourists (where firearms are not generally openly carried by civilians). Israelis however have a different

[17] Military weapons were an even more common sight several years ago, when the army toughened its rules regarding who may take home a weapon and under what circumstances.
[18] Despite the ubiquitous nature of firearms, Israel has rather strict gun control laws. It is not a simple matter for a civilian to receive a license for a firearm.

relationship to firearms. The sight of an individual openly carrying a pistol, or even a rifle, in a café, bookstore, or on a date is far from shocking.

My friend Ze'ev in Har Bracha (we will hear more from him later) wore a semi-automatic pistol in a holster on the back of his hip. Ze'ev has three children, and I asked him how he felt having a fire arm in the house with his children in the house. I wanted to know what practices him and his wife do to minimize the risk. He answered that the pistol was always on his person, and when he first bought it, he used to sleep with it under his pillow. Now it rests on a night stand next to his bed. He never places a bullet in the chamber, and very young children do not have the strength to pull back the slide. His wife added that there are certain things in the house that the children know are off limits. I then asked how exactly the children know what is off limits. "They try to touch it" Ze'ev answered. One Shabbat I saw his young daughter run into Ze'ev trying to hug and play with him. Her arms must have touched his pistol, and Ze'ev yelled loudly "Not the weapon! Don't touch the weapon!" Despite the family rules and the very strict line that the family draws around the weapon, accidents do happen. Ze'ev related to me how one day he stepped out of the shower and walked into the hallway wherein he saw his middle son holding the pistol. "Don't tell my mother" he quipped.

Established settlements such as Ofra, Eli in Samaria, or Efrat and Alon Shvut in Judea are very large, with hundreds of families and many permanent buildings. Other communities that are not as established, have few if any permanent buildings and only a handful of families. In between these two extremes are tens of settlements of varying sizes. In order to move into many, if not most, of these communities one is reviewed by an acceptance committee. One generally has to pass a graphological test, and must agree

to live by the rules of the community - known as a *takanon*. As a result each community tends to have a character all its own (this is true even for communities without an exacting selection process).

The social and religious center of some communities like Alon Shvut in Gush Etzion, or Har Bracha in Samaria next to Nablus, and Eli also in Samaria revolve around a yeshiva. Many of the inhabitants learn (or have learned) in the yeshiva, and the Rosh Yeshiva (the rabbinic dean of the institution) is a leading figure in the community as a whole. This is not the case, however, for all communities in Judea and Samaria. Some, like Efrat, or Neve Daniel are simply cosmopolitan suburbs of Jerusalem. That being said Alon Shvut, Efrat, and Har Bracha are theologically and politically very different kinds of communities. In upcoming chapters I hope to explicate many of these differences, and relate them to wider changes within Israeli society.

3.5 - **Education and Youth Groups**

Despite the wide differences between Religious Zionist communities within Israel there are some very important points of commonality. One of these points happens to be education. Most Israeli religious Zionist youth go through a similar course of formal and informal education, leading up to and including military or national service. The public education system in Israel for Israeli Jews is divided into religious and secular branches. Religious Zionist youth in Israel can enroll in both public and private educational options. Most parents, if they can afford it however, choose the private option, as they are generally considered more religiously observant, as well as offering better educational alternatives. Boys and girls attend separate religious schools – both private and public. Many teenagers attend boarding schools for high school. These institutions are called

Ulpanot for girls and *Pnimiyot* for boys. Here students sleep at the institution going home to their family's for the Sabbath every one or two weeks.

Throughout their elementary years children often join one of several youth groups. Youth groups are very popular in Israel, both religious and secular Israelis join them. The most common options for religious Zionist youth are Bnei Akiva, Ezra, and Ariel. These youth groups usually have a clubhouse or branch, called a *Snif.* Many of these *snifim* are painted by the kids and obviously have a wild and unkempt appearance. These youth groups hold activities after school during the week, and on Sabbath afternoons. They also organize nature hikes throughout the year. Branches of Ezra and Ariel always separate the sexes (and they are generally thought to be more religiously observant), while Bnei Akiva might separate them depending on the community. Smaller communities with fewer children are almost never separated.

3.6 - **Gender Separation**

The issue of Gender separation within the Bnei Akiva youth group became important in the recent 2013 Knesset elections. The Bayit HaYehudi (the Jewish Home) had on its party list Moti Yogev, the former head of Bnei Akiva. In an attempt to secure its own voter base, the Likud began a campaign to weaken the Jewish Home party. The publicized the fact that Moti Yogev ushered in the separation of the sexes within certain Bnei Akiva community branches. The Jewish Home defended Yogev claiming that these communities asked to be separated, and that Yogev was just acquiescing to their wishes.

Gender separation within Bnei Akiva (by far the most popular and oldest religious Zionist youth movement), is an issue that exemplifies one tension within religious

Zionism. Twenty years ago very few Bnei Akiva *snifim* separated girls and boys, now separation is becoming more popular. Not all religious Zionists in Israel are happy with the trend, which some feel is emblematic of a wider shift towards a more stringent observance of Judaism. This is a tension that is also affecting Israeli society as a whole.

The political kerfuffle over Moti Yogev's candidacy came on the coattails of a much larger controversy. A year previous several national religious soldiers were ejected from the I.D.F's Officer Candidacy Course after they walked out of musical performance which featured female soldiers singing. Jewish law (commonly called *Kol Isha*, or the Voice of a Woman) forbids males from listening to a live performance of a female singing. This began a tumultuous debate within Israeli society regarding the general position of women within the public sphere. Some claimed that this incident demonstrated how women were being slowly marginalized within Israeli society. As one friend of mine put it, "the army is becoming more and more religious. What, are they not going to have women in military bands anymore"? Others claimed that the military should have been more sensitive to the needs of religious soldiers. Some well-known national religious rabbis claimed that the issue of *Kol Isha* was one of existential importance and that religious soldiers should disobey orders on its behalf. On the other hand in 2012, Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein offered a more lenient ruling on the issue, claiming that it ought to be permissible to listen to female singing at official state functions. In general however, both religious and secular Jewish Israelis took positions on both sides of the debate.

I personally thought that both sides propelled this issue out of proportion. For years (at least for over a decade) some religious soldiers have commonly walked out of

female performances in the military. As a soldier, I even walked out of a performance once; without anyone saying a word[19]. I did not understand why, seemingly out of nowhere, this became a controversy of existential importance (for both sides of the issue). Indeed, this is a good example of how social, theological, and political debates can sometimes take on a life of their own. What began as a local incident within the national religious community inexplicably (to my own mind) became an issue of national importance.

The subject of gender separation and the prohibition of *Kol Isha*, has the potential to touch upon some very personal tensions within the lives of informants (both men and women). Oftentimes I felt very uncomfortable talking openly and honestly about the topic with people. As a result it never really became a focus of my research. On the other hand, the effects of gender separation can certainly be seen within a good deal of the ethnographic data presented here.

3.7 - **Years of Service/Yeshiva**

When youth reach their mid high school years they become '*madrichim*" (*madrichot* for girls) in their youth groups. For many, the activities of the youth groups take up a good deal of time, particularly on the weekends. For example, my friend's 17 year old sister in Jerusalem would often spend a good deal of her free time on Friday afternoons baking cakes, and taking care of other issues for her Ezra youth group.

[19] It is not that I cared so much about the prohibition of *Kol Isha*. Simply all of the religious Hesder soldiers had walked out. I felt awkward being the only person wearing a Kippa left sitting in the auditorium.

Towards the end of their junior year in high school Israeli teenagers begin to make certain life altering choices. Some of these choices revolve around their studies, but more importantly their impending military service. The State of Israel enacts a mandatory draft where men at the age of 18 serve 3 years in the military, and women (also at the age of 18) serve 1 year and 9 months. Between the ages of 16-18 youngsters begin to take certain military tests, and start to narrow down their choice of units that they may want to join.

Religious Zionist teenagers face a similar process. National service, either through the military or other volunteer service programs, has long been an ideal among religious Zionists. Indeed, it is probably the practical issue that most divides the national religious camp from their Ultraorthodox counterparts.

3.7A - *Service/Yeshiva Options - Males*

Instead of going into the army directly after high school for three years, most religious Zionist boys choose to spend a certain amount of time in a yeshiva setting before their induction. This choice is an extremely important one for boys, and it will influence the course of the next decade of their lives (perhaps the rest of their

Figure 1 Hesder Reserve Unit at prayer in the field

lives). An 18 year old boy can choose to go right into the army for three years. He can also choose to spend a year in a pre-military yeshiva known as a *mechina*.

These institutions offer a high level of Torah study, coupled with classes and events (such as work-out programs, or navigational exercises) that prepare their students for military service. Male yeshiva students can also choose to join a variety of *Hesder* programs. *hesder* (or 'arrangement') is a five year program that allows boys to combine high-level yeshiva studies with military service. Here males spend about 16-20 months (depending if they choose to go onto commander's course) in active service, while the rest of the time is spent in yeshiva. Until recently, in many of these *hesder* programs all the men from one yeshiva were inducted together. In the army they then formed what is called a "*machleket bein"ishim*[20]", or a yeshiva platoon. These students served an entire 5 years together through yeshiva and the military.

Similar to *hesder,* the Religious Kibbutz Movement sponsors a program called *shiluv* (or combination). Here students learn for 2-3 years in yeshiva, and spend the full three years in active service. There used to be two institutions that offered this program. In 2009 the branch in Ein Tzurim closed[21], and now there is only one left at Ma'ale Gilboa in Israel's north.

Finally students can choose to learn in a Yeshiva Gavoha (higher yeshiva). These students spend about 9 months in active service, and learn for many years (an indeterminate amount of time) in yeshiva with the eventual goal of entering into the

[20] Bein"ish is an acronym for Ben Yeshiva, or yeshiva student. It is a term the army uses to describe students in hesder or shiluv programs.
[21] I attended this institution as an American student in the year 2000

rabbinate. Many students jump from institution to institution and from program to program. Everything however happens, in coordination with the army.

It is important to understand the reasoning that goes into choosing one of these courses, and why this choice is so important. At the age of 18 a religious Zionist male is suddenly faced with a great deal of obligations which pull him in different directions. Most importantly, he has to join the army. It is difficult to describe how much of an onus this is upon the average Israeli. The army (especially in the combat units) is a totalistic environment. It demands the entire individual, both psychologically and physically. During the process of induction, and while serving, it is almost impossible to deal with things other than the army. Many girls complain in their late teen years that it gets really boring hanging out with groups of boys, since all they talk about is the army. A religious Zionist male will also most likely get married shortly after the military (sometimes even during his service). Children soon follow. At some point he must also earn a bachelor's degree, and find employment in some lucrative field. As one rabbi I knew expressed, "with all of these obligations on the horizon, this is a young man's one opportunity to become a serious Torah scholar, if he misses it, life simply gets in the way".

3.7A1 - *View of Military Service*

It is interesting that the military is thought of somewhat paradoxically within Israeli religious Zionism. On the one hand it is quite literally a "supernal value". It is an expression of the physical and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people. Through the Israel Defense Forces a young religious Zionist man not only becomes a member of Israeli civil society, but quite literally becomes a part of Jewish destiny. Most religious

Zionist males strive to serve in combat units, and go to great lengths to achieve that goal. They take strenuous tests to enter into elite unites, such as the Pilots Course, General Staff Special Forces, Paratroopers and the like. If they are unable to enter into the elite infantry, air or naval units, they then try to enter into regular infantry, armored or artillery units. Once there, during the first two weeks of basic training they almost all attempt to enter into the regimental Special Forces[22].

Figure 2 Religious soldier at prayer

Once secular kibbutz members made up the bulk of Israeli Combat Units, now one sees many more men wearing knitted *kippot* rising through the combat ranks. Indeed, while spending Shabbat with a family in the Jewish Community of Hebron, I met the commander of one infantry regiment. I was later told that he spent time in Yeshivat Mercaz Harav – one of the main and most serious institutions of higher Torah learning within Israeli religious Zionism. On a more personal observation I calculated that about 40% of my Reserve Infantry reserve unit – including most of the staff - are either religious Zionists, or come from religious Zionist homes.

Despite the importance of the IDF (specifically combat roles) in religious Zionist life, many also believe that the military has a detrimental effect on a young man's religious experience and commitments. It is thought that spending some time in a yeshiva

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[22] Each regular infantry, or armored brigade has its own special forces contingent.

program, or serving in a military unit with other religious men offers a good way for a young man to uphold and guard his religious standards. In this view the social and physical stresses of military life are at odds with a religious worldview. For many religious young men, the military is the first place they come in contact with women[23]. For many – if not most- it is also the first place they come in close personal contact with secular Israelis in general. Indeed, many young religious Zionist men do indeed remove their *kippot* while in the military, something that is taken as a symbol for a weakening of religious commitments. This phenomenon is so familiar in the army that there is even a slang term used to describe it - '*Dati Blai'*. *Dati* is the Hebrew word for 'religious'. *Blai* is a word that is used to describe equipment that is broken, or somehow no longer usable. Hence, the slang phrase depicts an individual whose religion is no longer in working order. For other young men, their first experiences of serious ethical dilemmas are felt during their years of combat military service. Soldiers (religious and secular alike) engage daily with the Palestinian civilian population in Judea and Samaria. A young adult quickly confronts the ethical responsibilities that emerge alongside the sudden appearance of power. I cannot comment as to the accuracy of this observation, but I heard several religious soldiers complain about the ways in which secular soldiers treat Palestinians. "They lack any boundaries" a religious friend of mine once commented as we were discussing his service in Hebron. A religious education is meant to strengthen a

[23] In my humble experience, I never understood this point of view. There are relatively few women serving in combat roles in the regular infantry and tank units. In most cases the only women a young combat soldier sees will be the social worker, the fitness instructor, and other operational instructors. I always wondered where were all these women that the religious Zionist community was warning about.

young religious soldier's faith and resolve as he confronts these personal, religious, and ethical challenges.

This inner debate (one rarely hears it being discussed in mixed circles) concerning the effects of the military on religious life, is something that touches upon some of the most sensitive motifs within religious Zionism. There is a value for religious Zionists in social integration that is rooted in theology. According to Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, the State of Israel is supposed to be a unifying force within Jewish life. The State is a modern entity – that although secular – is an expression of the most ancient and mystical desires for Jewish political, social, and religious unity. When a young man chooses one particular program over another, he is not only making a personal choice, or expressing a personal preference. He is also staking a claim on how Jewish peoplehood ought to be expressed and experienced.

While serving at a checkpoint in Northern Samaria during reserve duty I overheard a religious Zionist soldier talk to his very secular (and very left wing) friend about his *hesder* experience. Wearing an olive green ceramic vest and pacing back and forth along the road he explained, "It was important to me; I viewed it as a kind of *shlichut* [mission[24]]. Now I think differently. *Hesder* is something that separates us [Israelis, Jews]. I think in the end it was a mistake". At an older age he interpreted the strength of Jewish peoplehood as resting in the ability to overcome difference. The *hesder* program for him only strengthened difference and separations within Israeli society.

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[24] 'Mission' in the sense of sending an educational or lifestyle message. It is something that is meant to improve the Jewish world. *Shlichut* is the term used when Israelis go abroad in the employ of the Jewish Agency, or to teach Jewish subjects in a school.

3.7B - *Service/Midrashot Options - Females*

The stakes of national service are also something that effect young religious Zionist women. Religious women in Israel can receive an exemption from military service. Despite this, some religious Zionist women choose to serve. There are even *midrashot* (religious seminaries for women) that aid them in combining (like males) their religious and military obligations. There are not that many of these seminaries. Most of the women who attend them serve in military intelligence or educational branches. It is however, becoming more common to see young women in uniform wearing olive skirts, many of them with officer bars on their shoulders. Once outside the Jerusalem Central Bus Station I saw a mid-level female officer wearing a very large and much decorated *mitpachat*.

Most religious Zionist women, however, choose to fulfill their national obligation through a governmental sponsored program called *Sherut Leumi* (literally – National Service). For many it is not considered modest for women to actively serve in the military. *Sherut Leumi* places women at the age of induction into volunteer programs throughout Israel (and even abroad). Young women may work with mentally challenged children, in a hospital, or may help a teacher in a school. The volunteer program lasts a year, although many young women do a second year of service.

Beyond that, some women also choose to study in a seminary in addition to their years of service. Although they do not wear uniforms, these young women can usually be spotted by their very large back packs they carry around which say *Bat Ami* – daughter of my nation – printed on them. (*Bat Ami* is one of the organizations which sponsor the

program).Like their military counterparts, these women often spend a week or two away from home, and need to bring with them a lot of clothes. Boys sometimes joke that they wish they could help the girls with their over large bags. I personally missed many such great opportunities as a 19 year old soldier.

The decision that young women make on where and how to serve is no less important than it is for males. Women are expected to receive some form of higher education. Along the way they are also expected to wed and give birth (most women wed and become parous by their mid-twenties). These goals are not always easy to achieve when a women spends two years in national service, and a few more possible years in a seminary. I have spoken to a few religious Zionist women who have chosen not to perform national service. For them, raising a family *is* a national service. Beyond that they question the usefulness of performing a job (not very well) at the age of 18, and then upon learning the job, leaving it at the conclusion of one's service to go study or to wed. The choice between military service and *Sherut Leumi* (the number of years in *Sherut Leumi*), and then the choice to learn in a seminary, is not just one of personal preference. Like their male counterparts, by making these choices a young religious Zionist woman stakes a claim to the meanings of femininity in the life of a Jewish Israeli woman.

For both men and women the choices they are forced to make at the age of 18 will affect the rest of their lives. When searching for a potential spouse, both genders oftentimes look for specific service paths. Some men prefer women who have completed national service, and not active military service. Some women prefer to marry men who went to a certain type of yeshiva, or served in a specific type of military unit. A woman who performs two years of national service and then a year or two of seminary study

oftentimes will delay marriage, and thus delay having offspring. A man who spends five or more years in yeshiva limits the kinds of academic choices he can make. As a result education is a top profession among many of the adults in the more religiously observant communities. After more than half a decade in yeshiva, and with a growing family, education is oftentimes the most logical and lucrative field to choose.

Religious Zionism in Israel is a diverse phenomenon with many theological, social, and political tensions. Before delving into these tensions in greater depth it is important to gain a picture of what religious Zionism *looks* like in the field; how people dress, why they dress the way they do, and the aesthetic choices they make regarding education, housing, and national/military service. Most importantly, one must appreciate the stakes involved for religious Zionists when they make one choice over another. A sudden change in the style of *kippa* or *mitpachat* can communicate a great deal to one's friends and social group. It may signal a much larger shift in the theological, political, and social experience of an individual. A change in *yeshiva* or *midrasha* can do the same. Religion, culture, politics and theology are complicated and messy things. The clothes people wear, their hairstyles, where they choose to live, and how they choose to serve (and study) are all caught up in much large theological, social and political tensions and dilemmas. The following chapters will explore in greater detail some of the ways in which these tensions are experienced within daily life.

Chapter 4 - "The 'Wackadoodles' are Over There": Interpretation and Experience of Normalcy within Israeli Religious Zionism

The Zionist movement and the State of Israel in particular, were meant to provide a safe and secure harbor for world Jewry. More than that however, Jewish Nationalism was meant to allow Jews the ability to live free from the fear of persecution. The ability to live free of fear is one of the cultural underpinnings of the Zionist project and of Israeli society. The meaning of normalcy is distinctly linked to the prospects of physical harm. A good part of the religious Zionist enterprise is located in areas where there is a decided risk to one's physical safety. The ability to live within and travel through these areas is a major concern for religious Zionists. The ways in which they deal with 'fear' and the prospects of physical 'risk' are intimately connected to wider understandings of what it means to live a normal life in a free Jewish State.

During my fieldwork I soon came to realize that religious Zionists were not the only ones interpreting normalcy. Many social actoes seemed to be engaged in defining what a normal life ought to look like. Both the "anthropologist" who soon returns to his/her library as well as the settler living on his/her hilltop, attempt to delineate and define 'normalcy'. This chapter will explore how theological conceptions, as well as social and political affiliations are intertwined with the strategies that different religious Zionists use to categorize normalcy.

By exploring how religious Zionists demarcate between the 'mundane' and the 'exotic' (in both the political, social, and religious sense), we get a glimpse into how political pietists in Israel envision a free society. Along the way it is hoped that my

ethnographic vignettes will serve to deepen the picture of everyday religious Zionist life in both Israel Proper and the West Bank.

4.1 - **Political and Territorial Context**

One of the central cleavages within Israeli religious Zionism concerns the differences between life within Judea and Samaria and Israel Proper. As a result Jewish life within and beyond these territories is one of the main modes though which religious Zionists interpret normative existence. A brief overview of the political and geographic context is necessary to fully understand the ethnography data.

Figure 3 Sign warning Israelis from entering Area A

Currently the Israeli government divides Judea and Samaria into three distinct areas of legal jurisdiction. '**Area A'** is completely controlled by the Palestinian Authority (P.A.). That is, the P.A. is responsible for both the security control and the civil affairs of the area. The jurisdiction of '**Area B**' is jointly shared between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli military. That is, the Israel Defense Forces is responsible for the security control of the area, while the P.A. controls civil affairs. '**Area C**' is completely controlled by the Israeli Military. While all Israeli settlers live in Area C, some roads to their communities lead through Area B. Entrances to Area A are marked by large red signs in Hebrew, Arabic, and English.

Figure 4 View from a pillbox at a checkpoint between Areas A and C

It is illegal for Israelis to enter into Area A. This law is generally only enforced for Israeli Jews. In practice, Israeli Arabs regularly enter into Palestinian controlled territories. Palestinians are allowed to travel within Area C. Sometimes (as of 2012) the military places checkpoints between Areas A and C whose main purpose is to check vehicles and pedestrians moving in the direction of Israel Proper. Generally Palestinians are not allowed to enter into Israel Proper without authorization from the Israeli military.

This political context shades the daily experiences of those who live in this area. The ways in which people travel, raise children, and experience the daily joys and fears of everyday life are all implicated within this context.

4.2 - **The Little Minivan That Could**

Four hitchhikers, crowded into a beat up old minivan at Tapuach Junction headed towards the Samarian settlement of Har Bracha. My seatbelt made a satisfying click as I settled into the tightly packed back row. I rested my backpack on my lap - as there was not a lot of room around my legs. The minivan was dusty, and the engine was making this strange rattling noise as we began to head down the road. This was my first time heading in this direction, and at the time I was rather nervous. Everyone else in the vehicle however seemed perfectly calm. The young married woman with a stylish red

mitpachat who was seated in front of me seemed downright bored with the fact that we were going to be driving through Area B along the main road of the crowded Palestinian village of Huwara.

Our driver, with his knitted *kippa*, bushy beard, and long side locks switched gears on the manual stick shift, as we weaved through Palestinian traffic. As I looked out the windows I saw the National Bank of Palestine, and a little ways down the road, a goat tied up next to a gas station. The road was filled with honking cars, yellow Palestinian taxis with green license plates, and people walking along the side of the street. This was crazy I thought, an ambush would be so easy here. It was difficult to believe that Jews drove down this road. It was difficult to believe one of the biggest army bases in Samaria (Samarian Divisional Headquarters) was located on the other side. Beyond that, I seemed to be the only one interested in looking out the window. Our minivan exited Huwara, mades a left turn at the roundabout passing the Divisional Headquarters, and drove past the busy entrance to Nablus with its ominous red sign.

"No one would ever keep on going straight into Shechem [Nablus]" my host, Yossi, told me on the phone the night before.

"Wonderful, very comforting, thank you Yossi."

The minivan starts driving up towards Har Bracha, or the Mountain of Blessing. A yeshiva student sitting next to me exited off near the base of the mountain to ritually immerse himself in the nearby spring. From there on, the rise was pretty steep, and as the minivan started again, the rattling noise began to get worse. Just as we can see the first red roofs of Har Bracha the little minivan 'that could' suddenly could not anymore, and

we rolled to a stop. The driver furiously depressed the clutch, tapped the gas, switched gears, and muttered loudly to himself "oh this happens all the time"!

This was too much already. I laughed out loud, and thought to to myself "Seriously?! 'All the time', as in 'more than once'? Are you out of your blessed mind?! We just drove through Huwara, don't you think you ought to get that fixed?!" Somehow we made it through the gate of the community. I exited the car, swung my green backpack over my shoulder, and just shook my head….this is definitely going in my dissertation.

4.3 - **Yossi and Ezra**

Let us examine this unfortunate minivan incident more closely. The young married woman in her stylish red *mitpachat* seemed to be bored driving through Huwarra. She lived in Har Bracha, and she rode that route all the time. The owner of the 'little minivan that couldn't' really was used to his ride breaking down all the time. For him it was routine, the fact that he could find himself stuck in the middle of a Palestinian village did not seem to enter into the equation. When I asked my host Yossi, about the situation he said that in a real dangerous incident, you could always call the army. What a nonchalant response, I thought. I suppose you could call the army…

The interesting thing about my host Yossi in Har Bracha is that I happen to be very close friends with his brother, Ezra. Ezra and I were in yeshiva together at the age of 18, and then served in the same combat infantry unit in the IDF. The yeshiva we attended was known as an institution that was left of center religiously as well as politically (although my friend identifies with the right wing in Israeli politics). Ezra lives in

Modi'in - an upper middle class city between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv - with his wife and 2 year old daughter. He works as a software engineer and his wife, is an eye doctor. Yossi on the other hand is more religiously observant than his brother Ezra. Yossi chose to attend Har Bracha's *hesder* program; a yeshiva that is far to the right in terms of theological outlook than the institution Ezra and I attended. After finishing the army and his obligation to the Yeshiva, Yossi decided to stay on the settlement and married a daughter of one of the yeshiva's rabbis. Usually only exceptional students marry into the families of their rabbi's in a yeshiva. His wife works in the community, and Yossi himself is a part-time student in Bio-engineering at Bar Ilan University. He still studies part time in the Har Bracha yeshiva. This is an interesting family that spans the spectrum of religious Zionism, and I often found it useful to play the opinions of one brother off the other.

After my Shabbat on Har Bracha I called up my friend Ezra to ask him what he thought of my minivan adventure.

> "That's exactly why I don't like to drive to Har Bracha" he told me over the phone.
>
> "If you're car breaks down in Huwara, someone nice might help you, but you never really know"

For one brother, driving through Huwara is a completely routine activity, and if something does happen one can always call the army. That same activity for the other brother is one of trepidation, something that is beyond the routine. Here we have two

religious Zionists, both professionals, both yeshiva students, and both ex-combat soldiers. Yet they each understand normal, routine behavior, in radically different ways.

Religious as well as social differences are intertwined in the ways in which these two very similar (but also very different) brothers experience their own versions of normalcy. The expectations of both brothers can also be mapped onto the ways in which they interpret theological dicta and how comfortable they are in certain expressions of Jewish law.

There are few things more awkward for an observant Jew on Shabbat than being asked to help a non-observant Jew violate Shabbat. Worlds collide and it is just…..unpleasant. I would often invite myself over to my friend Ezra's house for Shabbat. This particular Shabbat both Ezra and Yossi were staying in Modi'in with their respective families. After the meal at their parents' apartment we all decided to take a brief walk. Modi'in is a relatively new city whose population is mixed between religious and secular Jews. Ezra'a wife is a doctor and we were talking about – of all things – eye cancer, as we were pushing the children's strollers down the street. A white car slowly pulls up next to us, stops, and the driver rolls down his window. He needed directions for getting to the highway.

This was a problem…..a big problem.

Observant Jews are not allowed to light or extinguish a fire on Shabbat. As a result, observant Jews do not drive cars on Shabbat. What happens however, when a non – observant Jew asks driving directions from an Observant Jew on Shabbat? On the one hand, the directions are going to be used to violate Shabbat. On the other hand, perhaps

by not offering directions, the person will be forced to drive for a longer amount of time, and thus only increase the sin. On the third hand, it is simply rude to ignore a fellow Jew. By not offering directions is one – to put it simply – causing one Jew to hate another? It is this latter issue that I think is the most troublesome. A goal of religious Zionism is the unification of the Jewish people. By not offering simple driving directions one is observing Jewish law, one might even be helping someone else (unknowingly) to observe Jewish law, at the same time though, one might also be causing an irreparable social rift.

There is a moment's hesitation and then Yossi steps back ever so slightly. Ezra on the other hand steps forward and walks over to the car. He leans into the window and offers the driver directions. The car drives away, and Yossi says that in these situations it is hard to know what to do. His Rosh Yeshiva in Har Bracha said that in certain circumstances (for example if you know that by not helping you will be causing the individual to increase his violation of Shabbat) one is allowed to offer directions. Ezra is quiet, but later that night his wife tells him, "I was really proud of you for helping that guy earlier". As the discussion progressed it became clear that the issue for Ezra is both ideological as well as ethical. For him the social rift that may be caused by not helping the driver was more important than a strict interpretation of Jewish law. Beyond that however, helping a lost driver (beyond any unique Jewish perspective), is simply 'normal' and neighborly.

The body language of the two brothers (Yossi stepping back, and Ezra stepping forward), and the comment of his wife (there are also other points of religious tension between Ezra's wife, and Yossi's wife) are expressions of theological comfort and discomfort. Yossi simply seemed uncomfortable offering driving directions on Shabbat,

while the opposite is true of Ezra. The point here is that ideas about 'what is normal' in the areas of religious law and practical observance (Sabbath violation) are also implicated in issues of politics and security (life in a settlement)

It is no coincidence that Ezra and his family live in Modi'in, among religious and secular Jews, while Yossi lives in Har Bracha a community that only accepts religious members. Interpretations of theology and the practice of Jewish law parallel the choices these two brothers make in terms of where they each think is best to raise a family. The ways in which these two brothers understand Jewish law, and then put that law into practice, factors into how they view each other. What is means to 'be normal' here is intimately (though certainly not exclusively) connected to Jewish law, to comfort levels, and to the broad religious Zionist ideal of social unity.

On a reflective note, this situation presented some challenges for me as well. As an Orthodox Jew I also refrain from driving on Shabbat. I was also intertwined in the same theological drama as Yossi and Ezra. On a personal level I do offer directions, but I think I may be a little more uncomfortable doing so than Ezra seemed to be. As an anthropologist however, the situation was a lot more complicated. I have been friends with Ezra for twelve years. It is only through Ezra, however that I am friendly with Yossi – who was a key informant in a key Samarian community. If I chose to stay back and not offer directions I risked alienating a very old friend. If I chose to offer directions with Ezra however, I risked alienating an informant. Here theological comfort and personal responsibility came head to head with my research goals. In this case I chose to stay back with Yossi. I hope Ezra (and his wife) understood.

4.4 - **A Normal Life: Rockets vs. Gardens**

I always enjoyed spending Shabbat in different religious Zionist communities. Sometimes, the stories they told, and especially the *way* they told them turned out to be quite enlightening.

Like a great deal of my ethnographic data this next piece comes from a Friday night conversation. I was sitting at the table of a middle aged family in the settlement of Elon More. Elon More is on a mountain to the east of Nablus. It is opposite Har Bracha, which is on a mountain to the west of Nablus. They had four children between the ages of 5 and 16, and the table was very noisy. This was a very interesting and welcoming family, and I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to spend a Shabbat with them. This family had originally lived in the Gaza Strip for 14 years in a Jewish community called Kfar Darom. After the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005, most of Kfar Darom relocated to southern Israel. This family however, decided to move to Elon More.

During these weekends I would try to gently direct conversations to topics that could potentially provide useful data for my dissertation. I wanted to talk about daily life in their community, how they understood religion, and what Zionism meant to them. I was not always successful in directing conversations. I rarely asked direct questions, and I rarely pressed a point when I felt an individual was reticent about responding. My goal was to make these Sabbaths feel as little like an interview as possible. This particular Shabbat I was able to direct the conversation to their memories of Kfar Darom. The mother began telling me about a woman she knew from the settlement.

As she described the tale, there was once this woman driver in Kfar Darom. She was Jewish, originally from Baghdad, and she spoke perfect Arabic. She would drive the Palestinians from Khan Yunis to work in the Jewish settlements. To cut down on her commute she rented an apartment in Khan Yunis for a while. One day the sheikh came over and told her that she probably ought to leave. She then moved to Kfar Darom. A little while later, she was driving her van and a few Palestinians came aboard. "That was it" my hostess said, not with any finality. She said it so nonchalantly, that I did not immediately understand what the point of the story was.

I glanced at my friend to my right, then to my hosts. It did not seem like she finished the story. "So" pausing slightly…."what happened to her"?

"They killed her"

As an anthropologist, I cannot comment on how this family *felt* about this incident. I do not know what this incident means to her in the middle of the night when she quietly walks into her children's room to check on them. I can comment, however, on how this story came across to an outsider listening in. My hostess did not blink an eye. She did not get excited, she did not look down. She did not even look sad. She just calmly related how a woman she personally knew was murdered while driving a van.

Here I felt it was appropriate to press the point. I leaned forward, lowered my voice slightly and started asking about the prevalence of violence in Kfar Darom. 'Prevalence' turned out to be an understatement. Mortar and rocket attacks were common occurrences. Most settlements have readiness teams, these teams however, rarely find themselves in active combat. My host related a story where Palestinians were shooting at

the settlement and the readiness team was called up. They spent most of the night on a line at the edge of the community shooting back. At one point during the night my host came home for a short break wearing his helmet. “That was the first time I cried” my hostess commented.

What I was especially interested in however, was why this family decided to move alone to Samaria and not relocate with the rest of the Kfar Darom community to Southern Israel. These communities are very small, and close knit. After living In the Gaza Strip together for 14 years, I found their decision to separate from their friends rather surprising. I asked the question directly, and I received in return a very direct answer. “We wanted a normal life for our kids. We wanted a yard, trees, things like that.”

They had just finished describing how someone they personally knew was murdered in a van. My hostess had just explained how she cried upon seeing her husband come home wearing a helmet after shooting all night. What they wanted for their children however, was a “normal” life, where normal meant trees and a yard. Abnormal for this family seemed to be a middle class urban life - even within a religious Zionist community. The concept of normalcy is constantly being interpreted by different groups of religious Zionists. “Normal” is relative, and different people draw their line in surprising ways.

4.5 - **“The ‘Wackadoodles’ are Over There”**

Har Bracha has a popular reputation for being a very religiously observant settlement. The yeshiva has a very prominent place in the community, and the Rosh Yeshiva is the final arbiter for most decisions. It is known as a place where people tend to

toe-the-line. I was told however, that the community was not always like that. Before the yeshiva was founded only a handful of families lived on the mountain, yet - as far as I was told – they exhibited (and accepted) a wider spectrum of thought and practice.

I would sometimes find myself in the company of one of these early families. They were friends with one of my friends in the neighboring city of Ariel. The Levi family is a nerd's dream. Their house is filled with fun science-fiction books (including Star Trek!), unique posters, their children are all in graduate programs, and the conversations there are just really interesting. The parents (originally from the United States) moved to Har Bracha back in the 80's, and enjoyed (they still do) the 'pioneer' experience. I always liked the tongue in-cheek critiques of Har Bracha life that would come from them. They were always said in good humor and they also offered a unique perspective on life in the community. For example, I once asked the mother how women in Har Bracha deal with having so many children at such a young age. She responded,

> "All the rabbis tell them to have one baby after another, now they just don't know what to do with them"

I appreciated the sarcasm. And it was interesting to learn about some of the tensions that may be percolating beneath the surface. On another occasion I was walking with their daughters down the street. They commented how while most women in the community dress very modestly (with long flowing skirts and loose shirts), they try to dress a little bit provocatively just to make people stare.

This family was different, and I loved their uniqueness. During the holiday of Sukkot a couple of our friends got together for a barbeque in their *Sukkah*. *Sukkot*, or the

Feast of Tabernacles, is a seven day holiday that commemorates the encampment of the Israelites in the desert after the exodus from Egypt. It also commemorates the fruit harvest during the era of the Temples. Observant Jews are commanded to build outdoor huts called *Sukkot* (*Sukkah* in singular). These generally have three or four walls with a thatched roof. All meals are eaten in the Sukkah, and some families even sleep there. Somehow, during the meal, we started discussing the different kinds of people that live in Samaria, particularly the kinds of people that live in and around their settlement. "Here people are a little bit out there" one of the daughters commented. Then she added in English, pointing to the nearby hill, "but the real wackadoodles live over there".

The people living on the hill she was pointing to are indeed different from those residing in Har Bracha. The former live in caravans or temporary homes, practice farming and sheep herding, and dress in the classic Hasidic religious Zionist style of large knitted *kippot*, long *sidelocks*, and homespun clothing. Indeed I once visited that hill, while volunteering on a nearby Jewish farm. A lady who lived near Tel Aviv wanted a sheepskin from the farm there, and the farmer I was volunteering for agreed to bring it to her. We entered into a small community with 2 rows of temporary houses. We drove up to a pen filled with dozens of sheep, and a guard dog running around, barking. On the ground next to the pen rested a bloody sheepskin, (with the wool still on it), covered in dozens of buzzing flies. I grew up in Brooklyn, as far as I know wool comes from Macy's. Thank God the farmer agreed to pick it up and place it in our plastic bag himself.

I am pretty sure 'wackadoodle' is not a real word, but with my bloody sheepskin story in mind, I understood what the daughter was trying to say. At the same time, I thought it was interesting that many people I know in Tel-Aviv, or even Jerusalem, might

call her a ‘wackadoodle’. After all, she lives in an isolated settlement, at the top of a mountain adjacent to Nablus. Beyond the politics, her community is considered to be one of the more religious in Judea and Samaria. To reverse this observation for a moment, her family is very different (religiously) from the rest of the community. So who is the real ‘wackadoodle’ in this situation? Is it the farmers on that ‘other hill’ with the skin sheep? Is it a zealously religious family who live in the established settlement? Or is it the one family in that settlement who own a library of Star Trek novels and posters?

4.6 - **“You’re Only Afraid of Things you’re Not Used To”: Attuning Oneself to Normalcy**

Many communities in Judea and Samaria are isolated. Some are located adjacent to Palestinian villages. One is sometimes required to drive through small Palestinian villages to reach other settlements. Fear is an ever present factor in the lives of these Jewish inhabitants. It is an even greater issue for the family and friends of these inhabitants who often come to visit. The ways in which fear is managed, dealt with, and interpreted often times parallel how individuals interpret normalcy. The management of fear is one factor in how individuals interpret ‘normal living’.

One afternoon during Sukkot, I was hitchhiking at the gate of Yitzhar, a settlement in Samaria southwest of Nablus, trying to make my way south to Jerusalem. It was the middle of the day, hot, and not many cars were passing (or were going my way). A young married woman, wearing an attractive blue *mitpachat*, with two small children in her van pulled up and offered me a ride down to Tapuach Junction. I happily accepted, and stepped into the front seat of her minivan.

To get from Yitzhar to Tapuach Junction one has to drive south through Huwarra. I was wondering if the drive was at all unnerving for a young woman driving alone with two little children in the backseat. The question really bothered me, and after waiting for us to get through the village, I built up the courage to ask her directly. She thought for a moment, and answered me just as directly.

> "You know I could give you a very ideological answer and say 'this is our land and we have to settle it, even risking out lives'. But, yes absolutely, it is scary. But you know what, it's a calculated risk. This is a regular road, lots of people drive on it, and the army drives on it all the time. And I'll tell you, you're only afraid of things you're not used to. If you never come to this area, this road is a little nerve wracking, but if you live here it's different. I'm from Ofra[25] and I have a friend who lives in Tel-Aviv who absolutely refuses to visit me. She says it's too dangerous. Now you know Ofra [we both share a knowing chuckle]. But she's just not used to it".

I think this woman was fundamentally correct, in linking fear to habituation. The management of fear is one strategy that people used to judge the meaning of 'normal'. The problem however is that attuning oneself to properly judge the contours of 'normal' could indeed have real life or death consequences.

In her essay *Fear as a Way of Life* Linda Green writes, "From an examination of the shifts between the normal and the emergency, between the tragic and the everyday emerges the paradoxes and contradictions that bring into sharp relief how the absurd (in this case, terror) works" (1994: 228). Here, Green uses the term 'terror' in its descriptive sense (i.e. an extreme sense of fear). For Religious Zionists the term 'terror' is more than

[25] A large community north of Jerusalem in the Binyamin region. This was one of the first settlements in Judea and Samaria. It is considered one of the most central and ideologically mainstream settlements by most inhabitants of Judea and Samaria.

a vague 'sense of fear'. Terror is a real life threat that can kill. They have a vested interest in understanding – in Linda Green's term – the ways in which terror 'works'.

A sense of 'fear' that is precisely attuned to the fine distinctions between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal' becomes an important part of this effort. These fine attunements were often made with the aid of certain questions. Is one driving down a road that is often traveled? Do many people hitchhike from this spot? Perhaps one should start wondering if the answer to these questions is a 'no'.

I would often observe people making exactly these quick judgments. I once saw a young pregnant woman arrive at a hitchhiking station in Jerusalem. She was from Tzfat and traveling to the settlement of Efrat for a medical test. She seemed really nervous, glancing from side-to side, and kept on asking people if waiting for a ride here was 'safe'? Is it something that is normally done? What kind of people catch rides here, and who picks them up?

People responded that it was safe, that even elderly people wait at this location. This woman simply was not used to hitchhiking from Jerusalem to Efrat. At the same time many elderly people are very much used to this activity. The question asked here was a simple one; "is this dangerous?" The answer to that question is complex. It revolves around the ways in which individuals attune themselves to normalcy and how they relate that to fear.

Very little of this philosophizing helps, however, the young pregnant woman who just wanted to get to a medical test safely. Was what she was doing dangerous? Yes and

no, it depended on whom she asked. In the end, we both got into the same car, and I observed her arrive safe and sound at the medical testing center.

In some sense this is not a matter of opinion, but rather one of experience. A similar ethnographic phenomenon might be found in the ways in which risk and danger are managed in New England fisheries. Commercial fishing is one of the most dangerous of professions, yet despite the risks and the very real dangers, people continue to ply this trade. The dangers however, also work to habituate these workers to risk. As Pollnac and Poogie note; “Experiencing the incidents may also habituate them to the dangers, thus increasing the thresholds at which they will become concerned during a potentially dangerous situation” (Pollnac, and Poogie. 1998: 56). In other words, there are those who are ‘experienced’ at confronting certain risks, and for them those risks are wholly normative. That is not to say there are no objective (actual) dangers present within the lives of these people. Only that the ways in which individuals experience danger are intimately related to how they interpret normalcy.

I would often think back to what the woman from Ofra said whenever I found myself in a situation that was uncomfortable or that I felt might be dangerous. I made my own fine attunements. To do this I also tried to ask myself several questions that ranged from the empirical to the psychological.

a) Was I going to a place (or in a place) that has a history of violence?
b) If so, how recent is that history?
c) Was I going to a place (or in a place) that is commonly traveled by Jews?
d) If so, who travels there (youngsters, professionals, the elderly)?

e) Was the source of my reticence a matter of simply “not being used to the location”?

In this way I – as both an anthropologist and as someone who just wanted to stay alive – tried to categorize the experience of danger and the interpretation of fear.

4.7 - **Freedom, Discipline, and Fear**

The ways in which, fear, and normalcy are categorized can also be seen through the everyday practices of childrearing among religious Zionists. It often seemed to me that religious Zionist parents in Judea and Samaria tended to give their younger children a lot more freedom than their counterparts did within Israel Proper. I observed numerous instances where I felt there to be a real cultural difference between how various religious Zionist parents chose to raise their children.

For example one Shabbat afternoon I was in the kitchen of a host family in the Samarian settlement of Nofei Nehemia. We were preparing for the traditional third meal of the Sabbath, and the mother let her 5 year old daughter cut the vegetables for the salad. Being a short five year-old, the daughter could not reach the counter, so the mother gave her a chair to stand on. I watched as the daughter scrambled up onto the wobbly chair. Then she was handed a knife. Two minutes later she lightly cut her finger….because that’s what happens when you let a five year old cut tomatoes with a sharp knife while standing on a unsteady chair. The daughter started crying, and the mother gently took the child into her arms, and placed a Band-Aid on the wound. She then told her daughter to stop whining.

In a second instance, a few friends and I decided to drive to another Samarian settlement for a political event. After the event I followed my friend to the house of a local vintner – by the name of Ofer – with whom he was acquainted with. My friend had worked in his grape fields in the past, and we hoped he might offer us some wine to take home.

Sitting in the living room with his many young children playing around us we sat and talked, Ofer offered us some of his recently produced wine. Ofer – being a very handy man - had a large stove heating his living room which used wooden logs for fuel. Yellow flames were licking out of the opening of the oven (they were not big flames, but the stove seemed exceptionally hot), and his little daughter was bouncing a pink rubber ball around the living room. Ofer recognizing this as a recipe for disaster, called out to his daughter "be careful, the ball might pop". The 'ball might pop' I thought to myself? Don't you mean your daughter's head "might pop?!" In the end both the daughter and her ball survived the night. Apart from this anecdote, I would often see parents let their many children climb all over furniture, including tall bookshelves and the like.

I once asked my friend Ezra about this phenomenon who also noticed it with his brother, Yossi's, family. He said that there is an educational reason for the relative freedom given to children in Judea and Samaria. "It teaches them not to be afraid, because you can't live there and be afraid all the time".

This is an interesting claim coming from a man (living in an upper middle class mixed city) who is commenting on the educational practices of his brother (who lives in a religious settlement next to Nablus). For Ezra fear in a settlement is interpreted as

something that his brother Yossi must teach his children to overcome. In this sense, the 'freedom' given to children is just another method of 'discipline'.

When I asked Yossi and his wife about this phenomenon however, they presented their own interpretation. For them the relative freedom given to children was meant to teach them self-confidence, and imbue within them a sense of self-trust. Specifically, if her children were ever in a situation that they are uncertain about, they should have the ability to trust their own instincts. For these parents freedom disciplines their children to be self-aware to threats and uncomfortable situations. One can see how this may be a very valuable lesson for people living in Judea and Samaria.

In both cases however the freedom given to children, and its educational impact, are understood in ways that relate to interpretations of normalcy. The ways in which people understand normalcy, and attempt to create a sense of normalcy within religious Zionist communities, dovetails with everyday activities such as childrearing. When we look at how religious Zionists raise their children, or how they interpret how other religious Zionists raise their children, we find pronounced attempts to delineate the contours of a 'normal' life.

4.8 - **The Categorization of 'Normalcy'**

So, what does normalcy look like? How is it categorized? For some religious Zionists, it is an urban middle class life, for others it is a suburban life with trees and a yard. Normalcy may be categorized through lenient (or conversely strict) religious practices. For some normalcy exists in their attempts at imbuing in their children a sense of self-confidence and trust. For other's it is acclimating oneself to fear. One could even

argue that the entire Zionist endeavor is one that is centered on an experience of normativity. Zionism wanted to normalize the condition of the Jewish minority in Europe (and throughout the world), to reestablish a Jewish State like any other State. When religious Zionists of different stripes delineate normalcy (through travel, interpreting law, childrearing etc.) they are in a sense expanding the horizons of Jewish nationalist possibilities. In other words 'being normal' is just as Zionist as drying a swamp.

There is, however, a broader point to be made here. It is not just actors in the field who categorize 'normalcy'; the anthropologist is also a part of the endeavor. Most analyses of religious Zionism focus solely on Jewish settlers living in Judea and Samaria. One scholar told me that although a minority, settlers have a weighted influence on the course of the movement. Likewise another scholar simply informed me that settlers just do more things of interest. Even if they represent the minority of religious Zionists, settlers happen to be more interesting. This is a focus that is chosen by the academic community. Scholars join their informants in delineating the boundaries of the 'normal' when they choose to concentrate exclusively on the settlements in Judea and Samaria.

Indeed it may not be an exaggeration to claim that all scholars who explore some aspect of the Israeli Palestinian conflict take part in this process of delineating 'normal'. Categorizing the experience of religious Zionism in Israel as 'fundamentalism' or as 'radicals' (Taub. 2010; Feige. 2009; Sprinzak. 1991), are just different ways of delineating the mundane from the extraordinary. We all metaphorically point to a nearby hill and claim to have discovered the "wackadoodles".

This is a process wherein the anthropologist and the informant are utilizing the same methods to achieve different results. While the anthropologist delineates 'normal' from exotic behavior in order to categorize human experience, the informant does the same in order (in some cases very literally) to live. Anthropologists who specifically specialize in areas of conflict ought to be more cognizant of this process.

4.8A - 'Normal' in This Study

Coming from a Modern Orthodox religious Zionist household, I had my own definitions of 'normal', which are perhaps quite apparent in this study. Anything that seemed to be influenced by Hasidism, or was even slightly mystical, was for me something exotic. I felt very uncomfortable riding through Palestinian villages, or in rickety cars. It was not a discomfort arising from moral qualms (most of the time); I simply did not feel very safe. I recognize that other scholars may have different comfort zones. Moral qualms are indeed one legitimate method of delineating 'normalcy'.

Throughout most of this research I was able to overcome my natural fear, in part with the help of the axiom I learned on my way from Yitzhar to Tapuach Junction. "You're only afraid of what you're not used to". Such moments were poignant – in many cases – because I was afraid, and in other cases because I was simply socially uncomfortable. In this way, I attempted to use my sense of fear, or social awkwardness, in an analytically beneficial manner.

The attempt to delineate 'normal' within ethnographic data is not something to be derided or delegitimized. Rather, it is a process that could very well be used analytically

to improve our research. The categorization of ‘normalcy’ is something that I used in this dissertation- on a variety of levels – to explore how religious Zionists interpret, their goals, fears, and desires.

Chapter 5 - Danger and Diversity: How Jewish Political Pietists Encounter the World Around Them

5.1 - "When My Kids Grow up I Want Them to be Religious"

During my ethnographic fieldwork in a religious Zionist yeshiva in Efrat I became acquainted with an Israeli rabbinic student named Rafi. A native of Efrat, Rafi was 26 at the time, married, and with one daughter. He had studied in a well-known *hesder* yeshiva in the Southern Hebron Mountains, and was a combat graduate of a regular IDF infantry unit. In many ways he was socialized within the typical religious Zionist education that I have described in chapter two. In 2011, I spent a Shabbat with Rafi and his wife's family in Eli, a well-established Jewish settlement in the Binyamin region of Samaria, north of Jerusalem. On Saturday night as Shabbat ended, Rafi and I started walking to the community's main synagogue to pray the evening service. Along the way we were asked to take part in an impromptu prayer service that some students were trying to put together outside. That night was extremely cold, and both Rafi and I were decidedly underdressed with our short sleeve white shirts (with no jacket). We were not comfortable saying 'no', and we proceeded to suffer through the prayers outside. After the service I commented on the physical stamina, the determination, and piety of these students (most of them were most likely graduates of, or destined to join combat units in the IDF). Rafi smiled, agreed, and we both shivered as we rushed back to the house we were staying in. I decided, however, to press the point.

"Do you think you could ever move here with your wife and daughter? I mean you already have family here." I asked.

"You know it's a nice place, and they are very nice people, but I don't think I could ever see myself moving here." Rafi responded.

"Really? Why not?"

"It's really about education. When my kids grow up I want them to be religious"

"But….this is a religious community, I don't really understand", I said a little confused.

"I know many people who grew up in religious communities who ended up becoming secular[26] as they grew older. It has something to do with the closed environment of these places. The kids never really come in contact with secularism, and when they do they're blown away. They don't know how to handle it. I think kids who grow up in mixed areas [cities or communities with both religious and secular inhabitants] have more experience with this stuff and tend to stay religious".

Rafi, a religious nationalist, who daily walked around with a holstered semi-automatic pistol on his waist for self-defense, was sharing with me one of his concerns as both a father, and a believing religious Jew. Parents want the best for their families. His worries over his children's upbringing are eminently understandable and are perhaps universal. In a more specific sense however, our conversation highlighted a story of political piety that is not often heard within the academic or popular overviews of the phenomenon. Rafi was negotiating a particular and common stress within his society. He wanted his children to be 'religious', or to take part in the collective spiritual and national

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[26] Rafi used the term *Dat"Lash*, a Hebrew acronym for *Dati L'She'avar*, or "Religious in the Past".

drama of his People. For Rafi this required real and extensive contact with a world that may or may not be religious or nationalistic. To preserve his family's religious lifestyle and experience Rafi wanted to expose them to the multiplicity of voices and ideas that can be found within Israeli society more broadly. For him, this simply could not be achieved in a relatively small settlement across the Green Line that is completely religious.

This is a complex kind of negotiation in two respects. Firstly, it is a calculated risk that is rather 'dangerous'. Rafi could be wrong. What is at stake here is nothing less than the spiritual livelihood of his family. Secondly, and perhaps in a more subtle sense, this calculated risk highlights another tension. Is Rafi's decision to expose himself and his family to secular (and secularizing) influences simply pragmatic? In other words is it *only* meant to be an educational experience, or does Rafi see some intrinsic benefit to secularity in and of itself (with no connection to any educational or spiritual goal)? My Shabbat in Eli occurred rather early in my fieldwork and I had lost touch with Rafi as my months of fieldwork progressed, so I never had the opportunity to ask him this question directly. These two issues however repeatedly emerged throughout the course of my research. They highlighted the ways in which different streams of Jewish political pietists in Israel confront the religious dangers and challenges that they encounter.

5.2 - **Danger and the Confrontation with the Wider World**

In the previous chapter I explored how interpretations of 'normativity' are related to the ways in which religious nationalists experience some of the fundamental tensions and conflicts in their daily lives. In that chapter 'normativity' was primarily viewed through the lens of physical violence and the sense of fear and danger that surround the

specter of violence. Simply put in the previous chapter, physical danger had an extensive role to play in how religious Zionists interpreted 'normal' life. This chapter will highlight other kinds of dangers that are more related to popular religious conceptions concerning the nature of the individual self, than to fears of physical harm. Here individuals (such as Rafi and others) find themselves negotiating between their spiritual obligations as religious adherents and worshippers of God on the one hand, and their own individual hopes, dreams, and desires on the other.

In the first instance, nationalism, piety, along with the imponderabilia of everyday life all become expressions of the soul's fidelity to its Maker. Torah study, daily prayers, and the physical acts of settling the Land of Israel, become obvious example of this divine service. But such examples may also include activities of leisure such as eating, and reading. Rest and recreation turn into a means of preparing the individual (and his or her soul) for further spiritual service. On the other hand even religious nationalists have individual aspirations and desires that may or may not be easily assimilated into this nationalistic and spiritual structure of divine service. There is a certain amount 'danger' (to one's soul, to personal development, and to the collective nationalist cause) in pursuits that are not *expressly* seen as 'religious'. For many Jewish political pietists in Israel, this danger is as deeply felt (if not more so) as are the daily physical risks and dangers to life and limb that they may choose to confront.

'Choice', or the freedom to choose, might be the hallmark of Modern Judaism. For most Jews throughout most of the world there is very little that is *forcing* them to take part in religious practices, or to feel part of an ethnic or religious collective. Confronting the fact of choice is a challenge that contemporary Jewry worldwide faces

daily. Whether it is Hasidic Jews in New York City, a suburban Reform congregation, Jewish Buddhists, or Modern Orthodox medical doctors, Judaism in the modern period must deal with the challenges posed by choice and freedom. As a result everyday issues such as education, housing, and leisure practices are all emblematic of attempts to accommodate individual desires to whatever it means to be a part of a larger Jewish collective. The ethnography in this chapter recounts what happens when people (political pietists like Rafi) confront these challenges against the backdrop of political conflict, nationalism, and redemptive visions.

Scholars of political piety may sometimes overlook the fact that their informants exist in a larger world that includes a variety of messages, ideologies, and temptations. They may shop, study, or otherwise spend time with individuals who are ideologically and religiously considerably different from themselves. How they choose to negotiate these interactions and the meanings that are put to them are all important elements in understanding the role that nationalism and piety may play in both Israel and the Middle East more broadly.

World history is replete with examples of societies that went to great pains to create and preserve relatively homogenous ideological or religious lifestyles. Despite such efforts even these societies oftentimes had to confront the challenges of multivocality and diversity. In an historical study of leisure activities among early New England Puritans, Bruce C. Daniels asserts, “The Puritan ideal of leisure and recreation contained an ambivalence of profound importance. Puritans had a problem articulating their ideal of appropriate leisure and recreation. This problem resulted in ambiguous messages to their own society and to future generations” (1993: 123). For Daniels, 17th

century Puritans expressed within their Church sermons a theological ambivalence towards leisure and recreation. For early colonial Puritans leisure and recreational activities posed a challenge to their social and religious dreams of a 'city on a hill'. Religious Zionists in both Israel Proper as well as in Judea and Samaria face similar questions. Like the early Puritans many of them express similar desires to create a kind of 'city on a hill' that is meant to inspire Israeli society as a whole. And like the Puritans the question of leisure and recreational activities offers a useful entry point into these theological and social cleavages.

5.3 - **Are Religious Jews Allowed to Have Fun?**

Are religious Jews – or individuals who believe in God, who take religious obligation seriously, who pray three times a day, learn Torah, who observe the laws of modesty etc – allowed to have fun? Is there room for personal enjoyment or personal fulfillment within Orthodox Judaism? This was a question posed by my *chevruta*[27], Avi Woolf[28], and was the initial impetus for this chapter.

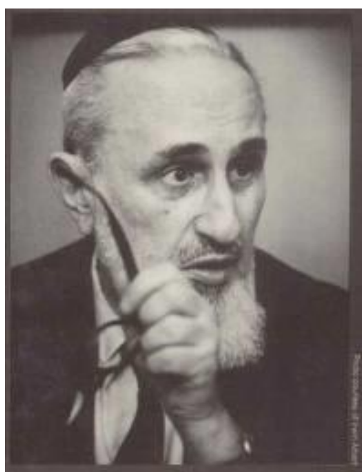

Figure 5 Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Avi and I had a weekly *chevruta* in a yeshiva in Efrat, where we learned *Al Hateshuva* (On Repentance) by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993). Rabbi Soloveitchik served (perhaps still serves) as the philosophical standard bearer of American Modern

[27] Study partner
[28] Does Modern orthodoxy not believe in Fun? (September 2011) http://torahmusings.com/2011/09/does-modern-orthodoxy-not-believe-in-fun/

Orthodox Judaism. He is no less important for American Modern Orthodox immigrants in Israel, many of whom have chosen specific communities in Judea as their home. Soloveitchik is primarily known as an intellectual Talmudist. His existential writings which attempt to capture the inner spiritual experience of rabbinic scholarship, place a great deal of emphasis of individual responsibility and effort. *Al Hateshuva* is a collection of essays about repentance written by Rabbi Soloveitchik during his rabbinic career.

During one of our study sessions Avi and I started talking about a blog he wrote concerning the nature of "fun" among observant Jews. As he described the problem in his blog entry,

> I invite you to take a look at leading publications, blogs and books of Modern Orthodox thinkers – left, right and center. Check out the discussions and read the histories. You will notice a recurring theme – an obsession with intellectual and "serious" issues, and a complete lack of attention to either popular culture or leisure in general. "High culture" – the fine arts, philosophy, science, politics – these are OK. Comic books, TV shows and sports – not OK[29].

For Avi, Modern Orthodoxy – in contrast to its more UltraOrthodox counterparts – has never assimilated the concept of 'leisure' into its theology[30]. There are very few books, television shows, songs, or movies that emerge out of and speak to a Modern orthodox cultural milieu. This is certainly the case for Modern Orthodoxy in America, but it is also accurate regarding religious Zionism in Israel (where only recently a series of cultural

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[29] http://torahmusings.com/2011/09/does-modern-orthodoxy-not-believe-in-fun/

[30] This may seem somewhat counterintuitive to those who are familiar with both the Ultraorthodox and Modern Orthodox Jewish cultural milieus. Yet consider the following brief example. In any contemporary Judaica store in America (and many in Israel), one can find many fictional adventure novels that are written from an Ultraorthodox perspective. The same cannot be said for Modern Orthodoxy. One can make similar observation concerning music and television shows.

productions have emerged). Avi argues that every family regardless of ideological conviction believes in 'play'. The proof for this point is that all orthodox families purchase toys for their children, or have some form of recess during school time. The question is to what extent they *recognize* play, fun, or leisure as an independent value in-and-of itself.

During our discussion we started talking about how there are certain things in Judaism which are permissible and certain things which are not. For example, one is supposed to give charity, and one is not supposed to steal. Between these two extremes however are a multitude of options, many of which are simply neutral. Reading a book, playing a board game, or collecting stamps are examples of neutral leisure activities. Yet for many religious Zionists (Orthodox Jews more broadly) these kinds of activities are not seen as being independently worthwhile. The question of what to do with 'free time' is a distinct tension within Jewish pietistic movements.

When I spent time in religious Zionist yeshivot I noticed that very few students read works of fiction. I never saw works of fiction in the *beit midrash* (study hall), and I rarely saw them in the dormitories.

It is important to understand that students usually live in these yeshivot full-time, only going home for a Shabbat once every two or three weeks. Forms of recreation are essential for young men between the ages of 18 and 25. Students would often play sports, soccer or basketball, and most would try to work out regularly (partly in preparation for their military service). Walking the halls of a dormitory one would constantly hear the clacking of dice on backgammon boards. Chess was a less common leisure activity,

though present nonetheless. I even saw some students spending their free time calling their girlfriends. While admittedly fiction is not for everyone, I always found it interesting that reading for pleasure never seemed to be a popular leisure activity[31]. The materials that students did read were primarily connected to *limudei kodesh* (sanctified study i.e. Jewish studies).

When I was in yeshiva I never really read works of fiction either. I always felt that if I had free time, and in yeshiva anyway, I might as well be learning Torah. I noticed that when students did want to move outside the realm of strict *limudei kodesh* they would tend to read a work of Jewish thought (generally something in contemporary Hebrew or English and with many explanatory notes). In the more liberal yeshivot, if a student was feeling adventurous he would tend to read a work of classical philosophy, such as Plato or Aristotle. In the year 2000 in Ein Tzurim, I remember how people would often joke that students would read classical philosophy just to look "cool". The philosophical texts were all over the *beit midrash*, but one rarely saw them open. In the most liberal of yeshivot, if a student was feeling exceptionally heretical, he may even decide to read a work of biblical criticism[32].

There is certainly pressure within many of the *yeshivot* that if there is some free time available for a good book, that one might as well use that time to learn Torah. This is certainly what is stressed in the *hesder yeshivot* and *mechinot* to students about to be inducted into the army. If there is some free time in the army (and there is not much), and one has energy to read, one might as well learn. Pocket sized books are published

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[31] One of the Roshei Yeshiva of Har Etzion has a PhD in English literature, and has written about the religious significance of literature.
[32] This was the type of institution I attended during my time in yeshiva.

that offer collections of daily Torah insights for just this purpose. I used one of these during my regular infantry service. I found my pocket compendia easy to read, readily understandable, and the book itself was rather light, compact, and simple to carry along with my other heavy military gear.

This skepticism towards reading as a recreational leisure activity is also reflected in the private homes of religious Zionists. For example there are many books in religious Zionist households. Religious Zionists read – or "learn" a lot. Their book cabinets are filled with religious and rabbinic classics. Shelves are stacked with Talmudic tomes, philosophical treatises by Rav Kook, or halachic compendia by Rabbi Eliezer Melamed[33]. I have seen however very few examples of adult secular fiction[34].

The discussion with Avi during our *chevruta* struck an ethnographic chord. It jived with many of my experiences traveling and spending time within different religious Zionist communities. I would try to raise the issue of fun with my informants in various contexts. I noticed it would always provoke an interesting response.

There are important religious, political, and social implications attached to the choice of leisure activities. As Bruce C. Daniels asserts, "A culture at play tells much about itself. Patterns of leisure and recreation do not develop by accident; invariably they are manifestations of a society's core values" (Daniels. 1993: 121). Leisure activities may be a manifestation of a societies "core values", but they are equally a manifestation of a society's core stresses as well. The social tensions surrounding leisure activities echo the

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[33] The Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Bracha. He wrote a collection of Jewish legal texts entitled *Peninei Halacha*

[34] I was surprised to see however in many households (particularly in the settlements) copies of Harry Potter.

manner in which religious Zionists experience the nature of their own souls, and then how they use that experience in their relationships to the world around them.

5.4 - **Between Spiritual Sensitivity and Neutrality**

There are many kinds of conflicts within nationalist and pietistic contexts. These conflicts are not just political but also revolve around distinctly religious concepts. Such concepts are not necessarily 'theological' in the sense that they may reflect written dogma. Rather, they are attitudes that are commonly found in the practices and sentiments of everyday practitioners, and that orient and guide the local moral worlds of these practitioners. As Arthur Kleinman points out,

> [S]ome things really do matter, matter desperately, [and this] is what provides local worlds with their immense power to absorb attention, orient interest, and direct action. Moreover, it is these local worlds that have the power to transform the transpersonal and subjective poles of experience. (1997: 327).

One of these concepts that 'desperately matter' concerns the nature of the individual soul. For religious Zionists in Israel, the agency of the individual soul is at stake in the grand drama of collective messianic redemption. Within anthropological contexts 'agency' generally refers to the "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn. 2001:112). In this context however, I am using the term 'agency' in a related, though slightly different manner. Here the 'agency of the individual soul' refers to the precise ways in which religious Zionists understand their relationship to the world (and its spiritual challenges) around them.

Specifically, there are some individuals who believe that the soul is extremely sensitive to external stimuli. In this sense, everything one does or encounters over the

course of one's life either helps or harms the soul's ability to serve God. On the other side of the coin there are those who approach certain experiences in life as being spiritually neutral. Such experiences, or stimuli, do not help, nor do they harm one's ability to serve God. These experiences simply exist, and the individual can choose to participate in them (or not) according to one's own personal desires.

For those who subscribe to the view of spiritual sensitivity there certainly is room for fun, leisure, and pleasure within religious Judaism. 'Fun' in this sense is simply used as a means of rest to help the individual recoup one's strength in order to better serve God. For those who lean towards the view of spiritual neutrality, 'fun' is a value all its own, that is independent of any larger theological goal. One reads a book, watches television, or plays with a pet because it is *enjoyable* and not for any ultimate supernal goal.

5.4A - *Pets*

I found this religious attitude concerning the soul, and the world that surrounds it, poignantly practiced within various ethnographic contexts. The unique position of pets within pietistic homes (nationalistic or otherwise) elucidates this point. I would often spend time with a good friend of mine in Givat Shmuel, outside of Tel Aviv. This is an upper middle class urban neighborhood where many younger religious Zionists choose to live (both married couples as well as singles). My friend Yoni and his wife Liana are animal lovers, and they own a small dog named Kukuchu[35]. I would sometimes accompany them as they took Kukuchu out for a walk in the neighborhood. We used to head for the local dog park, where we would meet other dog owners, both secular as well

[35] Yoni's family used to own a dog named Greenberg, after the famous Jewish baseball player Hank Greenberg.

as religious Zionists. It was funny; no one knew each other's names, just the names of their dogs. During our walks in the neighborhood (that borders the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood for Bnei Brak), we noticed that we never passed an ultra-Orthodox Jew with a pet dog.

I then realized that I had seen very few dogs among Israeli religious Zionists in general, and even fewer 'pet dogs' within settlements in Judea and Samaria. When there are dogs they seem to be mostly used for purposes of guarding. They are trained and placed on the outskirts of a community either to roam freely, or tied to a long rope. They are also used to perform certain tasks. For example, Jewish farmers (both legal and illegal) in Judea and Samaria who raise sheep often use large dogs to protect the herd. I once commented to the owner of one farm in Northern Samaria that his dog which was currently guarding the sheep seemed to want to eat me. The owner responded, "You don't want to be his friend, and he certainly doesn't want to be yours". These dogs are far from the docile pets in Givat Shmuel.

There are certainly no dog parks within most religious Zionist communities (although there is one in Efrat). The religious Zionists who do own pets tend to be either American immigrants to Israel, or otherwise more welcoming of secular influences within their homes. It is not that Orthodox Jews are forbidden from owning pets (in this case dogs). Rather, pets simply inhabit an ambiguous (they neither help nor expressly hurt) position in a larger religious paradigm. For those who believe in the sensitivity of the soul, a dog in the home is a danger to individual as well as collective divine service.

5.4B - *Shu"t Sms*

A second example of the conflict between spiritual sensitivity and neutrality can be found in some of the Jewish legal literature that is geared towards a popular audience. As in the case of household pets, here Jewish political pietists can be seen confronting some of the voices of the ideologies of the world that surrounds them.

Shabbat has many formal rituals codified in Jewish law, such as *Kiddush*[36] or *Netillat Yadayim*[37] and *Hamotzi*[38]. There are however some Sabbath rituals that are not codified in Jewish Law, but which nonetheless form an important part of the Sabbath experience.

For the national religious public one of these informal Sabbath rituals revolves around the weekly *Alonei Shabbat*. These *Alonei Shabbat* are pamphlets that are produced by various religious or political organizations and which are distributed in synagogues, usually sometime on Friday afternoons. The main purpose of these pamphlets is to impart *divrei Torah* (lit. words of *Torah*). These are rabbinic insights into the weekly Torah reading that are then connected by the authors, to some larger ethical or oftentimes political message. As the ethical and political realms are conflated, these pamphlets tend to discuss wider religious and political issues of importance to its religious nationalist readership.

A friend of mine once commented how the *Alonei Shabbat* have turned into a kind of journalism (a good deal of it very serious journalism). Writers discuss the pressing issues of the day, advertise for events, and interview political and rabbinic

[36] Blessing over wine that begins the Sabbath Meal.
[37] Ritual washing of ones hands before eating bread
[38] Blessing over bread that begins the meal.

figures. Political figures also routinely advertise within the pages of these pamphlets. In fact these pamphlets are so popular with their respective readerships that I have seen some synagogues only distribute them at the end of services. If they fail to do so it is usually a mad rush to get a copy, and then everyone is reading about the latest political protest instead of praying.

One important (and perhaps most interesting from an ethnographic perspective) part of many of these pamphlets are the spaces they give for individuals to write letters expressing some of their concerns, or directing a question to a rabbinic figure. In a couple of the different *Alonei Shabbat* there is a section entitled '*Shu"t SMS'*. A Shu"t, is an acronym for the Hebrew phrase *Sh'eilah U'Teshuva* or 'question and answer'. This is a genre of halachic literature and is the classical Jewish method of constructing and interpreting rabbinic case law. An individual would direct a Halachic question to a Rabbi, who would in turn write down and distribute his answer to a wider rabbinic and lay public. Such written opinions would traditionally offer an overview of previous rabbinic positions pertaining to the general issue at hand, and then use those positions in constructing an opinion regarding the specific issue in question. These answers were oftentimes very detailed and replete with rabbinic legal language.

The Shu"t SMS follows this traditional method. Only here, both the question and answer, are relayed through the medium of a cell phone text message – and then published within the pages of the Sabbath pamphlets. These messages are easy to send, quick to read, they are informative, and also at times, rather humorous. On the other hand the answers, by their very nature, contain very little of the halachic background that have traditionally characterized this rabbinic practice.

What I have seen happen on Friday nights is that someone in a family usually brings a collection of these weekly *Alonei Shabbat* home. They are then read and the issues are discussed by ones entire family (before, after, or during the meal). I have also seen some families play humorous games with the *Shu"t Sms.* They read the question out loud then they try to guess which rabbinic figure offered an answer. The people present then have to guess what the answer might be. Or conversely, sometimes the answer is read out loud, and those present have to guess which rabbinic figure authored the opinion. Many of these rabbinic personalities have a written (as well as halachic) style all their own, and one can often guess as to their answers.

I was once relaxing on a friend's couch after a Shabbat meal. There were several copies of my favorite (and a very poplar) Shabbat pamphlet *Olam Katan* (Small World) throughout the house. I saw a question that I found so odd that I just had to share with my host family. Apparently, a young man got himself locked into a bathroom on Shabbat, and he was not sure if he was allowed to break the lock during Shabbat in order to free himself. With a smirk on her face my friends wife turned to me and said "what did he do wait in the stall until the end of Shabbat so someone could pass him a cell phone to text?" Her implication was that the question itself (along with its medium) was somewhat laughable.

In another instance I was talking with a friend about the difficulties religious Zionist singles express regarding the dating scene. He told me about a question he once saw in a Shabbat pamphlet. A woman texted wanting to know what was the best chapter of psalms to read in order to find a husband. The rabbi answered by telling her to close the book of Psalms, put on some makeup, wear something nice, and go out and meet

guys. Both of us thought this was a very pragmatic answer. At this moment (January 2013) as I write these paragraphs I've clicked on Olam Katan's website and looked at their most recent publication. Someone asked if it is permissible to learn Japanese, "perhaps there might be some issue of idol worship involved". The rabbi simply answered "there is no problem with learning the language".

The world is – in a very real sense - a forest of dangers if every experience one encounters in life is either existentially helpful or harmful to the soul. One *must* ask a rabbi if it is permissible to learn Japanese, or what Psalm to read to find a husband, or if one can break a lock to a bathroom on Shabbat. To not do so would be to run the risk of harming one's very essence. The rabbinic response need not be long, or detailed. A simple answer is all that is required to alleviate the risk to one's soul. In fact the sooner one receives the answer, the better.

In a broader sense, the ability to deal with theological risk is a complex topic whose importance is growing within Orthodox Judaism. The "swing to the right"– especially concerning matters of ritual stringency (or *chumrot*) that several sociologists and historians have pointed to (Heilman. 2005, 2006; Shapiro. 2005) revolves around the issue of risk. There is a certain amount of risk in every religious practice. The ritual may not be performed correctly, there may be some mistake, one's the food may not *really be kosher*. Ritual stringencies work to lessen the effects of theological and ritual risk[39]. For example, in Chapter 3 when a car pulled up on Shabbat and asked the brothers Ezra and Yoni for directions, Ezra was willing to risk helping someone violate the Sabbath (or

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[39] I thank Avi Woolf for this important insight.

perhaps risk violating it himself!). Yossi was not willing to take that risk. As a result the "swing to the right" towards more stringency in the realm of ritual is as much a *theological* tension as it is a *social* and *political* problem within contemporary Orthodox Judaism. It directly touches upon the ways in which different kinds of religious Jews relate to, interpret, and 'feel' the nature of their own souls.

Clearly not everyone who reads these questions takes them seriously, and some of the rabbis who answer do so with a good amount of humor. At the same time one has to wonder why individuals are asking these questions in this manner. And why are rabbis (many of them very well-known and respected) answering them in this way?

The interest in the genre of the *Shu"t Sms* is symptomatic of the much wider theological and social tensions that directly touch upon the ways in which religious Zionists struggle with the nature of their own souls. As they struggle (or perhaps *through* the struggle) with this conceptual issue they are also actively negotiating their relationship to the wider social and moral world around them.

5.5 - **"It can't be That God Created all this Beauty in the World Just for the Goyim"**

I found this struggle that occurs among Jewish political pietists to be explicitly stated among two very different religious Zionist families. I used to have an evening *chevruta* in Efrat with Chovav a religious Zionist rabbinic student. Chovav enjoyed Hasidic teachings (he even grew some small, but noticeable side locks). And so every Tuesday evening we used to sit in his small caravan kitchen with two cups of mint tea, and study Rabbi Kook's Lights of Repentance, from a Hasidic perspective. One night

Chovav's wife Avital came home early from her classes in Michlelet Herzog[40], where she was receiving a B.A. and a Teacher's certificate in education. Since I was rarely able to speak to married women, I thought this would be a great opportunity to talk to her about some of her perspectives on religious Zionism with her husband present. I started talking to her about the idea of spiritual sensitivity and neutrality.

"Can I ask you an important question? It could really help me out with my research."

"Sure you can try, I really don't know that much " Avital responded, laughing nervously.

"No, you really do. I promise! Do you think a religious Jew is allowed to have fun?"

Avital bunched her eyebrows together for a split second. "I don't understand the question", she said.

"Just that, can a religious Jew have fun? Say you want to watch a movie, a completely modest movie. Is there room for you to do that in Judaism?"

Avital gave me one of those 'oh you poor child looks' and smiled widely. "I didn't even know that was a question at all. Of course there is, I don't even think about it".

Such is the fate of an anthropologist who fishes for ideas. Thinking that my grand bubble had just burst, I was about to change subjects and ask her about her simple blue *mitpachat*, Avital then continued.

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[40] A religious Zionist college located in the Gush Etzion Bloc of Judea. The women's campus is in Migdal Oz, and the men's campus is located in Alon Shvut.

> "You know, my friend was once in a P.T.A. meeting at her son's elementary school. They were talking about where they could take the students for a trip. One parent suggested they go to the Alps in Switzerland [I have no idea what kind of religious Israeli school can afford a trip to the Alps, but I decided not to press the issue]. That started this whole debate about whether one is allowed to go visit the Alps. Some parent's said there were far more Jewish things to do. Then my friend told me, "you know it just can't be that God created all of this beauty in the world just for the *goyim* [non-Jews]". There's simply room to enjoy the world"

That is how this one rabbinic student's wife, living in a prefabricated caravan in Efrat saw things. If there is beauty in this world, does God not want us to enjoy it? When I even pressed her on the issue she did not say that the beauty of the world ought to be enjoyed for God's sake (to better appreciate God), but rather for *our* sake. Pleasure is the purview of Jews as well as non-Jews.

At the same time, trips to the Alps, pet dogs, and fiction are uncommon among religious Zionists precisely because they do not fit neatly into the two poles of being either permissible or forbidden. There is little reason for an observant Jew to spend valuable time on these activities if they do not directly help the soul's ability to serve God.

Avital's incredulity contrasted with other reactions I received in different places concerning the issue of leisure. This served to highlight the very real tensions surrounding the issue of spiritual sensitivity. Yossi and his wife in Har Bracha were always interested in the progress of my research, and the different observations I was making. Despite (or perhaps in spite of) the differences between communities, it seemed there was little religious Zionists love discussing more than the present condition of religious Zionism.

At one Shabbat meal at a late stage in my research, Yossi asked me to tell him about one theological issue that I was relating to everyday experience. With a wide smile I happily obliged.

“Do I have a question for you Yossi!”

I asked him and his wife the exact same question I had put to Avital a year earlier. Yossi stopped, looked down and seemed to be thinking for a good two minutes. He then tried to find a passage in one of Rav Kook’s writings, failing to locate the passage, he thought again for another few moments. His wife filling in the silence said that she tended to agree with Avital. That there is beauty in the world, that one can simply enjoy. Here Yossi disagreed,

“I can understand if we’re talking about things which might serve a purpose. For example, if you need to eat, sleep, or if you have to take a trip for business. But just to enjoy something *stam* (just because), I’m not sure where one can find a support for that”

“You see Yossi” I said. “Just looking at this conversation here at the table, it’s a very difficult question”. I then received probably the greatest complement an ethnographer might elicit from an educated and curious informant. Yossi nodded in agreement. The conflict that revolves around leisure and pleasure, - as evidenced by Avital’s discussion with her friend as well as Yossi’s nod - between spiritual sensitivity and neutrality is something that people talk about, and it is a struggle that animates people’s lives. Different religious Zionists in Israel encounter the world around them in different ways. The dilemmas that are produced from this encounter also have social as well as political implications for these Jewish political pietists and their communities.

5.6 - **Social Tensions Surrounding Spiritual Sensitivity and Neutrality**

The differences between the soul's spiritual sensitivity and its neutrality are one of the major conflicts within contemporary Israeli religious Zionism. Its effects can be seen in how religious texts, attitudes, and ideas are interpreted as well as in the ways individuals interact within their social and political environments. It is this difference which marks the major difference between two sectors of the religious Zionist public; the '*Mizrochnikim'* and the '*Torahni'im'*.

These terms are difficult to define, and not everyone appreciates them. Indeed for many they come across as sounding very offensive (and in many ways they are meant to be). The term '*Mizrochnik* harkens back to the European 'Mizrachi Movement', which was generally distrustful of mystical – messianic forms of religious Zionism. These individuals are commonly thought to be educated, professionals in the upper middle class, who reside – for the most part - in the urban centers of the country. The term '*Torahni'im'* – with the word Torah in its name – marks individuals who place (what they understand to be) the values of the Torah at the center of their lives. These individuals are said to be more punctilious in their practice of Judaism as well as more serious in their commitment to classical religious Zionist values. The *Torahni'im* claim that the upper middle class *Mizrochnikim* are less serious in their theological and political commitments. By contrast the *Torahni'im* are accused of elitistism.

The differences between how these two groups view each other is both steeped in type of religious experience that makes certain claims upon the ways in which they choose to encounter general Israeli society. The *Torahni'im* have a more sensitive perspective concerning the soul's relationship to the surrounding world. Their souls

cleave to God. The *Mizrochnikim* retain the more neutral perspective. God gave them a unique to be used in the unique ways they so choose. The *Torahni'im* look askance at the lifestyles of the upper middle class religious Zionists in the larger cities. The *Mizrochnikim* on the other hand look back and wonder how one cannot take part in the educational, cultural opportunities – along with the simple pleasures - of Israeli society.

These are challenging categories to use because they are difficult to define in neutral terms. I once described my observations regarding these two categories to a national religious woman. I remember how offended she was when she told me "*Mizrochnik* is a terrible term to use. These people [*Torahni'im*] think they're better than everyone else, and it's just ridiculous".

What this woman was describing are the ways in which the *Torahni'im* tend to organize their social lives. And these choices also bear political implications. There are many religious Zionist communities, both within Judea and Samaria as well as within Israel Proper, that describe themselves as being '*Torani'*. These tend to be communities that are somewhat exclusive in their acceptance of new residents. The religious settlements in Judea and Samaria, for example were originally meant to portray the "City on the Hill", or to showcase what the best and the brightest of what the national religious public had to offer. Some religious Zionists have commented how this propensity for separation (separate communities, schools, army units etc.) has provided the context for which the disengagement from the settlements in the Gaza Strip (as well as future disengagements) became possible. By separating themselves from the larger Israeli public – as the argument goes – it becomes easier for that public to disengage themselves from religious Zionist communities in Judea and Samaria.

5.7 - **Settling into the Hearts of Israel: The Gar'in Dati and the Nature of Zionism**

Realizing this problematic issue, after the Disengagement from the Gaza Strip a major shift seemed to occur in the hearts and minds of young Israeli religious Zionists. Some of them chose to move to peripheral towns which were mostly secular (or traditional) and underprivileged. They started or (joined) what are known as a '*Gar'in Dati'* – or a religious seed- otherwise known as a *Gar'in Torani* – or a Torah seed. In fact, the differences between these two titles are important and will be noted further on.

These *Gar'inim Dati'im* (pl) are groups of young, religiously observant couples in their early to mid-twenties, who choose to live in marginalized urban areas of the country. The goal of these communities is to help improve the social, religious, and economic situations of these underprivileged areas. As they would describe it, they are settling the 'hearts' rather than the 'land' of Israel.

On a visit once to an eye glass store in the southern development town of Ofakim, I met a young married woman wearing a loose fitting shirt, a long flowing skirt and a white full *mitpachat* with a few strands of blonde hair showing in front. She looked like a classical religious Zionist woman that one might find in Judea and Samaria, and I was somewhat surprised to see her working in Ofakim. Thinking that she might be a part of the city's *Gar'in torani* I asked what brought her to Ofakim. She validated my assumption and said that she and her husband were originally from Shilo, a settlement in the Binyamin area of Samaria north of Jerusalem. They had, however, moved to Ofakim six years ago. She said they wanted to feel as if they were doing something "important", and she just didn't get that sense anymore living in the large and established settlement of Shilo.

It is never a simple matter when outsiders move into an underprivileged area with the express purpose of improving the social and religious life there. Tensions sometimes emerge between the local population and the well-meaning newcomers. In 2005 the city of Ariel in central Samaria invited a group of recent expellees from the Gaza settlement of Netzrim to rebuild a community there. The group moved into a collection of a few dozen mobile homes right in the middle of the city. There they reestablished their synagogue, and built a playground in the center of the new community. Most of the parents in Netzrim send their children to a religious private school a few kilometers south in the community of Eli. As one family explained it to me, they wanted to continue their service to Israel by moving to a secular city, and perhaps help to improve the city.

Not everyone in the city, however, looks at the community of Netzrim in the same positive light. One week I decided to spend a Shabbat in Ariel with some friends of mine. I had just missed the 148 bus to the city at the Jerusalem Central Bus Station. Instead I decided to take another bus to Ofra, and from there try and hitchhike. As the bus turned right into Ofra I see the 148 picking up some passengers within the community. I quickly jumped off the bus, hopped on to the 148 and exclaimed proudly to the drive "I caught you"! The driver smirked and said "don't be so optimistic, we still have a long way to go". A classic sarcastic Egged[41] bus driver, I knew it was going to be an interesting ride, and sure enough I was not disappointed.

After an hour and a half of a nauseating ride up and down twisting mountain top roads the bus entered into the gate of Ariel. My stop was toward the end of the route, and not wanting the driver to forget about my existence, I moved up into the first few rows.

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[41] A major Israeli bus company.

There I had a chance to listen in on part of a conversation between the driver (who was wearing a knitted kippa and who was a resident of Ariel) and another elderly passenger. The passenger was extolling the virtues of the inhabitants of the Netzarim community. The community adds to the religiosity of the city he claimed, and their presence helps to reduce the rates of teen alcohol abuse and general wildness (which is a big problem in Ariel). The driver responded with a play on the word Netzarim.

> Netzrim Netzarot [Tzarot is Hebrew for 'trouble'. He was saying the community was just trouble], they're simply not effective. They said they wanted to bring more Jewishness to Ariel. But they all live in the same place. It's like a settlement in the middle of Ariel. They're not afraid of terrorists, they're afraid of people. God forbid one of their children should be friends with another child who isn't so religious, one thing will lead to another…

The issues at stake here are religious, social as well as political. On a social level the driver was just explaining how the community of Netzarim separates itself from the wider city of Ariel, to the detriment of both parties. On the other hand, if someone from Netzarim had been on the bus, they might have defended themselves by claiming that a cohesive and distinctive community is a very effective way of changing the wider Ariel society. From a political perspective however, the driver was implying that by separating themselves into an enclave, the community of Netzrim was replaying the same error that aided in their removal from Gaza in the first place. Of course behind all of this is the theological issue. Simply put the inhabitants of Netzrim are more religious (read: observant) than this bus driver and his family.

Each side here responds to the risks and dangers posed by an encounter with social and ideological diversity in different ways. The bus driver was less sensitive to different kinds of Jews, and different levels of religious observance, than his neighbors

might be in Netzarim. Indeed if one's soul is sensitive to all sorts of external stimuli safeguarding the cohesiveness of one's community turns into an existential imperative.

The ways in which Jewish political pietists negotiate between the competing demands of religion, politics, and society can also be seen by looking at another community of young religious Zionists living in a peripheral town. They call themselves a "*Gar'in* dati". As my friend there explained, the purpose of the *Gar'in* is to improve the community by becoming an inseparable part of the community. Each of these families joined the *Gar'in* in this slightly out of the way, and run down town, because they felt they may be able to improve upon a religious Zionism that they perceive is currently closing itself off from the general Israeli society.

While almost all of them are on the right of the political spectrum, they would like to see a religious Zionism that spends more energy on *Am Yisrael* (the People of Israel) than on *Eretz Yisrael* (the land of Israel). As my friend's wife told me, "what does it help [she meant politically as well as socially] being far away on some hilltop somewhere, when there is work to do right here." In the end as my friend put it "the purpose of the *Gar'in* would be to obviate the need for a *Gar'in*".

These of course are the ideals of the community, things become more complicated when one has to put ideals into practice. As all of the members of the *Gar'in* are young couples with small children, education is an important topic of conversation. They all need to educate their children, and each family would like to give their child a good education. At the same time however, as a *Gar'in* with an ideological purpose, it is important for them to have their children be a part of the general community.

Understandably, there are few options in a small underprivileged town, and these desires conflict with one another. This is a very personal issue. Where does a family send their small child to pre-school? Do they choose a school that best fits their own personal needs and ideologies? Or do they choose a location that best fits the vision of the *Gar'in*?

One evening the *Gar'in* met in my friend's living room to discuss this very choice. There are two preschools in the area, one is the local religious public school, and the other is funded by Agudah, an ultra-orthodox political/social organization. On the one hand the Agudah's preschool is generally thought to offer a better education (although some members dispute this). On the other hand, sending one's child to the religious public school would be the fulfillment of the *Gar'in*'s vision. The meeting got very intense and no definitive communal decision was reached. One of the leading members of the *Gar'in* chose to send his children to the Agudah preschool, and this caused no small amount of tension.

Figure 6 Circumcision in Gar'in Synagouge

Another similar moment of tension can be seen in the *Gar'in*'s annual Israeli Independence Day celebrations. For religious Zionists Israeli Independence Day is a religious holiday, and there are specific prayers that are said during *Shacharit*, or the morning service. It is important for most religious Zionists to go to synagogue in the morning, even if they do not normally pray in synagogue during most

weekday mornings. What is the *Gar'in* to do? On the one hand it is important to have certain events that are just for the benefit of the *Gar'in*. In this sense a prayer service that is organized by, and just meant for the *Gar'in* would seem to be appropriate. After all it *is* important for them to have a sense of communal cohesion. On the other hand, Israeli Independence Day is one of the most important holidays for Israeli religious Zionists. How then could they not pray in the town's synagogue? And if they do pray in the town's synagogue, who should lead the services and drive the singing and dancing; members of the *Gar'in* or the native townspeople?

Apparently, as my friend related every year before Independence Day, members of the *Gar'in* gather to discuss the issue. Every year they decide to have their own prayer service. And every year my friend prays in the town's synagogue.

The tensions that the *Gari'nim Dati'im* face revolve around socio-political issues, and are centered around shared religious attitudes and perspectives. It should be remembered however that these tensions are not new. They are found in the history of religious Zionism as well as in some of its foundational texts. For example the desire of the *Gar'inim Dati'im* to reassert the importance of the People of Israel (*Am Yisrael*) alongside *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel), only echoes earlier debates between mystical messianic Zionists (the followers of Rabbi Kalischer), and the more pragmatic followers of Rabbi Reines. These tensions are not new; they just reemerge under different social or political tensions.

This conflict between universality and particularism is further expressed in one of Rabbi Kook's most famous works *Midot Hara'ayah*.

> Because only a soul that is rich in the love of creation and the love of man can the love of the nation rise up in all its glorious strength and it's practical spiritual greatness. And the troublesome eyes that sees everything outside the borders of the unique nation, even outside the border of Israel, as only ugliness and impurity, that is one of the terrible darkness's that is destroying the general spiritual good (*Midot Hara'ayah* 4).

One finds these theological tensions being echoed in the complaint of the Ariel bus driver that the Netzrim community in Ariel segregates themselves too easily. One finds it in the desire of a religious Zionist woman in Ofakim to feel as if she is *doing* something. One sees these theological, social, and political tensions played out in a community searching for the best place to educate their toddlers.

5.8 - **A Constant Confrontation: Political Piety and the Challenge of Competing Messages**

The ways in which leisure and recreation are approached is symptomatic of much wider conflicts occurring within religious Zionist communities in Israel. One of the interesting things about fieldwork in this area is walking into a home with several children and seeing toys and games strewn out across the living room. No matter how hard the parents try to tidy everything up (or inspire the children to clean), somehow it is never really enough. I am forced to walk very carefully lest I break something. I imagine this experience is not something distinctly unique to ethnographic fieldwork among religious Zionists in Israel. As humans we all require some form of recreation or leisure. As Gary Chick asserts

> There is no obvious reason not to believe that all humans in all societies, and at all times have, or have had, at least a measure of free time, although some more than others…Emotions such as pleasure interest and enjoyment, which appear to be associated with subjective experiences or leisure, are panhuman (Chick 1998: 116).

This is no different for religious Zionists in Israel. Only here forms of leisure also include a range of theological, political and social implications. Are religious Jews allowed to have fun? Perhaps, and under certain conditions. The point, however, is that recreational activities occur in any case, the only question is, how and under what circumstances? What is true for the specific example of leisure and recreation is also true for the political pietistic encounter with heterogeneous ideas and life ways in general. No matter hard some may try to sterilize their environment from a myriad of competing ideas, contact with these ideas will always occur. Just like the parents of toddlers who *constantly* try to pick up their children's toys in the living room, political pietists are *constantly* confronting competing messages.

The political pietists in this chapter all confronted the question "what does it mean to be 'free'" against a backdrop of communal and social concerns. For some it meant choosing a community that will ensure their children's connection to Jewish religious practice. For others it meant choosing how and under what circumstances to take part in the community around them. Yet for others this question takes on a more personal and mundane character. It is answered through the books they read (or where they read them), or by the pets they choose to keep.

The ways in which Jewish political pietists in Israel choose to encounter heterogeneity, can illuminate some of the everyday political and social risks that influence their lives. By looking at the connection between religious experience and everyday practice the social scientist can gain a much more sensitive understanding into the ways in which religious nationalists interact with the world around them. The next chapter will explore the ways in which religious interpretations of sanctity interact with

these experiences of the soul, and how these two in turn relate to political, pedagogical, and social practices among religious Zionists in Israel.

Chapter 6 - The Search for Sanctity: Political Fidelity and Religious Experience among Religious Zionists

The previous chapter explored some of the ways in which an understanding of religious concepts can add depth and texture to our understanding of the everyday lives of religious Zionists. We explored the communal and political stakes involved as religious Zionists encounter religious and ideological diversity. The following chapters will broaden the discussion by exploring how political and social loyalties are reflected in religious experience. That is, the ways in which religious Zionists answer the question "what is freedom?" is directly related to how they tend to organize themselves socially and politically. This relationship is reflected in particular modes of religious thought and practice. The following chapters will ethnographically demonstrate the links between political conceptions of sovereignty, liberty, and religious experience.

This particular section will explore the theological issue of 'sanctity' to demonstrate how the mystical messianism that is a part of religious Zionist thought is progressive in nature as opposed to apocalyptic. That is, the general tenor of Messianic religious Zionism stresses slow historical movements towards an ultimate redemptive goal. Politically this goal can only be achieved through State sovereignty, and collective loyalty to that State. This kind of sovereignty and collective loyalty stakes different claims on how 'freedom' may be conceptualized and practiced by certain religious Zionists and their communities.

To best understand this claim it is important to first outline some of the indigenous ways in which religious Zionists in Israel understand and contextualize their own theological, political, and social beliefs and practices. In part, religious Zionists tend

to do this by referring to the different institutions of Torah study popular within their communities.

6.1 - **Three Methods of Prayer**

Rabbi Menachem Froman sat in the front of the small prefabricated synagogue in Tekoa Bet. Surrounded by two of his sons at his side, and musical accompaniment behind him, he leaned into the black microphone. The rabbi with his large white knitted *kippa* was wearing slippers and white socks, and had one swollen leg resting on a plastic chair. His once full long white beard was now short and scraggly, his white side locks that once flowed down his shoulders had largely disappeared. He was pale and gaunt, his body wracked with stomach cancer. Despite his illness, he still had the ability to enthrall crowds with his short, pithy, and mysterious interpretations of the *Zohar*, a classic text of Jewish mysticism.

Rabbi Froman was the Chief Rabbi of the Settlement of Tekoa. He was one of the main students of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook and one of the founders of Gush Emunim. He grew out of the Kookian tradition of ultimate progressive unity and collective redemption. At the same time, he was also very different from many of his rabbinic colleagues. As a student of his once told me however, ultimate unity "could not be the result of 'conquest'". Moving away from the collectivism of his *chevruta*, Rabbi Froman turned to a kind of Hasidism that focused on an individual faith in God that went beyond the political and social boundaries of state nationalism. This theological view led Rabbi Froman to (according to his critics – naively) conduct private talks with Palestinian militants including Yassir Arafat (the former head of the PLO) and Sheikh Ahmed Yassin

(the former spiritual leader of Hamas). It also led him to come out very strongly against any State evacuation of settlements and removal of Jews from their homes.

On this particular evening this maverick rabbi, who held personal talks with Palestinian terrorists, was commenting on the different types of prayer experiences that are common among religious Zionists in Israel.

> "There are three methods of prayer", he said "the prayer of a *Gushnik*, the prayer of a *Mercaznik*, and the prayer of the 'scream'".

The terms '*Gushnik'* and '*Mercaznik'* refer to two different religious Zionist rabbinic seminaries. By '*Gushnik'* Rabbi Froman was referring to students who attend the yeshiva in the Gush Etzion Bloc called *Har Etzion*. By *Mercaznik*, Rabbi Froman was referring to students who attend the yeshiva in Jerusalem known as *Mercaz Harav*. By the 'scream' Rabbi Froman was referring to individuals who are more drawn to Hasidic thought (particularly the thought of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov).

Here it is important to remember that texts (and their readers) exist within a wider social, cultural, and political context. People engage with texts in ways that sometimes move beyond efforts to 'comprehend' the simple meaning of their words. In societies where textual study is a central focus of everyday life, textual practices bear with them certain social, moral, and political implications. The place one studies, and the methods one uses to study are components in shaping social, political, and religious experiences.

Through the dual prisms of prayer and the institutions of textual study, Rabbi Froman attempted to place religious Zionism in Israel into three separate religious – but also political - categories. The first two categories are classical theological modes of how Zionist thought has been assimilated into Israeli religious communities. The 'Gushnik' is

generally stereotyped within religious Zionist communities as being very pragmatic and rational, and their Zionism follows this pattern. For the 'Mercaznik' on the other hand, loyalty to the State of Israel and its institutions is rooted in mystical and messianic principles. The category of the 'scream' is relatively new. The 'scream' stresses the different – and sometimes contradictory - ways in which a person may experience both individual divinity as well as state loyalty. What Rabbi Froman was implying was that, in all three cases the ways in which one experiences theology or divinity may mirror, or reflect, how one chooses to experience political loyalties.

I thought this was a rather intuitive manner of describing the spectrum of religious Zionist thought and practice. It is an indigenous categorization, which attempts to classify the very real theological and political differences between people. The goal of the following chapters will be to unpack the ethnographic implications of these relationships. I will argue that each category of 'sanctity' marks a distinct relationship between theological experience and political fidelity.

By exploring the ways in which individuals and communities experience sanctity, one also gains a privileged perspective into the ways in which they confront civil issues such as loyalty to the State of Israel, the role and nature of violence, or even pedagogical methods surrounding Torah (Talmud) study. What is at stake in each of these issues however, is the larger question of Jewish liberty. This is at one and the same time an historical, political, as well as sociological question. For the first time in over a millennia, the Jewish people possess sovereignty over considerable portion of the Biblical Lands of Israel, and they are currently a majority within that land. As Isaiah Berlin wrote, "In this sense the creation of the State of Israel has liberated all Jews, whatever their relation to

it" (2001: 184). This fact necessitates new ways of encountering and practicing Judaism, a religion that evolved in large measure within the Diaspora. More than that however, the political and religious realities of Jewish sovereignty necessitate individual Jews to reevaluate their relationship to a larger (national) collective. What does it mean to be 'free' in a 'free' Jewish commonwealth? The answer to this question is complicated, and can be traced through religious, political, and ethnographic permutations. By showing how religious experience, politics, and culture are inextricably intertwined, I am arguing for an anthropology that is more sensitive to the theological as well as the ethnographic details (and the linkages between them) of the phenomenon it observes.

6.2 - **Mamlachtiyut: Transcendental Harmony and Political Unity among the Followers of Rabbi Kook**

The most common theological view of sanctity among religious Zionists in Israel can best be described as "transcendental harmony". This theological perspective has influenced the political, social, and even economic outlook of the vast majority of contemporary religious Zionists in Israel. Its major proponent was the first chief Rabbi of British Mandate Palestine, Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook (known popularly as Rav Kook) and his son Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook (known popularly as Rav Tzvi Yehuda). For Rav Kook, the essence of sanctity rests in ultimate unity with the divine presence. The theological experience of transcendental harmony reflects certain political attitudes towards a centralized State authority, along with one's individual loyalty to that State.

Rabbi Kook like many Jewish mystics, subscribed to a radical acosmic view of the universe. There exists nothing outside of the one true God (Schwartz. 2002: 62). At the same time however, it was necessary for that God to contract himself in order to make

room for the creation of the world. God as it were forces himself into ‘exile’ in order to allow for that creation. According to this perspective, there exists a division between divinity (the sacred) and its opposite (the profane). The individual in this system struggles to attain sanctity by uniting the opposites. Redemption then becomes the unification between the sacred and the profane. As Rabbi Kook wrote in his personal diaries sometime between 1920-1924)

> The method of war between the Sacred and the Profane is generally not a positive thing. There must be found some path of peace, that the sacred and the profane, even though they seem opposed one to the other, that each one should travel down its own path...it’s not enough that they will not be opposed to each other, but that each one will add strength to the other (Kook. 2008: 398)

Reminiscent of Emile Durkheim (who was writing at the same time) sanctity resided in a transcendental sphere, separate from the everyday. Indeed, Durkheim’s theoretical understanding of the concept of sanctity, is the literal definition of the term in Hebrew[42]. That which is ‘sacred’ is ‘set aside’[43]. In Rabbi Kook’s thought, all of creation is infused with divinity. In this way, the same God who created the profane also created the sacred. Digging beneath the surface, one may find that the heretic and the rabbi have more in common than expected. It follows that, (in contrast to Durkheim) the individual and all of humanity, must unify with the sacred, in such a way that all opposites are harmonized into one entity. This occurs to the extent that some students of Rabbi Kook deny the very existence of opposites in the world.

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[42] The word ‘sanctity’ in Hebrew is *kedusha* – or set aside, to be differentiated. David Emile Durkheim, the scion of a French rabbinic family, was most likely well aware of this definition.

[43] So for example, in the Hebrew Bible, a *kedesha* was a woman who was ‘set’ aside as a prostitute for the Gods.

The desire for harmony, and unity with the divine infinite, is a mystical passion that is experienced by the soul. As Rabbi Kook wrote in the last months of his life; “My soul longs for the supernal light, for the light of the infinite, the light of the true God… This longing consumes my life, the material and the spiritual, I have no talent, and no proper training for how to satisfy and fulfill this great longing” (Kook. 2008: 505).

The expression ‘harmony’ is not chosen randomly. In this system of thought disunity and disharmony are equated with loud noise, chaos, and stormy weather. “One should not stand in astonishment, lacking in good sense, amidst the great sea of noise, full of activity and storming with emotions and thoughts” (Kook. 2008: 398). By contrast the ultimate return to sanctity, or to transcendental harmony is thought of as an experience of musical tranquility.

> His soul is completely submerged in the streams of Eden, sanctity and purity float about him. Limitless love fills his spirit, his soul thirsts for God…he is as one born again, a new creation, the whole world in its entirety, and all the worlds are renewed with him, and everything sings a song, the beauty of God fills all (Lights of Repentance 2006: 14).

Transcendental harmony also serves as the theological source of Israeli mystical religious Nationalism. In Rabbi Kook’s thought, world harmony was contingent upon the ability of nations (in particular the Jewish nation) to come to a sense of harmony within itself.

> Every man has his own path through which he finds happiness’ for the purpose of his being, and through which he cleaves to his creator. One cannot attain the goal of his desire through the path of another. This point is true for the individual person, and how much more-so for the entire nation (Kook. 2008: 507).

As harmony is achieved, God returns from his exile, and the people of Israel ‘return’ along with him. This is not an apocalyptic action. It does not occur all at once. Rather, to

use Rabbi Kook's Kabbalistic terminology, the world is 'sweetened' (*bisum ha'olam*) over time. In other words, the world progresses slowly, and by degrees, through various moral and mystical changes.

Most religious Zionist rabbis in Israel can trace their intellectual (theological lineage) back to these rabbinic figures and the institution they created. Rabbinic scholars, or religious Jews in general who have spent time in yeshiva are very much cognizant of these lineages, which they are often traced back centuries. Since these lineages are so relevant to the religious experiences of the national religious community, they also offer a necessary historical background for understanding the ways in which religious Zionists relate to political predicaments.

Figure 7 From left to right: Rav Tzvi Yehuda, Rav Kook, Rabbi Charlap.

The intellectual/theological lineage that Mercaz Harav attaches itself to is displayed nicely on the walls of the Yeshiva's *cheder ochel* or dining room. In this large rectangular room, beneath the *beit midrash,* are placed large portraits of the people who have most influenced the yeshiva. On one wall hang the portraits of Rabbi Kook, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda, and Rabbi Charlap (one of the major early students of Rabbi Kook).

On the opposite facing wall hangs the picture of the Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Elijah Kramer) 1720-1797, along with past Roshei Yeshiva of Mecaz Harav

The Vilna Gaon was an 18th century Lithuanian Rabbi who was a famous early opponent to the nascent Hasidic movement of the time. On the one hand he is commonly known as a renowned Talmudist and Halachist. On the other hand he was also a famed kabbalist known for his work Kol Ha'tor (the Voice of the Songbird), a mystical treatise dealing with the era of redemption. In 1803 the Vilna Gaon's primary student Rabbi Chayim Ickovits founded a yeshiva in Volozhin. Before 1803 rabbinic students would generally choose to study with a rabbi in another town (sometimes rather far off). The Yeshiva in Volozhin was the first to create a 'rabbinic scholarly community' housed in one building. The 'Volozhin Yeshiva' was operational for some 90 years and became the prototype for nearly all future yeshivot (Stampfer. 2012).

Figure 8 On the right, Rav Shaul Yisraeli (former dean of Mercaz harav and winner of the Israel Prize), Center top, The Vilna Gaon. Center bottom, Rav Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim. Left, Rav Avraham Shapira former Rosh Yeshiva.

Rabbi Kook studied in the Volozhin Yeshiva and quotes from the Vilna Gaon's *Kol Ha'Tor*. As well as being seen by others as the flagship yeshiva of the religious Zionist movement, Mercaz Harav (and its students) sees itself as being the

intellectual/theological legacy of Vilna. It is also important to notice what is not on these two walls. There is no rabbinic figure who representing the very strong Hasidic current in Eastern European Judaism[44]. Rabbi Kook's mother was from a Lubavitch Hasidic family, and in many of his works one can see the influence of Lubavitch Hasidut. The classic theological[45] tension between Lithuanian Judaism (known colloquially as 'Litvaks') and Hasidic Judaism (known colloquially as Galicianer's[46]), is replayed in Mercaz Harav.

In 1924 Rabbi Kook founded a rabbinic seminary called Ha'Yeshivat Ha'Mercazi Ha'olami (The World Central Yeshiva), based in his house off of Jaffe Street[47]. The original idea of the yeshiva was that it would serve as a central location for rabbinic scholarship for both the Land of Israel and world Jewry. The yeshiva was located there into the 1960's and then moved to a much larger building in the Kiryat Moshe neighborhood of Jerusalem. The older building is now used as a museum to highlight the influence of Rabbi Kook on religious Zionism, and on Israeli society in general. This goal of creating a central institution of learning fits well with Rabbi Kook's work to establish a central rabbinate in the Land of Israel. Indeed the impetus to centralize (and in a sense legalize in the eyes of authorities – British and otherwise) rabbinic institutions corresponds to Rabbi Kook's mystical goal of ultimate harmony.

The idea of redemption in this transcendental vision is progressive. The unification of different aspects of divinity on the personal level, and the paralleled

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[44] There is also no rabbinic figure from a Sephardic tradition.
[45] In the 18th and 19th centuries the tension was also sociological. 'Litvaks' were viewed as being more civilized than their Galician counterparts.
[46] Galicia in Eastern Europe was a stronghold of the Hasidic movement.
[47] According to a popular legend I heard, Rabbi Kook wanted to originally place the Yeshiva in Tel-Aviv, the heart of the New Jewish renaissance.

unification of the People of Israel in the Land of Israel occurs slowly through time. For them, history moves in very specific stages, and each stage is necessary. There are no, sudden or apocalyptic jumps in this process. In this view the State of Israel, and all aspects that are attached to it, is a sanctified institute. It is sacred because it is one irreplaceable stage in the complete unification that awaits redemption.

After the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Rabbi Kook's theology of transcendental harmony became extremely popular among contemporary Israeli religious Zionists in Judea and Samaria. The intimate and inescapable connection of the soul to larger transcendental forces implies an intimate and almost mystical connection between the individual and the State (or in other words: Law, both secular and Jewish). In contemporary religious Zionist parlance this theological and political loyalty to the State is called 'mamlachtiyut'. As Yagil Levy argues Mamlachtiyut was formulated, mainly by David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister and Defense Minister. "Mamlachtiyut raised the State to a supreme symbol as the embodiment of Zionism, supplanting any particularist conceptualization incompatible with state directed goals" (1997: 36). For David Ben-Gurion State authority and loyalty were 'civic' principles. For the mystical and messianic followers of Rabbi Kook, this civic norm turned into a religious experience.

While all religious Zionist yeshivot in Israel are influenced by the works of Rabbi Kook, there are some institutions – known as Yeshivot Ha'Kav (or Seminaries of the Line) that follow a very strict and conservative interpretation of Rabbi Kook's thought. They 'hold the line' as it were. For them the thought of Rabbi Kook is nearly infallible. I remember once learning a text of Rabbi Kook with a c*hevruta* in Machon Meir, one of

the classical religious Zionist institutions. I mentioned how I disagreed with a particular aspect of what was found in the text. My study partner, (a teacher in the yeshiva) got rather offended. “You can’t really say that” he said. “Rav Kook is on such a different level, that you really just don’t understand it properly yet”. In this perception however, there are certain people who *do understand*. Great rabbis have an intuitive understanding of these mysterious historical processes.

It is such men who– in the view of these religious Zionists –have taken the responsibility for editing Rabbi Kook’s written works. As Avinoam Rosenak (2007) has demonstrated, the majority of the written material that has been published under the name of Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook has actually been edited (sometimes a great deal) by his son Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda, and one of his disciples Rabbi David Cohen. Rabbi Kook’s the theological texts, which form the basis of religious Zionism in Israel, are very difficult to understand. Many of the Hebrew words are either archaic, or were used in such a way as to be avant-gard for the early 20th century. The language is highly poetic, and the ideas in each paragraph do not always flow in a linear manner.

I once heard a popular story that someone had asked the Chief Rabbi of Haifa, Rabbi Sha’ar Yashuv Cohen, the son of David Cohen, why Rabbi Kook wrote the way he did. Rabbi Sha’ar Yashuv said that Rabbi Kook was trying to write using the poetic language that people in his time would understand. The Rabbinic figures who later edited his work did so - in part - to make them more understandable.

There was, however a good deal of censorship in the process. The editors changed certain words, and altered the order of paragraphs. As Rosenak argues, there are two

reasons for this censorship. Firstly, the ideas of Rabbi Kook as originally expressed in his notebooks are very revolutionary. His students wanted to protect their rabbi from the critique of the Ultra-Orthodox rabbis of the time (men who were vehemently opposed to his ordination as Chief Rabbi). Secondly, they wanted to protect the reader from revolutionary ideas, from ideas whose import may be misunderstood. As Rosenack writes, “the editors began to try to protect us—the readership - from R. Kook’s revolutionary ideas. They did so on the premise that “the generation is not yet ripe” for the revelation of his thought in all its grandeur.” (2007: 147). As my *chevruta* told me in Machon Meir “Rav Kook is on a different level…I just don’t understand”.

For Rabbi Kook, his disciples, and the communities that emerged out of this philosophy, Jewish freedom took on a collective and positive aspect. Collective and individual ‘Self-realization’, discipline, and self-mastery, was their answer to the question “what does it mean to be free in a free Jewish commonwealth” (Fischer. 2007: 101). The aspect of self-realization and mastery that emerges out of the philosophy of transcendental harmony goes hand-in-hand with a particular political outlook on the world.

To understand this point, it is best to return to Isaiah Berlin’s understanding of ‘positive freedom’. Berlin’s statements to this effect are hauntingly similar to the Kookian approach. For Berlin ‘harmony’ and ‘unity’ served as a philosophical basis for the kinds of movements that attempted to free men ‘for’ a specific purpose.

> All true solutions to all genuine problems must be compatible: more than this, they must fit into a single whole; for this is what is meant by calling them all rational and the universe harmonious. Each man has his specific character, abilities, aspirations, ends. If I grasp both what these ends and natures are, and how they all relate to one another, I can, at least in principle, if I have the knowledge and the strength, satisfy them all… (1969: 17).

For some of the more zealous adherents to Rabbi Kook's philosophy, great individuals have an intuitive understanding of the grand unifying movements of history. As Berlin wrote, "the ends of all rational beings must of necessity fit into a single universal, harmonious pattern, which some men may be able to discern more clearly than others" (1969: 21). These individuals have the capacity then to determine or locate the 'true-desires' of others.

There are then some worrying implications to this harmonious view of political life. "[The]ancient faith [That] rests on the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail one another" (1969: 29), is responsible for the some of the most authoritarian, totalitarian (or all unifying) governments in history.

To be clear, I am not arguing for a causal relationship between a Kookian philosophy of transcendental harmony and collective sovereignty (unity) with political injustice. In other words it would be too simple to directly link military occupation within Judea and Samaria to a positive notion of liberty. As will be shown, certainly negative senses of liberty can cause injustice and even violence.

A central tenet of Rabbi Kook and his disciple's philosophy was the negation of the Galut (Jewish Diaspora). This idea sharply criticizes (and indeed deems impossible) Jewish life in the Diaspora. As Eliezer Don Yehiya argues, "In Rav Kook's approach, Galut constitutes a defective and alienated existence characterized by decline, narrowness, displacement, seclusion and weakness (1992: 130). Life in the Diaspora is

what limits the capability of the Jewish people to attain a state of harmony and sanctity. To attain collective freedom, the Jewish People must free themselves *from* the Diaspora.

I am arguing that, on the whole, classical forms of mystical, progressive, and messianic religious Zionism intimately links the individual to State authority. It demands of the individual that he realize his potential as a Jew within the boundaries of the State apparatus. These demands are directly related to how the Kookian style of religious Zionism views the concept of Jewish national liberty. This relationship can be seen at an ethnographic level through Jewish settlement, disciplinary, and military practices.

6.2A - Know Him in all Your Ways: Self Discipline and Self Realization in a Samarian Settlement

Images of Rabbi Kook's thought and philosophy serve as the theological source of disciplinary practices within the classical mystical messianic branch of religious Zionism. That is, the ways in which Rabbi Kook's thought is received and interpreted, influences everyday social and political expressions.

The anthropology of religion (and of Jews and Judaism specifically) has tended to overlook the role that religious experience may play in their analyses of socio-cultural phenomenon. A poignant example of this tendency can be found in Zbrowski and Herzog's text, Life is With People (1952). Here, Marc Zbrowski, and Elizabeth Herzog try to resurrect the daily life of the Jewish Shtetls that dotted the Eastern European countryside up until the start of WWII. They do this, through the recollections of the former inhabitants of these towns. Life is With People, is heavily invested in describing (and critiquing) the differences between the *sheyne* (beautiful, elite, and learned) and the

proste (simple, proletarian) Jews. In many ways the shtetl is portrayed as a reflection of the tensions between these *sheyne* and *proste* Jews.

> In a brief account of the worldview of Shtetl inhabitants, Zbrowsi and Herzog write; The Shtetl views the universe as a planned whole, designed and governed by the Almighty, Who created it from original chaos.

At the word 'chaos', they comment in a footnote.

> Here, as throughout the book, it is of course the culture and not the theology of the shtetl that is being discussed. Any reference to a religious doctrine is not in a theological frame of reference, but is presented as an expression or reflection of the culture (1952: 409).

The relationship between religious experience and everyday practice is simply lacking in Herzog and Zbrowski's analysis of Jewish culture. Yet it seems that for a full understanding of the human condition, and for religious nationalist movements specifically, this relationship is *precisely* what needs to be highlighted.

My friend Ze'ev in Har Bracha seemed to almost have an encyclopedic knowledge of Rabbi Kook's writings. In his house one Shabbat he walked over to his bookshelf (on which one could find perhaps the vast majority of Rabbi Kook's writings) and he took down a text entitled '*Mussar Avicha'* (literally translated- The Message of Your Father). *Mussar Avicha* was released in 1946 by Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda. The text, fits into the general genre of moral, ethical and disciplinary writings – known as the *Musar Movement* - that were appearing in Europe during the 19th century (Etkes. 1993). The text – which is steeped in Jewish mysticism - offers a series of disciplinary guidelines that are meant to aid students as they attempted to refine their ethical and moral character traits. Ze'ev wanted to show me the following passage in the text;

> Know him in all your ways. One has to seek The Holy One Blessed Be He in the ways that one is accustomed to. When he is busy with prayer, should seek The Holy One Blessed Be He in the understanding of the matters of prayer and in the proper intentions that ought to be in one's heart during prayer. He should not seek the knowledge of God at that moment in other matters. Since he is busy with the work of prayer, The Holy One Blessed Be He as it were is dwelling next to him specifically through that prayer, and not through anything else. And when he is busy with Torah, know that he should find The Holy One Blessed Be He as he is delving into and understanding his Creator, he should have a good memory, and learn well. Through his Torah learning, and not in another way, he will know the Blessed One, because in that moment God is revealing himself through that work. And that is also the case when he is busy with charity for the benefit of his friend. Then he should seek The Holy One Blessed Be He just in deepening his ability to offer the best aid possible. And this is the case in all the things that one does, for in truth there is nothing in this world that is not for the honor of the Blessed One[48] (Musar Avicha 2:2).

Ze'ev explained how serving God can be accomplished through human activity. Even the most mundane matters can be a way to reveal God's honor in the world. For Rabbi Kook "knowing God in all your ways" and thus revealing his "honor", seems to be another way of expressing the ultimate unity within all creation.

> "Know him in all your ways". That is one small verse that includes all aspects of the Torah that are activated through treasured paths, it is truthfully an inheritance for the collective. All our life's goals, and all our life's desires, accomplishments and passions, the richness and the honor, the government, and the expansion of Israel, they all flow from the source of sanctity[49] (Orot Yisrael u'tchiyato 3).

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[48] My own non-literal translation
בכל דרכיך דעהו, צריך לבקש את הקכ"ה בתוך הדרכים שהוא מתנהג בהם. כשהוא עוסק בתפלה אז יבקש את הקב"ה בהבנת עניני תפלתו וכונה רצוי' באמונת הלב באותם הענינים של תפלתו. ולא יבקש את הידיעה בשעה ההיא בענינים אחרים, כי כיון שהוא עוסק בעבודה זו הקב"ה כביכול שורה מצדו בזו העבודה דוקא ובה ימצאנה ולא במ"א. וכשהוא עוסק בתורה ידע שימצא את הקב"ה בהיותו מעמיק ומעיין להבין דבר על בריו ולזכור ולשנן היטיב, ובזה הוא יודע אותו ית' בתורתו ולא באופן אחר, כי בשעה זו הוא מתגלה בעבודה זו. וכן בהיותו עסוק בגמ"ח להיטיב לחברו, אז יבקש את הקב"ה רק בהעמקת עצה איך להיטיב לו טובה גדולה הגונה וקימת. וכן בכל הדברים שעושה הרי באמת אין דבר בעולם שאינו לכבודו ית

[49] My own non-literal translation

Learning Torah, or giving charity, or as we shall see serving in the army, are all ways one can reveal God's honor. In so doing one personally performs the unity that is in all creation. The point however, is to inject some form of discipline into these practices. As my friend Ze'ev explained, the acts of charity, praying studying, perhaps even fixing a car ought to be performed *exclusively*. All of one's energies ought to be devoted to one practice at a time.

Figure 9 The Ark in Har Bracha

That evening we went to the evening prayers in the Har Bracha Yeshiva. During *Sh'mone Esrei*, as students were standing, swaying back and forth, I noticed a Hebrew verse written above the Ark that read, "Know him in all your ways". The Yeshiva is the central locus of the community. Community members and students pray facing this verse nearly every day. The message is internalized.

Just how internalized this disciplinary message was, became clear a few months later when I and a few friends attended a political event on the settlement. Despite the official (and unofficial) building freeze in Judea and Samaria that the Netanyahu coalition pushed through in 2010, Har Bracha had managed to construct a new neighborhood

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"בכל דרכיך דעהו", שהיא פרשה קטנה שכוללת כל גופי תורה, שיוצאת אל הפועל ביחידי סגולה, נחלת הכלל היא באמת. כל שאיפת החיים וכל חפץ ההיים, הקנין ותשוקותיו, העשר והכבוד, הממשלה וההתרחבות בישראל, ממקור הקדש הם נובעים

within their community. On a rainy night in January the community, along with various political figures, gathered in the Synagogue to celebrate this accomplishment. There was a pretty violent rainstorm that night, and on the way up our car was also hit by a wild deer (at first I thought we were hit by a rock). My friends and I arrived late to the event, wet and somewhat shook up.

Figure 10 Synagouge in Har Bracha

When we walked in, there was standing room only. The synagogue was packed from wall to wall with little children, middle aged men, and women who sat on the other side of the *mechitza*. There were many speeches, by many figures, and each of them had a stake in the new construction. Not all of the speeches however, were so thrilling. My friend made a very interesting comment. “Nehemia, look around, no one is moving, kids aren’t running around, everyone is so focused, disciplined. They’re like an army”. My friend was commenting from a political perspective. For him the people sitting in the synagogue were an ideologically (and physically) disciplined army. I thought the statement was also true in a religious sense. Self-discipline enacts a kind of ultimate unity that was as much political as it was religious (or personal). There was a disciplined audience in the synagogue, and that discipline emerges out of a particular interpretation of sanctity.

6.2B - *The Army in Eli*

My friend's observation that "this is an army", echoes other practices of self-disciplining that emerge out of Rabbi Kook's thought. If - according to Rabbi Kook's theology of transcendental harmony – the State itself is sacred, all institutions of that State are also sacred. For most religious Zionist communities few institutions are as important as the Israel Defense Forces. For some, military service is not just an important civil contribution, it also takes on a distinctly religious significance. The military acts as a theological means of redemption.

The Bnei David (Sons of David) *Yeshivot* in the settlement of Eli is one example of an institution, indeed a community, for whom the values of military service take on a heavily religious significance. Bnei David, is the first pre-military preparatory yeshiva (or *mechina*) in Israel. The institution places an emphasis on preparing students both spiritually as well as physically for full and meaningful service in the I.D.F. The Yeshiva encourages its students to serve the State to the best of their abilities. The implication here is that students who are physically capable ought to serve in combat units, and ought to strive to enter the Officer Corp. Bnei David runs three institutions in Eli, a pre-military *mechina*, a post-military yeshiva, as well as a yeshiva for older, married students. Moreover, many officers, and their families, live within Eli, and on the surrounding hilltops.

Right before Chanukah a friend of mine in Yeshiva was visiting his wife's family in Eli. They let me come along and I stayed in a neighboring house (the residents were away for a Shabbat). On Friday night we prayed in one of the *yeshivot*. Between *Kabbalat Shabbat* and the evening prayer Rabbi Eli Sadan, the Rosh Yeshiva of Bnei

David, gave a homily on the topic Chanuka. He asked a halachic as well as a very military question. Jews always say that it is a miracle that Judah Maccabee with a weaker force defeated the Syrian Greeks, who had a larger force. If Jews are prohibited from relying on miracles, then by what halachic right did Judah Maccabee fight his war[50]? Rabbi Sadan offered an interesting answer, which exemplified Bnei David's focus on military prowess coupled with spiritual attunement. He claimed that at times, a military commander has an inner (*pnimiyut*) sixth sense which tells him that he can indeed overcome the odds and defeat a larger or better armed force. In this situation, a commander is allowed to listen to this inner voice and attack. Rabbi Eli Sadan, a former officer himself, seemed to have been echoing Rabbi Kook's focus on the inwardness (the *pnimiyut*) of an individual. Here military acumen becomes a disciplinary practice that emerges out of an inner spiritual attunement.

Military traditions and disciplinary practices are an everyday part of the day-to-day habitus of life in Eli. On Saturday morning I got a little lost walking to synagogue. I asked a young man for directions. He told me to "turn around, make a left and then another left until the end[51]". The he stopped, thought for a second, and pointed to a nearby hill. "In essence it's on this hilltop (*kippa*) so just go around and up". I was a little bit taken aback because the gentleman whom I asked started using military navigational terms when giving me directions. The classical infantry exercise in the I.D.F. includes the capturing of a hilltop. Here, one unit moves straight up the hill, while a second unit maneuvers around to the side of the hill and attacks from the flank. This second unit

[50] This is a common traditional aphorism among orthodox Jews. Rabbi Sadan is turning this aphorism into a topic of Jewish legal discussion.
[51] This is how all directions seem to work in Israel.

literally goes "around and up". Apparently that's how this gentleman also walks to Synagogue every Shabbat.

In the synagogue I was chosen to open up the ark and take out the Torah. There was a metal gate with a lock that had to be opened, and I noticed a key tied to the gate. The ends of the knot were burned together. This is a common practice in combat units and is part of what is called *shipur tziud* (or improving equipment), the acronym that is often used is *shif"tzur*. For example small chords are tied to rifle magazines to make them easier to remove from a vest. In order to keep the tied ends from fraying, they are always burned together. In this way, soldiers can spend hours during their free time improving their equipment. Someone in the synagogue had put a *shif"tzur* on the keychain of the Ark. When I spoke to my friend who let me come along for the weekend he rolled his eyes, laughed, and said "people in Eli are in an army movie".

Indeed this 'army movie' is a theological one. For Rabbi Sadan, the army represents the unity of the Jewish People, which is a transcendental value. Ironically I heard this belief echoed in the comments of a secular soldier.

In 2012 got a ride from a fellow soldier on my way back to reserve duty. Yogev was taking 25 days off from his career in High Tech to serve as a sergeant in reserves. On the way to the base, we were talking about reserve duty. "Look, around you when you're on the base" he said. "You have really wealthy people, and some people who have difficulty finishing the month. And they all sit together in the same mud, they all eat the same shit. It's really amazing". I did look, and it was amazing. For Yogev, this unity which manifests itself in the military possesses a *civil* value. For Rabbi Sadan, as a student of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, this kind of unity is of a transcendental value.

Rabbi Sadan, and the community in Eli are known as 'moderate' voices. Despite any mistakes the State of Israel may make, they see in it (and the military in particular) intrinsic aspects of holiness. For them, Jewish independence and 'freedom' is intimately connected to this collective and statist sanctity. For this reason, they see any violence directed at the army as not just a political, but a theological act of betrayal directed at the State of Israel.

So how does a 'Mercaznik' pray? During my time in yeshivot I often saw these students praying the *shmoneh esrei*[52]. They would stand with their feet together, their faces raised skyward, and their hands held together over their hearts, their bodies gently shuckling back and forth. For a Mercaznik, there is no screaming and none of the clapping one might find in more Hasidic styles of prayer. For them prayer is the quiet song of redemption (Lights of Redemption. 2006: 14). To best answer this question, however, perhaps we should turn to our primary source, one of Rabbi Kook's comments on prayer.

> Prayer is the ideal of the cosmos. All experience in its entirety yearns to return to the source of its life force. Every plant, every bush, every grain of sand, every clod of earth, everything where life reveals itself, and every place that contains the secret of life, every small creation, in it's greatness, bend and burn with sanctity, all the details of existence, in all its generalities, all of it hums, and strives, and years, for the beloved wholeness of its supernal source, the life that is sanctified, purified and great….With prayer man raises up all of creation, unifies himself with all of existence, he raises it all, elevates it all, to the source of blessing, to the source of life[53] (Olat Ra'ayah 8:1).

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[52] The Eighteen Benedictions. The liturgical climax of Jewish prayer

[53] Translation is my own
התפילה היא האידיאל של כל עולמים. כל ההויה כולה למקור חייה היא עורגת, כל צמח, וכל שיח, כל גרגר חול, וכל רגב אדמה, כל אשר בו חיים נגלים, וכל אשר בו חיים כמוסים, כל קטני היצירה, וכל גדוליה, שחקי מעל, ושרפי קודש, כל הפרטיות שביש, וכל כללותו, הכל הומה שואף עורג ושוקק, לחמדת שלמות מקורו העליון, החי הקדוש הטהור והכביר. והאדם סופג את כל השקיקות הללו בכל עת ובכל שעה, והוא מתרומם ומתעלה בתשוקות קדשו, ובא תור הגילוי, לתשוקות רוממות אל אלה בתפילה, המכה גלי אורה, היוצאת

For the Mercaznik prayer is the means through which man raises himself up towards divinity. It is the effort at unification with the divinity. For the strictly statist, or *mamlachti* view, prayer is one element towards the ultimate redemption that will see the People of Israel unified with spiritual source of their existence, within the physical source of their existence, the Land of Israel.

6.3 - **Immanent Sanctity**

In the previous section we discussed the ways in which a theology of transcendental harmony is coupled with a politics that reflects state authority and loyalty. In this section we will explore how an immanent experience of sanctity reflects a religious Zionism that – while being strongly supportive of the State of Israel and Zionist principles –also reserves the right to be critical of that authority.

Some religious Zionists disagree with Rabbi Sadan's approach. They understand the nature of sanctity quite differently, and associate it with different ways of relating to national collectivity and liberty. In the year 2000 I remember one teacher of mine in Yeshivat Hakibbutz Hadati in Ein Tzurim, who said that he did not understand why the military has to be the locus of Jewish redemptive unity. After all he, claimed, Israel's social security institution (*bituach leumi*) was just as unifying, and was just as essential to Israeli daily life. More recently, I heard this notion echoed 12 years later by my *Rosh Yeshiva* in Efrat. He wrote in a Shabbat pamphlet,

> I don't call for pacifism, but I object to turning the military into a religious value. The Jewish power of defense is a part of the State, and it is the State's

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בחופש עזה, בהגיון שיח קדשה, למרחבי אל. מרומם הוא האדם בתפילה את כל היצור, מאחד הוא עמו את כל היש, מעלה את הכל, מרומם את הכל, למקור הברכה, למקור החיים

> responsibility to defend its inhabitants. There is however no greater sanctity in this than there is in the healthcare system, in the ministry of the interior, or the treasury. …pre-military academies and rabbis who turn the army into a religious value transform the religious public into something that is based on the force of arms.

I later went up to his desk at the front of the Beit Midrash, and asked if he could clarify his views for me. After all, among religious Zionists in Israel, it is unusual to hear a rabbi (of a pre-military academy) deny or minimize the religious value of the Israeli army. The Rosh Yeshiva explained that Rabbi Sadan's approach touched upon fascism (he used this word). He made it clear that while he is not any less of a Zionist, or any less supportive of the military, to claim, however, that the unity of the people rested in military force simply seemed fascistic. For this Rosh Yeshiva as well, *bituach leumi* could just as easily represent the unity of the Jewish people. This tension is not necessarily recent, but it has become more noticeable in recent years. It is based around an imminent conceptualization of sanctity and, like the mystical messianic approach outlined above, is also implicated in socio-political conflicts of modern Israeli (and broadly Jewish) existence.

What I term 'immanent', is the notion that sanctity is not something that resides in some far away transcendental realm, and is not something that must be achieved, or unified with. Rather, sanctity resides within the physical world (as opposed to a transcendental realm), and can be produced, or drawn out using various intellectual and disciplinary techniques.

This section will review three popular approaches towards the immanent nature of sanctity and will describe the political or social implications that may emerge out of each. These three approaches can be found specifically among English speaking

immigrants (primarily from the United States) to Israel. It will be shown that this is significant because it expresses a distinct theological and social divide between religious Zionists in Israel[54].

6.3A - *Immanence through Study*

One popular expression of immanent sanctity can be found in the works of Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903 – 1993), a Modern Orthodox Lithuanian - American Rabbi. Rabbi Soloveitchik serves as the philosophical standard bearer of American Modern Orthodox Judaism. He is no less important for American Modern Orthodox immigrants living in Israel, many of whom have chosen specific communities in Judea as their home. Soloveitchik is primarily known as an intellectual Talmudist. Beyond that, his existential writings attempt to capture the inner spiritual worlds of rabbinic scholarship, and place a great deal of emphasis on individual responsibility and effort. A center of Rabbi

[54] Throughout my travels among religious Zionists I could not help but notice how distinctly 'American' this notion of divine imminence seemed to be. Some scholars have pointed to the presence of American Israeli immigrants (known in Israel as 'Anglo-Saxons', or 'Anglos') in the religious Zionist movement (particularly among settlers in Judea and Samaria) (Raymond. 2011; Waxman. 1989; 1995). I question this connection. While many people in the field talk about the American immigrant influence within Judea and Samaria, the last statistical study of the population was published in 1989. Certainly most of the religious and political leaders of the settlement movement (and of religious Zionism) more broadly, are not of American origin. The traditional religious Zionist political parties have only very recently made a concerted effort to attract the American vote – and their efforts in the 2013 *Knesset* campaign were less than compelling)[54]. What does seem to be the case is that most immigrants tend to choose to live in places that are close to other immigrants from the same origin. American immigrants – perhaps owing to their overwhelming Orthodoxy - tend to live in the 'metropolitan' area around Jerusalem. Most of the area around Jerusalem tends to fall on the eastern side of the Green Line, turning many American immigrants to Israel into 'settlers'.

Soloveitchik's thought can be found in Yeshivat Har Etzion in the Gush Etzion Bloc of Judea.

Echoing Rabbi Reines and the Mizrachi Movement, Joseph Soloveitchik was very suspicious of the mystical tendency towards transcendence. If the mystic saw in God's contraction something to be overcome, Soloveitchik saw in it something to be lauded.

> [T]he task of man is to bring down the divine presence to the lower world, to this vale of tears. The mystery of tzimtzum [contraction] should not precipitate metaphysical anguish but rather gladness and joy. (Soloveitchik. 2005: 52).

This understanding of sanctity is directly related to the pedagogical method of Talmud study that became popular within the walls of the Volozhin Yeshiva in Lithuania. The method known as *Derech Brisk* (or the Brisker Way) was named after Reb Chayim Soloveitchik of Brisk (1853-1918). It placed an emphasis on rigorous analysis and precise conceptual definitions in resolving Talmudic contradictions. A student studying Talmud using this method deconstructs an argument (most notably a contradiction in a text) into its conceptual components, analyzing them individually, along with their assumptions and implications. The contradiction is often resolved by finding minute differences within underlying assumptions. At times two opposing answers to a contradiction are both equally accurate. The point here is that sanctity is produced through human effort and - in a sense - human fallibility. Sanctity emerges out of the attempt to bring the infinite down into the realm of the finite.

There are two practical implications to this theological understanding of immanent sanctity. Firstly, the intellectual pursuits, particularly the Brisker method of Talmud study, is one method through which emerges human fallibility. Talmudic conclusions reached through human thought may not match divine intention. This is

especially true when the Brisker method leads to two contradictory conclusions. If a Talmudic conclusion need not, match divine intent, then neither must the practice of Jewish law. Thus the second practical implication to the view of immanent sanctity can be found in the everyday practice of Jewish law.

> An individual does not become holy through mystical adhesion to the absolute nor through mysterious union with the infinite, nor through a boundless all-embracing ecstasy, but, rather, through his whole biological life, through his animal actions and through actualizing the Halakhah in the empirical world…Holiness consists of a life ordered and fixed in accordance with Halakhah and finds its fulfillment in the observance of the laws regulating human biological existence… (Soloveitchik. 2005: 46-47)

Questions such as; when to eat, how to get dressed in the morning, the proper legal method of marriage, all of these are details of Jewish law that are in the hands of man. Here the minutiae of Jewish practice – as interpreted by man - are the means through which sanctity emerges.

Soloveitchik's Jewish Nationalism is closely connected to this view of divinity. For him there was very little connection between mysticism, messianism, and modern Zionism. In his writings one can find little mention of progressive movements towards an ultimate transcendental redemption. The religious significance of Zionism and the State of Israel was ultimately pragmatic. As he wrote, "For the first time in the history of our exile, divine providence has surprised our enemies with the sensational discovery that Jewish blood is not free for the taking, is not *hefker*!" This is Rabbi Soloveitchik's religious Zionism. Simple and pragmatic, and based on the basic theological assumption that the Jewish People ought not be weak.

For the followers of Rabbi Kook the State is sacred in an *intrinsic* sense. Beyond any human action, the State of Israel by virtue of its very existence is a way-post on the

long road towards redemption. Unlike Rabbi Kook, however, for Rabbi Soloveitchik there is little *intrinsically sacred* about the State of Israel – or any State for that matter. For him, a State only deserves the loyalty of its citizens so long as it bends itself to more supernal values. As he explained;

> "We only submit ourselves to one thing and that is to the Holy One Blessed be he and to the Torah he gave us as a way of life and as a scale of spiritual values that guide us. If a State aids us in this submission – we give ourselves over to it with all our heart and soul' but if a State interferes with this submission – then I cannot feel any love in my heart for that State (Peli, No Year: 142).

Rabbi Solovitchik's theological ability to leave room for individual action (i.e. God's contraction is not something that necessarily needs repair) has allowed his students and followers to come to some surprising political conclusions. For example, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein Rabbi Soloveitchik's son-in-law, and the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion in the settlement of Alon Shvut, was asked about the permissibility of offering Palestinians land in exchange for peace. He responded that such questions are best answered by strategic experts and not rabbinic personalities (whose expertise is in the Torah)[55]. Here pragmatic human decisions are far more compelling than any intrinsic and transcendental type of sanctity. Moreover, Rabbi Soloveitchik understands of sanctity lead him and his followers to be far more skeptical towards any all-encompassing authority - be it rabbinic or civil.

This outlook can be seen quite clearly within the pedagogical philosophies of various rabbinic seminaries. Within religious Zionism divine immanence allows for multiple legitimate perspectives and tends to eschew unifying (and perhaps simplistic)

[55] This mirrors an answer Rabbi Soloveitchik once gave to a personal question. As the story goes, one student asked him why his wife doesn't cover her hair. The Rabbi answered "Why don't you ask her?"

paradigms. For example, Yeshivat Har Etzion has two *Roshei Yeshivot* (Rabbinic Deans). In New York's Yeshiva University[56] every rabbi is called a "Rosh Yeshiva". The Rosh yeshiva sets the religious and political tenor of a seminary. He answers Jewish legal questions and acts as an ethical and scholarly role model for his students. A plurality of *Roshei Yeshiva* offers students an individual choice. Pedagogically it implies that there are no simple answers to every question, and not all answers emerge out of rabbinic authority. Here sanctity is produced out of individual responsibility and personal choice. In contrast, nearly all seminaries that emerge out of the theological ideas of Rabbi Kook only employ one Rosh Yeshiva. For them the goal of sanctity is to produce unity and harmony. In the end harmony speaks with one voice.

So how might a 'classical' 'Gushnik' pray? First of all prayer does not seem to be the primary focus of a 'Gushnik's' religious experience. As Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstien writes; "According to the Rav [Rabbi Soloveitchik], the sanctity and unique nature of a *beit midrash* are based not on our preference for the intellectual and rational aspect of our faith, but rather on the greater importance of study than *tefilla* [prayer] on the existential plane"[57]. When the time for prayer has arrived, the student will stand for the *Shemoneh Esrei*, place his feet together, and straighten his entire body. His lips may move and he may sway gently back and forth, yet always gracefully, never in any exaggerated motion. Prayer is a *mitzvah* - a commandment, an obligation. God - the King - commands one to pray, and one prays as if standing before a king.

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[56] Another institution affiliated wth the thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.
[57] http://www.vbm-torah.org/archive/ralpray1.htm

6.3B - *Immanence through Kindness*

I heard a second approach towards immanent sanctity from Rabbi Shlomo Riskin of Efrat. Shlomo Riskim is an Orthodox Rabbi born in in the United States. After receiving rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik at Yeshiva University in 1960, he became popular as the Rabbi of the Lincoln Square Synagogue on Manhattan's Upper West Side. In the early 1980's Rabbi Riskin moved to Israel and helped establish the settlement of Efrat. As part of my fieldwork I tried to regularly attend classes given by Rabbi Riskin in Efrat. In one of these classes, sitting around a large table adjacent to the dining room, he expounded upon a verse from the daily prayers.

> "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the entire world is filled with his honor". And afterwards a loud noise is heard, "blessed is God's honor [*Kavod*] from his place [*mimkomo*][58].

Rabbi Riskin understands the word '*Kavod'* or God's honor according to his particular reading of Maimonides' Guide to the Perplexed. Honor here signifies "God's expression on earth'[59]. He then glosses the Hebrew conjugation *mimkomo* or 'from his place' in a rather new light. Instead of 'from' Rabbi Riskin uses the phrase "greater than". The meaning of the prayer then becomes clear. God's expression on earth should be made greater than his expression in heaven. Bringing a verse from Jeremiah, Riskin further argues that God expresses himself through acts of compassion and loving

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קדוש קדוש קדוש ה', צבאות מלוא כל הארץ כבודו

ואשמא אחרי קול רעש גדול ברוך כבוד ה, ממקומו

59 Whether or not this interpretation was actually Maimonides intent is beyond the pale of this discussion.

kindness. The definition of sanctity here is distinctly immanent. Humans *create* sanctity through acts of compassion. This makes God's expression on Earth *greater* than it is in heaven. Rabbi Riskin related this understanding of imminent sanctity to his version of religious Zionism. The State of Israel was created in part to practice compassion and loving kindness. The State of Israel itself becomes a compassionate (and imminent) expression of sanctity.

How alternative this message is within the Israeli religious Zionist context can be seen by comparing it to the interpretation given by Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, interpreted the above verse in the traditional way, and in a manner which exemplified his understanding of transcendental harmony. For Kook, Gods' sanctity is *expressed in heaven*. Humans must sanctify the Divine as the angels do – "from his place" in heaven. Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda interprets the sanctity in the verse by citing from Pseudo-Jonathan. The ultimate form of sanctity is

> "Sacred forever and for all time, it includes everything from the supernal heavens to the lowest earth, in one decisive unity of God is one and his name is one[60] Aviner.1998:165)

Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook turns this verse into a theological proof text for notions of transcendental harmony. For him, there is a transcendental and unifying form of sanctity. Behind every nook and cranny of this world, there is only one God who unifies all contradictions. The return of the Jewish people to their land is one step towards that ultimate unity. On the other hand, for Rabbi Riskin in Efrat, the State of Israel produces

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[60] "קדוש לעלם ולעלמי עלמיה, המקפת את הכל משמי מרומים עד תחתיות ארץ, באחדות האחת המוחלטת של "ד' אחד ושמו אחד"

sanctity because humanity has the freedom (and individuality) to practice acts of compassion.

Indeed Efrat is known as a rather cosmopolitan community. They pride themselves on the friendly relations they have with the neighboring Palestinians. A friend's sister who lives in Efrat once told me how she gave some of her friends from New York a tour of the community. She showed them the Palestinians who were allowed to harvest their olive trees which were located within the community. I heard one outspoken leader of the Settler Movement chide those in Efrat slightly, claiming tongue in cheek, "they think they're "friends" with their Arabs".

6.3C - *Immanence through Power*

There is certainly a tension among American religious Zionists in Israel. On the one hand I encountered some very cosmopolitan and politically progressive attitudes (towards Palestinians). On the other hand I also encountered attitudes which were on the far right of the political spectrum. Sometimes these opinions could be found living side by side as neighbors, and sometimes one found them within the same person.

The notion of divine immanence expressed through power can be found within the works of Rabbi Meir Kahane (1932-1990). Rabbi Kahane was born in Brooklyn and educated in the Modern Orthodox Yeshiva of Flatbush High School. As a young man he was an active member of Bnei Akiva, and received rabbinic ordination from the Mir Yeshiva (Kahane. 2008: 31). In the late 60's Rabbi Kahane rose to fame through the Jewish Defense League (JDL), an organization he founded whose purpose was to protect

Jews from manifestations of antisemitism. Rabbi Kahane and the JDL began their activities with (civilian) patrols in the poor neighborhoods of NYC, in an effort to protect the elderly Jews still living there.

Very quickly, however, Rabbi Kahane became interested in the issue of Soviet Jewry. Rather than be satisfied with mild protests against Soviet antisemitism, the JDL utilized violence. They disrupted Soviet cultural events in New York City, and routinely harassed soviet diplomats and their families. My father, who was active in the JDL at the time, still remembers the Russian epithets they used to scream towards the diplomats.

One lesson to take away from violence is that it is almost always difficult to control. As part of their efforts the JDL resorted to the use gunfire, and explosives. In 1971 Rabbi Kahane spent a year in federal prison for violating probation in relation to a bombing charge. After his release, Kahane moved to Israel where he became politically active. His Kach Party (Hebrew for 'Thus') gained one seat in the Israeli Knesset in the 1984 elections. While polls showed him rising in support, the party was banned from running in the 1988 elections on charges of racism.

While in Israel, Kahane focused much of his energies on the Arab Israeli issue. Citing a demographic threat, he would often point to the seeming contradiction that the State of Israel was both a 'Jewish' as well as a 'democratic' state. In Kahane's view, it was simply untenable that an Arab majority in Israel may, by means of the vote, end Israel's Jewish character. To counter this problem, Kahane called for the transfer of Arabs out of Israel Proper as well as from Judea and Samaria. When asked many times if

he was a racist, Kahane would often respond, "I don't hate Arabs, I love Jews". In 1990 while on a trip to the United States Rabbi Meir Kahane was assassinated in the Mariot East Side hotel in Midtown Manhattan.

Though condemned by most major Jewish organizations Rabbi Meir Kahane found wide support in the United States and Israel among working class Jews. As an example, my yeshiva high school in the late 1990's employed a middle aged Russian man named Marc, as a janitor. One day Marc left the janitor's closet open. My friend and I looked inside and on the door was a picture of Rabbi Meir Kahane. We could not understand why our Russian janitor would have a picture of Meir Kahane taped to the back of his closet. We asked Marc, and he responded "ohhhh this is a very holy man!"

Most of Rabbi Kahane's written work is in English and it comments on the Jewish political and social situation. Rabbi Kahane was able to write several works of Jewish theology in Hebrew. His most well-known work '*Or Ha'arayon*' (the light of the idea) was published during his life time. Other works were collated from his notes and published posthumously.

The essence of Rabbi Kahane's zealousness, his activism, his violence, and his love for Jews, can be found within the theological writings of *Or Ha'araayon*. This text can provide the anthropologist with a subtle window into the mindset of Rabbi Kahane and his followers. A great deal of Rabbi Kahane's thought is predicated on the issue of sanctifying (and its opposite, desecrating) the name of God.

For Rabbi Kahane the sanctification of God's name is based on the understanding that there exists no power other than God in this world[61]. Building off of a Rashi on Exodus 19:10[62], the word 'sanctity' or *kadosh*, can also mean 'invitation'. One sanctifies the name of God, by inviting Him into our lives, or into this world.

> "He who sanctifies God, in essence invites him into this world. Invites Him, so that this world can be holy, spotless, pure. (1993: 152)"

Sanctity here is something that is contingent on the actions of humanity. Humans invite God into the world. Humans sanctify the world, with God's presence. The opposite is also true for the desecration of God's name.

> "And someone who desecrates God's name, as it were, removes him from this world, and the world remains secular, empty. [both plays on the Hebrew word *Chol*, empty] – without any possibility to grow the sacred fruits of the holy ways of God. The world is like sand [also a play on the word *Chol*] on the seashore, that doesn't grow, and doesn't blossom, barren land. (Ibid)

Likewise, the desecration of God's name is something that is contingent on human control. Humans have the power "as it were" to remove God from the world. For Jews the issue of sanctification and desecration is one of practical import- as it is linked to the issue of martyrdom. Historically, to "die for the sanctification of the divine name", meant to allow oneself to be martyred. By defining sanctification and desecration one is also delineating the parameters of martyrdom.

Rabbi Kahane goes on to differentiate between the i*ndividual* desecration or sanctification of God's name, and the *collective* form of that term. For the individual:

> It is a general rule that the Holy One Blessed Be He created a Jew to accept the yoke of the kingdom of heaven. Through the observance of the commandments

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[61] אין עוד מלבדו
[62] "לך אל העם וקדשתם היום ומחר" , ופירש רש"י שם: "וזימונתם" (תשנ"ג" קנב)

> man bends his will and binds his ego within him. In so doing he crowns God over him as a king, and publicizes his name throughout the world. It follows that one must be alive to fulfill this goal in the world (1993: 153).

And so, Rabbi Kahane explains when an individual is being forced to violate a particular commandment under pain of death – apart from three specific circumstances - one should *not* allow oneself to be martyred.

The same however is not true on a national scale. Here Rabbi Kahane turns away from the issue of martyrdom and focuses instead on the general nature of 'national' desecration.

> The desecration of God's name is the result of the reviling and the humiliation that God feels as it were when his commandments or his people (Israel) are belittled, and he, as it were cannot help them,…Relatedly, when it comes to the Jewish People, the desecration occurs in the humiliation and embarrassment that they feel when they are forced to stand, with no response, against the humiliation of the commandments and of the Jewish people (1993: 154).

For Rabbi Kahane the sanctification of God's name comes in the form of power. Sanctity is created when humans reveal God's power on earth[63]. Desecration emerges when God's power is "as it were" minimized or negated. This happens when the Jewish People (as a People) are weak. The best and most efficient way to 'sanctify God's name' is to ensure the power of the Jewish People.

This is a longstanding theme in the works of Rabbi Kahane, going back to the late 60's. It influenced his political and social agenda, both in the U.S. as well as in Israel. In 1977 at a speech he gave to the Jewish community in Skokie Illinois Rabbi Kahane beseeched those present to come out and protest a planned neo-Nazi march in their community. By showing up to the rally "we sanctify the name of God" he said.

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[63] When it comes to the sanctification of God's name Rabbi Kahane does not seem to limit himself to Jews. Anyone has the capacity to reveal God's power.

For Rabbi Meir Kahane, sanctity emerged out of the immanent practice of power. The desire to produce sanctity through power becomes the source of political activism. This is the theological source of Kahanist violence. At the same time, even within Kahanist contexts, the immanent notion of sanctity can also be moderating force in relation to ritual and Halachic practice.

6.3C1 - *Sanctity, Power, and Moderation*

This notion of sanctity - as emerging out of immanent practice - was echoed in a Shabbat *drasha* (or sermon) I heard at the Young Israel of the Old City of Jerusalem. The Rabbi of the Synagogue is Rabbi Nachman Kahane, Meir's younger brother. The synagogue is located in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, on Al-Wad Hagai Street, about halfway between the Western Wall Complex and the Damascus Gate. It is directly opposite the Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva, which is easy to locate from the many blue and white Israeli flags hanging from the rooftop. These landmarks are important for Jews walking in that area on Shabbat, especially for those who have not been there before \, as the alleyways in the Muslim and Christian Quarter can be confusing (and somewhat dangerous).

When I arrived Shabbat morning, I was surprised that the door to the building was not locked and one can simply walk in. The Synagogue is a rather wide room lengthwise and is located on the second floor. The women's section is on the right, and despite the length of the room, the place always seems crowded on Shabbat. The walls are filled with Jewish books, both in Hebrew and English, although most of the people who attend services Saturday morning are Americans. While I was supposed to be praying I usually

spent most of my time browsing the many eclectic books present. There were the usual classics, copies of the Talmud, halachic compendia, Jewish history, versions of the Bible and its commentators; they even had a few books by Rabbi Kook. They also had several copies of Rabbi Meir Kahane's Hebrew texts. Some of these books – like Or Hara'aayon - are well known and sold in many places. Others however were more obscure, like *Perush Hamaccabim*, Rabbi Mer Kahane's commentary on portions of the Bible.

Rabbi Nachman Kahane is most well-known amongst rabbinic scholars for being the author of the *Mei Menuchot* (or the Calm Waters), a commentary on the Talmudic Tosaphot. It is often joked that while Rabbi Meir was the more zealous brother, Rabbi Nachman the *Mei Menuchot* was the calmer of the two brothers. Indeed Rabbi Nachman, with his neatly trimmed soft white beard, always seemed to speak in a gentle and forgiving tone. While the cadence of his speech was recognizable, there was little of the fiery language of his older brother.

While the synagogue was an hour walk from my apartment (and in the summer that could be quite treacherous), I always enjoyed attending services there. The people were very friendly, but beyond that, the place with its tables, and chairs, seemed almost a transplant of the many little synagogues I had grown accustomed to in Brooklyn. Rabbi Nachman Kahane used to give a sermon in Hebrew after the Torah reading, and then during the *Kiddush* after services he would translate the sermon into English. A *Kiddush* is the term used to describe refreshments that are served either during or after services. A Kiddush usually entails some kind of alcoholic beverage that one then recites a blessing, or Kiddush over, along with some light snacks such as pretzels, fish, or a potato casserole called a *kugel*.

The Kiddush in the Young Israel of the Old City was a serious affair. They would clear all the tables of prayer books and place down plastic covers. With the men and women sitting separately, plates, knives, and forks were passed around to each person. Bottles of hard liquor passed from man to man, followed by trays of salted fish, and two kinds of *kugel*, potato and noodle. Kiddush was a meal unto itself.

Rabbi Nachman Kahane gave a fascinating lecture on *Shabbat Parshat Ki-Tisa*, which focused on the issue of sanctity. *Parshat Ki-Tisa* is the Torah portion that is most well-known for the story of the Golden Calf. For Rabbi Nachman Kahane the sin of the Golden Calf emerged when the People of Israel wanted to bypass Moses and achieve a direct relationship with sanctity. Israel was seeking *kedusha* or sanctity, something which is eminently good. But like the sun, where one requires special glasses to look at, one cannot attain sanctity without some intermediary. This, however, isn't the Jewish way. A distancing from God is necessary in order to experience sanctity. Like all things however, the challenge is moderation. To distance oneself from God to an extreme would risk losing sanctity entirely.

He then related this theological call towards moderation, to the issue of *Chumrot* in Judaism. A *Chumra* is a ritual stringency that goes beyond the letter (or perhaps even the intention) of a particular Jewish law. He said that people take upon themselves new stringencies in order to feel a direct connection with sanctity. Such people may experience that connection for a brief period, but in the end, such a direct connection is unhealthy for their faith.

For Rabbi Nachman Kahane, Sanctity is not something that is found in another world that one must connect to. Sanctity emerges in this world, ironically out of a moderate distancing from God. Like Soloveitchik, it is a divine contraction that produces sanctity. For his brother Meir, sanctity emerged out of human power, for Nachman, sanctity emerges out of human moderation.

It is not that Rabbi Nachman Kahane is any less of a right-wing political activist than his brother Rabbi Meir Kahane. Nachman Kahane (along with his late brother) is a *Cohen,* a member a member of the priestly class. In ancient times the *Cohanim* worked in the Temple complex. Nachman Kahane is a member of an organization that is preparing for the moment when the Priests will be able to resume their work in a rebuilt Third Temple. On the other hand, this immanent view of sanctity is also what leads Nachman Kahane towards positions that are very critical of excessive ritual stringency. During my fieldwork, this is the precise moment when I began to analytically question the terminology of gradations that scholars sometimes use. 'Radicalism', 'fundamentalism' and 'extremism' are all terms that quantitatively 'grade' one phenomenon in relation to another. They can be very easily applied (and often are) towards Rabbi Meir Kahane and his followers. Yet a closer (and perhaps a more sensitive) look at the relationships between theology and practice reveal a more complex reality that is difficult to quantitatively grade.

These are three distinct views on sanctity that revolve around immanence. Here sanctity is *created* through human effort. For Rabbi Soloveitchik that effort is mainly intellectual, though not exclusively so. His religious Zionism was pragmatic and also echoed the calls for Jewish power. "Holiness is created by man, by flesh and blood.

Through the power of our mouths, through verbal sanctification long, we can create holy offerings for the temple treasury and holy offerings for the alter. The Land of Israel becomes holy through conquest… "(2005: 47). For Rabbi Riskin, sanctity is produced through the human ability to act compassionately in this world. For him, acts of kindness and political temperance bring sanctity into the world, and become the very reason for the existence of the Jewish State. For Rabbi Kahane sanctity is produced through power. When Jews are powerful God's presence is brought into the world, and his name becomes sanctified. Kahanist violence occurs in Israel against this theological backdrop.

6.4 - **Between Power and Compassion**

At first glance the positions of Rabbi's Riskin and Kahane seem starkly oppositional. Power and compassion do not seem to complement each other very well. Sometimes, however they complement each other in surprising ways. In the late 1960's and early 1970's Rabbi Riskin worked with Kahane on the issue of Soviet Jewry. The two were friendly if not friends. As Rabbi Riskin told me, Kahane would sometimes spend Shabbat with the Riskin's when he received leave during his federal prison term. Rabbi Riskin appears fairly often in the biography published by Libby Kahane, Meir's wife (2008).

At one point, I was attending a small lecture in yeshiva given by Rabbi Riskin. About ten of us were sitting around a table listening to the Rabbi interpret a Talmudic passage. In these situations, political issues oftentimes emerged out of the discussion. That day, Rabbi Riskin commented somewhat sarcastically on Great Britain's recent condemnation of Israeli settlement policies. "Britain has held the Falkland Islands thousands of miles away, for over a hundred years, and now they tell us how to build".

This was not the first time I heard this argument and most of us in the room were very sympathetic to it. One industrious British student, however, decided to protest. “You know that’s not exactly a fair comparison”, he pointed out in a very posh accent. “Most inhabitants of the Falkland’s want to be British, that’s not true of the West Bank”. Rabbi Riskin offered a quick and fiery response. He turned to the student and his eyes were alight with a political zeal I was not used to seeing in him. “We don’t want to occupy anyone! That’s not what we’re doing here!” In the same person and in almost the very same moment I was confronted with two statements that can be viewed in almost opposite terms.

For all three Rabbis, Soloveitchik, Kahane, and Riskin, religious Zionism and the State of Israel are inexorably linked to the imminent presence of sanctity in *this* world. They exhibit very different understandings of sanctity yet they are all theologically related to each other and exist ethnographically only a few short kilometers from each other (and sometimes within the same person). What does not appear in these three American thinkers (and their unique understandings of religious Zionism) however, is the presence of messianism. Redemptive visions do not seem to hold the same import for them as they do for the many followers of Rabbi Kook.

That is not to say that a messianic vision is completely ‘unimportant’ for these three thinkers and their followings. A firm belief in the coming of the Messiah is a general staple of the Orthodox Jewish religious experience. During the Sabbath, in every synagogue in Gush Etzion one can hear the reader (in Hebrew *Chazan*) intoning the first line of the official prayer for the State of Israel. “Our father in heaven, protector and redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel the first flowering of our redemption”. The

phrase "*first flowering of our redemption*" clearly echoes the progressive and transcendental notions of Rabbi Kook. While this is far from absent within the 'liturgical' repertoire of the followers of immanent religious Zionism, I simply did not find it to be an 'ethnographic' focus of those same individuals.

This skepticism towards mystical messianism offers an outlook towards both Jewish Statehood as well as Judaism in general, that carves out a defined space for the individual practitioner. Here the creation of harmony and ultimate unity is not a desired political, social, or religious goal. For Rabbi Kook and his disciples 'freedom' consisted of the collective Jewish presence (and practice) in the Land of Israel. For those who subscribe to an immanent view of sanctity the notion of 'freedom' is far more complex. This perspective "recognize[s] the fact that human goals are many, not all of them commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another" (Berlin 1969: 31).

Sanctity that is produced out of human effort leaves room for a kind of principled criticism of both state policy and religious authority that is not really possible for the followers of Rabbi Kook. In Soloveitchik's view loyalty to a (any) state is conditioned upon that state's ability to protect Jewish religious (and physical) interests. The same is applicable towards loyalty to a religious authority. Here the knowledge of religious leaders is not absolute and far from infallible. In this way, as we have seen, Rabbi Lichtenstein from Har Etzion, left the decision to transfer land for peace out of the hands of religious authorities. 'Land for Peace' simply is not a decision that falls under the category of religious experience. For Rabbi Riskin in the settlement of Efrat room for critique can be found within ethical standards. The Kahanists – with their emphasis on

Jewish power – are well known for the ease with which they critique state policies, and the extent to which they are willing take those critiques.

The debate between these 'classical approaches' to religious Zionism touches upon what it really means to create a free and faithful Jewish society in the State of Israel. The different philosophies, and the people who put them into practice, are all working to apply the words of the national anthem – "a free nation in our land" – to their political and religious experiences. Here religious experience, theological interpretation, and political practices overlap with one another. By studying one, the researcher gains a glimpse into the reflection of another. Along the way we also gain a more precise understanding of the (sometimes paradoxical) relationships religious nationalists make between interpretation and practice. Mystical messianism for example, despite being the theological impetus behind the settlement movement in Judea and Samaria is often seen as the more moderate and predictable voice within contemporary religious Zionism. It is not that an immanent view of sanctity leads to political opinions which are any more or less 'moderate'. It does, however imply a certain degree of unpredictability in the realm of human activity. With its emphasis on slow historical progressions, social harmony, and state authority, the mystical messianic, or *mamlachti* view of religious Zionism is exceptionally predictable. The following chapter will explore the wider ethnographic and historical context to this mystical messianic vision of religious Zionism.

Chapter 7 - Between the Land and the People: Hebron and Kibbutz Reishit

This chapter will explore the wider social, political, and religious context of Gush Emunim. It will do so by making a counterintuitive comparison between two very different communities. One model can be found within a settlement that is characterized by terrible violence. The other model can be seen in an urban religious kibbutz whose stated goal is social responsibility. Both locations emerged out of similar yet very different mystical visions of Jewish peoplehood and freedom. The differences between these communities exemplify some of the tensions that characterize Jewish political piety in Israel, and in so doing make a case for an ethnography that is sharply attuned to the ways in which religious texts and concepts impact daily life.

Most studies of the impact of Gush Emunim on settlement activity and Israeli society in general, center on analyses of either ideology (Aran1995, 2013; Newman 2005) or political activity (Sprinzak 1991; Don Yehiya 1987; Asher Cohen. 2011). Generally these studies do not take into account the wider socio-religious context of Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook's writings. This wider context is important because it shows how the daily political, social, and nationalistic practices are deeply intertwined with certain experiences of religion. The goal of this chapter will be to show how an ethnography that is attuned to the wider context of religious experience can engage with the larger dilemmas and conflicts of social and political life.

Rabbi Kook's philosophy of transcendental harmony is the primary theological source for religious Zionism's political and religious goals. Settlement activity within Judea and Samaria in particular is heavily influenced by these religious concepts. Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook however, was not the only mystical rabbinic figure living

in Palestine in the early decades of the 20th century who was deeply moved by the political, and social currents of his time.

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi Aschlag (1885-1954) was born in Warsaw and moved to Palestine in 1921 (Garb. 2005: 21). There he became a famous Jerusalem Kabbalist who is most well-known for his translation of the Zohar into English entitled *Ba'al HaSulam*. Like Kook, Aschlag used religious concepts and Jewish mysticism as a way of commenting on political and social issues. The intellectual fate of these two rabbinic thinkers would become intertwined during the political and social upheavals occurring within Israeli society in the late 60's and early 70's. To explore these interconnections, I will be comparing two very different communities that emerged out of the maelstrom of two of Israel's seminal conflicts.

The current Jewish Community in Hebron and Kibbutz Reishit in Jerusalem are two communities that were founded out of a sense of deep bewilderment at Israel's near loss of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. As mentioned in the previous chapter this was a breaking point of sorts for Israeli religious Zionism. These two communities are very different politically and religiously. In their differences, however, they both exhibit a kind of tenacity through which emerges some of the central tensions over the nature of Jewish independence, freedom, and collectivity that have influenced the development of religious Zionism over the past thirty years.

7.1 - **Hebron**

The city of Hebron is home to the burial places of the founding patriarchs and matriarchs of Judaism. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, along with Jacob and

Leah are said to be buried in a series of caves beneath an Herodian period structure known in Hebrew as the *Ma'arat Hamachpela*.

Contemporary Jewish settlement in the city of Hebron was strongly emphasized by Gush Emunim in the years following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Jewish settlement, in what was perceived as its religious and national heartland, was meant to rejuvenate Israel's spiritual and national outlook after the war. For the Jewish inhabitants of Hebron, freedom and independence revolves around this spiritual and (perhaps more importantly) national outlook. In this regard, the Jewish State is a 'free state' when it holds national sovereignty over the ancient sites and locales that are at the heart of Jewishness. Identity, religious experience, and politics all come together in Hebron.

For Hebron's Jewish inhabitants, history (both biblical and modern) is the focus of a religious Zionist claim. As I heard one person say, "Abraham never walked in Tel-Aviv, but he definitely set foot in Hebron". In this view, if Jews have no national rights to live in Hebron, then they surely have none in Tel Aviv. In this way, Jews in Hebron specifically, but also many of the inhabitants of Judea and Samaria more broadly, talk about themselves as the modern vanguard of nationalist Zionist values. Michael Feige has written;

> Among Hebron Jews, national memory reigns supreme. Hebron and Nearby Kiryat Arba, claim the settlers, are where Zionism can be witnessed in its essence: A small number of dedicated Jews, obeying the Biblical decree and the provisions that history has imposed upon them, have returned to the place of their forefathers to struggle against those seeking to evict them" (2009: 144)

It is, however, not only ‘memory’ that reigns supreme in the Jewish Community of Hebron. Determination and a certain kind of national tenacity coalesce within the Jewish neighborhoods of Hebron. I saw it in the way people spoke, in how they walked, and in the stories they told. For the Jewish residents of Hebron (and for many of the people who visit), what scholars term ‘national memory’, is a tangible experience.

7.1A - A Troubled History

This tangible experience, however, is checkered with a troubled and violent history. For centuries Jews resided together with Arabs under non-Jewish rule in the city of Hebron. Jewish life in Hebron before the beginning of the 20th century was exceptionally religious. In the late Middle Ages it served as a center for Sephardic Kabbalism, and indeed there was a sizable Sephardic community in the city up until the early 20th century. In 1924 a large segment of the Lithuanian Slobodka Yeshiva relocated to Hebron. In 1929 the British Mandate authorities evacuated the Jewish community of Hebron following Arab riots that killed 67 community members.

After the 1948 Arab-Israeli war Hebron was annexed into the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, and then was captured by Israeli forces after their victory in 1967. After the ‘67 war, Religious Zionists had contacted the military governor of Hebron, along with Yigal Allon the Labor Minister in an attempt to receive official permission to resettle a Jewish presence in the city. Their approaches met with some interest, yet nothing concrete materialized. As Miriam, the wife of one well knows activist Rabbi Moshe Levinger told her husband, “The government won’t send you there. Go settle, and things will work out” (Auerbach. 2009: 90). During Passover of 1968 a sizable group of Jewish

activists rented several rooms in the Park Hotel in Hebron. They had planned to stay, and after long negotiations with the government, the group was relocated to a military camp that in 1969 became the suburban settlement of Kiryat Arba.

In 1979 Jewish settlers, decided to expand their presence into the city of Hebron itself. A group of women and children slipped into Beit Hadassah, a former Jewish hospital within Hebron. The response of the Begin government (perhaps due to internal coalition pressures) was indecisive at best. It did not remove the inhabitants, but rather cordoned them off. Only food and water was allowed into the enclosure, and those woman who chose to leave the building were not allowed to return. There was no running water or toilets, and after a few months several inhabitants came down with Hepititus. Yet the women refused to leave. In January of 1980, a yeshiva student was killed in the Hebron Market, and in response the government decided to legalize the status of the inhabitants of Beit Hadassah.

On Friday nights a group of yeshiva students from Kiryat Arba would walk down to pray in *Ma'arat Hamachpela*. After services they would then walk to Beit Hadassah to sing and dance in front of the building. On Friday May, 2nd 1980, this group was ambushed by terrorists in front of Beit Hadassah. Six people were murdered. In response Jews moved into the Avraham Avinu neighborhood (next to the *Ma'arat Hamachpela*) and a building adjacent to Beit Hadassah, that became known as *Beit Hashisha* (or House of the Six) in memory of the six people murdered on May 2nd 1980. The Jewish community of Hebron is then a series of sites that runs from the *Ma'arat Hamachpela* westwards and includes the Avraham Avinu neighborhood, Beit Romano the site of the

Shavei Hebron Hesder Yeshiva, and Tel Rumeida, which is a series of caravans perched on a hill above Beit Hadassah.

In 1994 Dr. Baruch Goldstein dressed in his military reserve uniform and carrying a Galil rifle, murdered dozens of Palestinians during prayers in the Isaac Hall in the *Ma'arat Hamachpela*. The massacre sent shockwaves throughout Israeli society in general and religious Zionism in particular. Most religious Zionists vehemently condemned the murders, while some justified them, or even offer some praise. Even today, the Jewish inhabitants of Hebron – Goldstein's friends and neighbors – are deeply ambivalent about the event. One can see how uncomfortable they are talking about it. Eyes that at one time have no trouble making direct contact with my own, look down towards the floor, or at a place far beyond me. "We knew him, he was so nice, we were shocked at what happened" a mother of 8 told me once in Beit Hadassah. Goldstein is buried in Kiryat Arba across from the Meir Kahane Memorial Park. His gravesite was turned into a shrine that was late destroyed by the Israeli government.

In 1997 under the Wye river accords the city of Hebron was divided into two sections, H1 and H2. The Palestinian Authority was granted civilian control over H1, while the Israeli military retains full control over H2. About 500 Israelis and 30,000 Palestinians live under Israeli control in H2, and no Israelis are allowed to reside in H1. Attacks on Jewish inhabitants increased after the Second Intifada began in 2000. One of Hebron's main roads Shuhada Street was closed to Palestinian foot and vehicular traffic from *Ma'arat Hamachpela* to just after Beit Hadassah. While the Moslem Casbah, legally in H2, is closed to all Jewish activity (aside from weekly tours which will be explored further on). It remains closed as of January 2013.

7.2 - **Jewish Life in Hebron**

I visited Hebron several times for Shabbat, staying with two families who lived in Beit Hadassah. I wanted to see how these pressures and ethnographic tensions played themselves out in the daily lives of individuals. I became acquainted with one family in Beit Hadassah through a website that matches Jewish students in Israel together with families throughout Israel who could host them for Shabbat. I requested a family in Hebron, and after a few weeks I was given the number of the Levi family.

Both Miriam and her husband Yitzchak work in Kiryat Arba. Miriam is a secretary, and Yitzchak is the principle of a local high school. Yitzchak is originally from the religious Kibbutz Movement, and grew up in Kibbutz Be'erot Yitzchak. I asked him why he decided to leave the religious kibbutz. For him the religious Kibbutz had somehow lost its way. Life on a religious kibbutz was not necessarily religious enough for him. He also, wanted a place that was more ideological. As we shall see further down, this is also the case for individuals in Kibbutz Reishit.

I was told to first try calling Miriam Levi on her cell phone, but she most likely would not answer a strange number, so I was given her home number as well. When I first called Miriam she seemed very abrupt and abrasive. I thought that I may have just called her on a bad day, yet when I called her a second time she was just as brusque. This made me very nervous and I did not know what to expect. When I arrived in Beit Hadassah with a friend Friday afternoon Miriam immediately told us to wait in the living room, and even instructed us on how to prepare the space for Shabbat. Of course we complied. She then showed us where we would be sleeping, which was a bedroom upstairs that was used by two of her children who were not home for the weekend. We

realized that the bedroom was also a walkway between different floors of the house (as well as between different apartments). People (sometimes the sisters) would walk through the bedroom to reach another room, or even a neighbor's apartment. Miriam has a large family with ten children and eight grandchildren. Miriam's apartment had two bathrooms. One was connected to the parent's bedroom, and the other was a shower and a bathroom connected to the kitchen. The bathroom was closed off from the shower by a separate door. When one person was in the bathroom they would close that door, but leave the main door open. There were four girls home – three of them older teenagers – the lack of privacy made it somewhat embarrassing to shower, go to the bathroom, or even brush my teeth. This is a rather religiously observant family, they were fairly religious. For example, they used tea essence on Shabbat instead of simply a *kos shlishi* (third cup). Moreover they believed that the tea essence could not be used cold, so they left it on top of the water percolator all of Shabbat[64]. There is an *Eruv* in Hebron yet the father Yitzchak, put his *Tallit* on before going to synagogue and walked back home wearing it as well. With all of this in mind, I suppose I expected them to be a little shyer concerning personal boundaries and privacy. Yet the lack of privacy, and having strangers in the house no less, did not seem to bother them. In context though, the Jewish community of Hebron is relatively old, almost everyone is part of a large family, and

[64] 'Cooking' is not permitted on Shabbat. As a result it is not permissible to heat water on Shabbat. Orthodox Jews generally have a large water percolator which they fill and turn on before Shabbat. Placing hot water directly into a cup to make tea or coffee is generally considered 'cooking'. What most Orthodox Jews do is first place pour the water into a second cup (the water percolator is considered the 'first' cup), and then into a third cup with the tea or coffee. The Levi family, following the decision of Rabbi Dov Lior, the popular Rabbi of Hebron and Kiryat Arba, held that this method is not permissible on Shabbat.

building (or even buying new buildings) is nearly impossible. I saw first-hand how people almost literally live on top of each other.

The Levi's invited me over to their apartment in Beit Hadassah several times, including once in 2012 for the Passover *Seder*. At the meal one of the sisters's asked, perhaps half-jokingly, "Where's the Arab"? A communal sigh passed around the table. Miriam then related to me the story. A few years earlier a Palestinian had entered into their house during Pesach. Apparently this family does not take any chances[65]. "My sons jumped on him, there was blood everywhere. It was terrible". Miriam said. For one moment, I could see the pain in her eyes. After the incident she said her children were afraid to sleep at night without the door being locked, and she was sure to lock the door every night.

I found this issue of fear very confusing. Were Jews in Hebron afraid? If so, how was fear expressed? How did they deal with fear? The topic once came up during a *dvar torah* Yitzchak gave on Rabbi Kook's understanding of character traits[66] . For Rabbi Kook fear was something that blocked one's connection to God. I asked Yitzchak, how one "corrects" the trait of fear. He answered "faith, one who has faith is not afraid". His wife however previously admitted that her children, at least, exhibited some amount of fear. Perhaps though, she was hinting at her own fear. She had one son who was walking home one day, and was hit by a rock. He walked into the house with blood pumping from his head. She had another son who was driving between Kiryat Arba and Gush Etzion one night. His car had passed a military roadblock, but did not stop. The nervous reserve

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[65] Earlier in 2001 Jews were massacred at their Pesach *seder* in a Netanya hotel.
[66] Rabbi Kook wrote an essay about the perfection of character traits.

soldiers manning the station had shot at the car, and her son still has pieces of shrapnel in his foot[67].

In spite of the violence that surrounds them, members of the Jewish community of Hebron are fulfilling a historical and national call in choosing to live where they do. This national call is seeped to a great extent in the philosophy of Rabbi Abraham Kook and his son Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. Yeshiva Shavei Hebron at Beit Romano for example is one of the main *Yeshivot HaKav*, or a rabbinic *seminary of the line* that – as previously- follows a very strict interpretation of Kookist thought (they 'hold the line' as it were). While in Hebron on Friday nights, I would often sit and 'learn' in the yeshiva. I am not a very good Talmud student, so I would usually open up a volume of Rabbi Kook's writings and begin reading. A text was not difficult to find, one was literally on every table.

On one visit to Hebron during the week, I told my host David Wilder of my ethnographic interest in Rabbi Kook, his writings, and his disciples. David was the English spokesperson of Hebron, and a former fundraiser for Yeshivat Shavei Hebron. We were driving up to Tel Rumeida, David smiled and told me that he had someone I should meet. After a brief tour of the area we walked past a caravan and met a smiling, middle aged woman with greying hair under a white *mitpachat*. It turns out she is one of Rabbi Abraham Kook's Great Grand Daughters. In 1998 her Father, Rabbi Shlomo Raanan, was stabbed to death by a Palestinian terrorist. After the murder, David – who

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[67] This was not an isolated incident. During my fieldwork a soldier manning a road block near Hebron had mistakenly shot a Jewish motorist after he had failed to stop his car. The army now instructs soldiers not to shoot at cars that appears to have run a roadblock.

was living in Kiryat Arba at the time - decided to move into his apartment in Beit Hadassah.

Rabbi Kook's philosophy of transcendental harmony, centers around the Land of Israel. It is the Jewish presence within the Land (or return to the Land) that acts as a redemptive engine. The Jewish communal presence in Hebron is one, perhaps extreme (and I use that concept with caution) result of that philosophy. Here violence and loss exists alongside a tenacious sense of religious and nationalistic purpose.

7.3 - **Kibbutz Reishit**

It is this tenacity and purpose that I saw mirrored in the eyes of members of a little known religious Zionist urban kibbutz in the heart of Kiryat Menachem - one of Jerusalem's poverty stricken peripheral neighborhoods. I very much enjoyed visiting both Hebron and Reishit. Hebron was stimulating, historical, and always very tense. It was as if at any moment something exciting and 'ethnographic' might occur. Kibbutz Reishit was the exact opposite. I always felt a sense of quiet and calm when I visited. It was as if amidst the tall grey concrete buildings there existed a tranquil space of simplicity and benevolence.

I was first introduced to Kibbutz Reishit by my friend Bentzi, whose wife Tziporah grew up in the collective. When my friends heard about my dissertation topic of religious Zionism they said that I might want to check out Kibbutz Reishit.

"It's an interesting place" Tziporah said. "Although I'm not sure how much it can help you. They're just like ten *nudnikim*[68]"

"What do you mean?" I asked surprised someone would talk like that about their own community.

Bentzi interrupted, answering my question, "They're very different in Reishit. They don't really represent where religious Zionism is today". For Bentzi, Kibbutz Reishit was a small group of determined people who changed a community.

"I used to call them the Amish people", Tziporah quipped sarcastically

Kibbutz Reishit is a religious Zionist Kibbutz that was first founded in the early1980's. After a brief stay in the Bucharian neighborhood of Northern Jerusalem, the collective moved to their present home in Kiryat Menachem. The Kibbutz is located within the neighborhoods urban slums and housing projects (*blockim* in Hebrew). Kiryat Menachem was built on the hills above the site of an old *Ma'abara* (transit camp) for newly arrived *mizrachi* immigrants. Most of the current inhabitants in this neighborhood 'ghetto' are the descendants of these immigrants, or are more recent immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union.

The kibbutz members see themselves as being a collective force against prostitution, drug use, the general malaise of city governance, and the corruption of the local police. Most buildings in the neighborhood are eight stories tall. In Jerusalem there is a law that all buildings (built after a certain date) above 4 stories must contain an elevator. As members told me, city developers got around this law by building an inner

[68] People who nag, and who are very stubborn about it

walkway that connects the buildings on the fourth story. In the eyes of the municipality each eight story building are actually two four story buildings.

Back in the 80's when the Kibbutz first moved into the neighborhood there were heaps of garbage piled up on the sides of "streets". The collective organized garbage collection for the neighborhood. At the time there were few sidewalks; residents would have to walk through unpaved terrain full of shrubs and bushes to reach the entrances to the buildings. The Kibbutz itself paved many of the walkways, although one still sees remnants of the dirt paths in some locations.

On one visit my friend pointed out where the old Ma'abara was located. I was told that people developed a community there. It was not perfect, and it was not always pleasant, but it was a life. Then the city government came and built housing for the inhabitants. They were not given an option, they were forced to move. My friend's wife – Tziporah - told me to take a look at the current buildings. The entrances to each apartment were built in such a way so as to prevent any kind of communal feeling. There was almost no communication between those who lived on the lower and upper floors. Entrances to the apartments did not face each other but were built side-by-side. "In the *Ma'abara* people lived almost communally", Tziporah told me. "These projects were built for maximum privacy". This was one factor that destroyed a community and left room for all manner of criminal activity.

"When we first came here we used to sleep with our shoes on" one member told me at a Shabbat meal.

> “If one of our members got into a fight with a local drug dealer, all of the members had to go out and respond. That’s just how things were. There were prostitutes right outside our window.

Indeed, violence was not unknown to these urban kibbutz members. At one Jerusalem day celebration in the earl years of the Kibbutz someone in the neighborhood tried to stab Yirmiyahu, the religious leader of the collective.

While their friends in Gush Emunim went out to settle the barren hills and populated Arab cities (Hebron, and Kiryat Arba among them) of Judea and Samaria, these kibbutz members settled the inner city. Both the Jewish community of Hebron and Kibbutz Reishit used stubbornness and audacity to achieve their very different – yet in many ways similar - goals. The relationship between these two communities (and their goals) runs far deeper however than simple tenacity.

7.3A - *“Gush Emunim Went to the Land, We Went To the People”*

Like other religious Zionists who settled Judea and Samaria, the story of Kibbutz Reishit began after the Yom Kippur War. Israel’s near defeat in that conflict and the general dissipation of the euphoria of 1967 had a profound impact on religious Zionism. As Tziporah’s mother told me, “many people felt that something was missing. The difference between us and Gush Emunim is that they went out to the land, we went out to the people”. Yitzchak Levi from Hebron felt the same way. For him something (that ‘something’ was mainly religious) was missing in Be’erot Yitzchak, and so he went out to the settlements. Tziporah’s father, Efraim felt himself drawn to the people, and so he left Kibbutz Sa’ad with its rising bourgeois atmosphere and joined an urban religious

Kibbutz. There, a difference could be made not through the conquest of the 'Land of Israel', but rather through the social and economic development of the 'People of Israel'.

I visited Kibbutz Reishit several times, eating with different families. Most families had similar fundamental disagreements with the settlement project in Judea and Samaria. I ate one meal, for example, with the Regev family. Moshe Regev learned in Ein Tzurim in the 70's, and I was surprised to learn that we knew some of the same personalities. For him settling more land in Judea and Samaria is *shitchi* (shallow), if it is not accompanied with *ruach* (spirit, or in this context, spirituality). Settlements aren't strong he warned, without a spiritual foundation.

It was at kibbutz Reishit that as an ethnographer I was first introduced to the mystical text *Matan Torah* (*The Gift of the Torah*) by Rabbi Yehuda Aschlag. In Kibbutz Reishit time does not have much meaning. Whenever I asked *Mishpachat* Yanai when Shabbat would begin or end, they would always say, "soon, when it gets dark". Times for prayers or when dinner might start were even hazier. Prayer Friday night would always commence "around" an hour after Shabbat started. No one had an exact time; yet somehow people would just come to the synagogue. In that hour period between the beginning of Shabbat and prayers, the family would sit in the living room and just talk.

This Friday night the conversation turned – at my urging – to the ideals of the collective. Efraim Yanai is a tall lanky man with a long white beard, and blue eyes that are pierced with a kind of moral zeal. He said that to begin to understand the mission that the kibbutz sets for itself would be *Matan Torah*. He stood up and plucked out a small brown book from a well-worn wooden shelf. "This is a little difficult to understand" He

said, “There are a lot of kabbalistic terms, but try, the book says a lot”. Efraim opened the book gingerly and showed me some of his favorite passages.

Matan Torah is a small collection of essays that details Rabbi Aschlag’s thoughts on Jewish morality and responsibility. The version Efraim showed me that Friday evening (and that I subsequently purchased) also contains various theological –political essays that composed by Rabbi Aschlag.

For Efraim the most important parts of the book were the second and third sections entitled “The Gift of the Torah” and “Mutual Responsibility”. Efraim quoted from these sections to try and describe the Kibbutz’s mission within Israeli society.

> We were commanded: “love thy friend as thyself.” The word ‘thyself’ tells us, to love our friend in the same measure that we love ourselves, not less in anyway. This means, you must constantly and vigilantly satisfy the needs of every person in the Israeli nation, no less than you are always vigilant to satisfy your own needs. (Aschlag. No year: 24)

Efraim then pointed to a question that appears later in the essay. Why did God choose to give the Torah to the Jewish People after the Exodus from Egypt? Why did he not give the Torah to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? For Rabbi Aschlag the commandment to “love thy neighbor as thyself” is the essence of the entire Torah.

> All the other commandments surround it to explain and interpret it. It is not fitting, however, to fulfill this commandment by oneself’ without the earlier agreement of the entire nation. For this reason God did not give the Torah until the Exodus from Egypt, when Israel [as a collective] was able to fulfill it (Ibid: 44).

Altruism was at the center of Rabbi Yehuda Aschlag's Kabbalistic cosmology. As Jonathan Garb notes, "Kabbalah enhanced kindness and altruism… and was the pinnacle of the Jewish religion. Kabbalah [Aschlag] believed, encourages pure observance of the commandments without ulterior motives and fosters the desire to give" (2005: 30).

By citing Aschlag's altruistic urge, Efraim was trying to tell me that Kibbutz Reishit (Hebrew for 'Beginning') sees itself as the first step – a new beginning - to this ultimate fulfillment of the Torah. The Kibbutz members love their neighbors by fighting the neighborhood drug lords, prostitution, organizing garbage collection, and working with the Jerusalem Municipality to pave the neighborhood's streets. They also do it by taking part in the Kibbutz's main source of income, education. The Kibbutz runs kindergartens and a public religious school which cater to the underprivileged (many of them whose families are new immigrants) children in the neighborhood. Like the Jewish community of Hebron this requires a good deal of tenacity and a great deal of sacrifice.

This zeal for altruism and self-sacrifice can also be seen on a personal level. Tziporah Yanai has three grown siblings. After raising the children, her mother a few years ago decided to take in a 13 year old foster child named Daniela. I was told that Daniela's father lives in the neighborhood, but is unable to take care of his daughter (for various reasons, among them drug use), and her mother "isn't in the picture".

The Yanai's apartment is not large. It has two small bedrooms, a bathroom, and a narrow kitchen. The largest room in the apartment is the living room, which serves as Daniela's 'bedroom'. The space was also Tziporah's old bedroom. It is really just a corner section of the living room that is closed off with tall bookshelves. I was struck by

the lack of privacy. For Daniela the family put in a thin sheet which serves as a 'door'. Tziporah however, never had such a luxury. I asked Tziporah what it was like growing up as a teenager and never being able to – for example – slam a door? She said that she never really felt that she was 'missing' anything, and the only thing that really bothered her, was that she was never able to have private phone conversations. To create a sense of privacy she used to talk under a thick quilt.

The lack of privacy and the very simple living conditions seems to be a part of the kibbutz philosophy of *sipuk b'mu'at,* or frugality (literally, satisfaction with a little). Where many kibbutzim, possessed large dining halls, lush green gardens, and swimming pools, Kibbutz Reishit shuns such luxuries. For them frugality is a part of the ideal of helping the People of Israel (in this instance the impoverished community of Kiryat Menachem). For them, a desire for luxuries seems to be another form of selfishness, which is precisely where the State of Israel's troubles begin.

The collective in Kiryat Menachem is a community where religious experience reflects the tenor of everyday life. After my discussion with Efraim about the altruism, I accompanied the family to synagogue for the weekly Friday night prayers. Their synagogue is a nondescript structure at the edge of a cluster of tall granite buildings. There is no extravagant furniture inside, and even the ark is just a simple wooden structure. Most of the men – who were all wearing knitted *kippot* - began tying *gartels* (Yiddish for 'belt') or long black cloth straps around their wastes. A *gartel* is a strap whose religious - legal purpose is to separate one's heart from the genitalia, a region considered impure during prayer. Most Orthodox Jews follow the legal opinion that any waistband can serve this purpose. The *gartel,* however, is customarily worn almost

exclusively by Hassidim. I also noticed that most of the Ashkenazi men grew out their side locks. These were not the flowing side locks I became accustomed to among the religious Zionist youth. These were shorter, closer to the head, but noticeable.

Friday night prayers are generally constructed of three liturgical sections. Most synagogues recite the afternoon prayers right before the onset of the Sabbath. Then there is a section called '*Kabbalat Shabbat*' (Greeting the Sabbath) which is composed of a collection of psalms. After *Kabbalat Shabbat*, the rabbi may or may not give a short *Dvar Torah*, and then the evening prayers are recited. In most religious Zionist synagogues the *Kabbalat Shabbat* prayers are very musical. In some synagogues large portions of each psalm are sung aloud in the Carlebach Style[69]. In other synagogues only select Psalms, (or portions thereof) are sung. In either case, most tunes during *Kabbalat Shabbat* are melodious, rather quick paced, and 'happy'. Kibbutz Reishit however sang their tunes very slowly, extremely slowly. So slowly in fact, that I fell asleep during several portions. The melodies also seemed, somewhat 'depressing'. At one point during the prayers members stood up, held hands in a circle. With faces turned skyward they started dancing around the middle of the room. The 'dancing' however was extremely slow, as if every participant were concentrating intently on the meandering tune. Towards the end of the prayer, I noticed that my friend Bentzi had also fallen asleep, and after services I went up to him and said in a low voice,

[69] Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach (1925-1994) an Orthodox Jewish composer and singer. Carelbach began his career in the Chabad Lubavitch movement eventually becoming a pioneer of the *Ba'al Teshuva* movement of the 1960's and 70's.

"Bentzi there is something very strange here. All the songs are very slow, and depressing. What's with the *gartels* and the *peyot*? Where am I? How is this a kibbutz?"

Bentzi, gave an ironic smile. "I was wondering if you would notice"

"I'm an anthropologist, it's my job" I quipped.

On the way back to Efraim Yannai's apartment, Bentzi tried to explain what I had observed. The kibbutz itself is very Hasidic. It is not Hasidic in the current trends of Lubavitch or Breslov that are popular among religious Zionists. Rather the kibbutz follows the Hasidic approaches of Vizhnitz and Ruzhin. Bentzi could not tell me what those approaches are, and interestingly enough, neither could Efraim Yannai.

The leader of the Kibbutz is a man named Yirmiyahu Friedman Ben – Shalom. Yirmiyahu's father is a well-known Rabbi, educator and academic named Yisrael Friedman Ben-Shalom. The family is directly related to the Vizhnitz and Ruzhin Rabbinic dynasties. After the Second World War, Yisrael Friedman's parents (who were both descendants of Hasidic rabbis) moved to a secular socialist kibbutz. The family eventually moved again to Sa'ad a religious kibbutz in the Northern Negev. There they raised their children Menachem, Yirmiyahu, Shmulik, and Hoshea. Yirmiyahu is the charismatic religious leader of Kibbutz Reishit. As Bentzi put it, "everything Yirmiyahu does the other members of the kibbutz follow, at least the Ashkenazi members." I was also told that most members had broken with their families to follow Yirmiyahu.

Apparently – in the style of Ruzhin - all of the tunes on the kibbutz are very slow, and the kibbutz strives to keep it that way. Bentzi told me how he was in the kibbutz

synagogue on Israeli Independence Day one year. People were sitting in a circle singing Zionists songs. As is usual the songs were very slow and somewhat depressing. One of the youngsters started clapping his hands. This rebellious act was quickly halted by older members.

The quiet kind of determined concentration is a palpable experience in Kibbutz Reishit. This observation can be seen most clearly within the liturgical aspects of life. The determination they express towards acts of social justice seem distinctly linked to religious principles. The collective is steeped in a spirituality that seems intimately tied to its social (and obviously religious) mission.

It should come as no surprise then that Rabbi Yehuda Aschlag also applied his theological principles towards political and social dilemmas. For Aschlag, pure altruism was the basis of Jewish life and practice[70]. He believed that the value of the individual was contingent upon his altruistic ability to help society. Or as Aschlag wrote in an essay he published in 1933 called '*The Peace*'

> That is that each member is obligated by nature to receive his needs from society, and so is obligated to influence, by way of his labor, for the good of society. And if he will break on of these two commandments he will be punished without mercy" (Aschlag. 1933: 98)[71].

In Aschlag's vision at least this outlook promotes a certain kind of freedom, and safeguards individuality. As Jonathan Garb explains, "the freedom of the collective and

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[70] As well as for the world in general

[71] דהיינו שכל חבר מחויב מצד הטבע לקבל צרכיו מהחברה, וכן מחויב להשפיע ע"י עבודתו לטובת החברה. ואם יעבור על אחת מב' המצוות הללו יענש מבלי רחמים

the individual are inseparable, as long as each individual fulfills his function without detracting from the others" (2005: 56).

At the same time however this theologically inflected social ethic presents certain classical problems. Namely, how does one ensure that people have a desire to so selflessly work for society? In his essay, Aschlag addressed this problem by addressing the socio-economic state of communist Russia. He noted that - all things being equal - Russia in 1933 ought to be prospering. They had a large fertile landmass, and each inhabitant was obligated to work for the well-being of his neighbor. Far from flourishing however, Russia was starving. In Aschlag's view, Russia's socio-economic difficulties were actually rooted in a theological problem.

> This nation committed one sin, and the Blessed One will not forgive them for it. All of this work, which is treasured and exalted, that is "bestowal upon the other" which they have begun to perform, must be done **in the name of the blessed one, and not in the name of humanity** (1933: 100).

In Aschlag's view humans cannot be motivated to labor for the sole good of society. In its place they must find motivation in laboring for God. Divinity and a religious experience surrounding labor is the true engine of social reform.

My friend Tziporah told me that members of the kibbutz used to read from Rabbi Yehuda Aschlag's works on Saturday night upon the conclusion of the Sabbath. The quiet determination that one sees in the eyes of the inhabitants of the collective, the slow concentrated prayers, are parts of a religious experience that motivates that also acts as a moral ethic of social responsibility.

Despite the ideology of mutual responsibility and its religious foundations, Kibbutz Reishit had undergone a serious crisis in the past. In the mid 90's the kibbutz had split. Yirmiyahu's brother, Hoshea, left with half the members to form another urban kibbutz in the Gilo neighborhood of Jerusalem called Beit Yisrael. This was extremely painful for members in Reishit, and they rarely speak of it. The split in the Kibbutz also caused a deep rift between the two brothers, which only recently is healing slowly. No matter how hard I tried I could never get a member of Reishit to tell me the full story. Whenever I asked Efraim, he would just sigh deeply, and say "people have different personalities. They are not bad, just different".

Hoseha is a career officer, a Brigadier general, and in 2012 just appointed as the IDf's new Chief Reserve Officer. He is ultimately responsible for the placement of reserve soldiers. He currently runs a pre-military *mechina* in Kibbutz Beit Yisrael. This seminary is unique because it is one of the first of such institutions that casters to both sexes as well as to secular and religious Jews. I happened to meet a young woman who had previously studied in the *mechina*. According to her the source of conflict between the two urban kibbutzim was Yirmiyahu himself. Yirmiyahu wanted a kibbutz that was culturally and ideologically monolithic (under his interpretation). Hoshea wanted a kibbutz that was more open to differing opinions and differing ideas. The ideological split between the two brothers became so profound that one night Hoshea and his followers just left. The secrecy with which they did this was the reason why the split was so painful. I do not know if this young woman was correct. Echoing my friend Bentzi however, "knowing Yirmiyahu, it is certainly possible".

This conflict surrounding authority and openness is not so unlike the split that occurred within Yeshivat Mercaz Harav, the rabbinic seminary founded by Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook. In 1997 a group of Rabbis under the leadership of Rabbi Tzvi Tau split (rather suddenly) from the yeshiva, and started their own rabbinic seminary titled Har Hamor. The issue that caused the split was the possible opening of an academic department within Mercaz Harav for training teachers. At stake however was the general openness a rabbinic seminary ought to have towards academic studies.

7.4 - **Between Gush Emunim and Kibbutz Reishit**

In the late 1970's two religious social movements set out to redefine what it meant to be a religious Zionist in the State of Israel. *Gush Emunim* and the Collective at *Reishit* both emerged out of the religious Zionist Kibbutz movement, and were responding to the emotional, political, and social turmoil following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. From a theological perspective both groups grew out of the philosophies of two rabbinic, who knew each other and spoke in some similar, and yet very different tones.

Both Rabbi Kook and Rabbi Aschlag believed that mystical thought ought to be disseminated and studied in the modern period, and both related that thought to modern political dilemmas. On the other hand Rabbi Aschlag has generally been studied for his kabbalistic insights and his social doctrine has been somewhat downplayed by society at large. On the other hand, within religious Zionist seminaries Kookist thought has historically been studied in relation to Jewish philosophy and ideology. Within these seminaries his writings have only recently been studied for their Kabbalistic content and through a mystical lens.

Relatedly, Rabbi Aschlag's Kabbalism had a more universal appeal[72], while Rabbi Kook attracted mainly Israelis (Garb. 2005: 53). This difference in focus may be related to Gush Emunim's ability to expand its influence and encompass hundreds of settlements across Judea and Samaria. Kibbutz Reishit on the other hand contains only a few dozen families, and inspired the offshoot of only one other kibbutz. Rabbi Kook's nationalistic philosophy of transcendental harmony spoke to masses of Israeli religious Zionists in the late 70's and early 80's, and still speaks to them today in ways that Aschlag's vision was not able to do.

These two rabbinic personalities also related to the idea of Jewish Nationalism in very different ways. For Rabbi Kook the Land of Israel was the catalyst for a redemptive process that would eventually encompass all of humanity. Nationalism served a crucial role in the ability of the Jewish people to bridge the gap between the sacred and the profane. Through the Jewish (secular) national return to their homeland, religious expressions and experiences would become an integral part of the "public and national life" of the Jewish People. (Fischer 2007: 108).

This kind of religious expressivism would go on to have political and social implications in the late 60's and 70's. Religious Zionists were a distinct minority within Israeli politics and society in the early decades of the State of Israel. The Jewish State was in large part founded by secular socialists who regulated the state funded religious institutions. Individuals who were religious and Zionists viewed themselves as the "foster children" of the larger secular society (Koppel. 2008: 120). Religious Zionists at the time

[72] His children and disciples founded the very popular contemporary Bnei Baruch Kabbalah Research Institute.

lacked a kind of collective self-confidence in relation to their secular counterparts (Aran. 2013). In the 1960's a distinctly religious Zionist self-confidence developed. Men's kippot became bigger and more prominent, and they started wearing their ritual fringes longer outside of their clothes. Women's modesty also took on a new emphasis (Fischer. 2007: 191; Aran 1987: 317). The religious expressivism found within the writings of Rabbi Kook spoke to this desire for religious thought and practice to impact the day-to-day life of Israeli society. The Land of Israel and Jewish Nationalism in general, did not hold the same crucial position for Rabbi Aschlag. His focus on inner psychology (Garb. 2005) and mutual responsibility does not seem to have the same kind of 'expressive' dynamism of Rabbi Kook's thought.

Religious experience in both the Jewish Community of Hebron and Kibbutz Reishit stands at the center of each of their socio-political goals, as well as everyday life. Here we see how the practice of everyday life may echo religious concepts and experiences. In Hebron these religious experiences are played out against a backdrop of extreme violence along with a commitment to national memory. In Reishit these experiences are connected to an abiding social steadfastness towards mutual responsibility. Both communities work for their goals with an extreme amount of determination, tenacity, and self-sacrifice. It is only by looking at the social, political and personal paths of religious experience that the full context of Jewish political piety in Israel be understood and appreciated. This context is also an excellent introduction to the next chapter which will discuss the wide disenchantment with Rabbi Kook's collectivist and messianic theology.

Chapter 8 - Like a Fire: The Challenge to Classical Religious Zionism

8.1 - **A Protest Rally**

Sometime in March 2012 I found myself driving around Jerusalem's governmental district in the passenger seat of a small Mazda automobile. I was holding a large Israeli flag out the window, and Gadi the driver was honking his horn incessantly. I was participating in a political rally to protest the upcoming expulsion of a settlement in the Binyamin region called Migron. Migron was affiliated with the Yeshivot HaKav, specifically Yeshivat Har Hamor in Jerusalem. Many of its founders (along with the settlement's rabbi) were students of Rabbi Tzvi Tau, a main disciple of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, and one who firmly believes in the transcendental sanctity of the State of Israel. Like the theological and political transcendentalists of the previous chapter, the theological worldview of the inhabitants of Migron eschews apocalyptic jumps towards ultimate redemption, preferring instead the slow movements of history.

The rally was supposed to consist of a line of cars with placards attached to them, Israeli flags out the window, with all of the vehicles blaring their horns as we drove around Jerusalem. The final goal would be to encircle the governmental offices until we were stopped by authorities.

I had first heard about the planned rally from the announcements section in one of the *alonei shabbat* (indeed I found many such events from these announcement sections). There were several initial meeting locations for the rally participants, and an inhabitant of Migron was organizing things in each location. I chose to meet up one early morning with a group coming from Gush Etzion. I hitchhiked my way to the Gush Junction and simply introduced myself to the organizers. They seemed happy to have me along. I

helped out a bit by attaching placards to cars. There I met Gadi, a father of three, and an inhabitant of Migron, and off we went.

Between horn blasts and U-turns through the crowded Jerusalem side streets, Gadi expressed some curiosity about my research (of course he did….I was a complete stranger to him). I explained that I was writing a dissertation on how religious Zionism is dealing with political, social, and theological tensions. Gadi then asked;

> "Wow do you sometimes get the sense that we're a *yeled kafot*, [a whipping boy], for Israeli society"?
>
> "What do you mean I asked"? In reality I had no idea what a *yeled kafot* meant, but I was too proud to admit it
>
> "You know someone in school, who always gets beat up and never responds. They're kicking us out of our homes, playing us as political pawns. We're like a *yelet kafot*"
>
> "It may seem like that" I responded. Taking a gamble I continued. "But eventually the whipping boy has to respond, and I'm not sure this is the best way."
>
> "Maybe it isn't" He said holding one hand up from the steering wheel. "But what else can we do?"

Gadi was expressing a frustration common to religious Zionists (or at least one I heard often). Over the past 25 years religious Zionism, or the national religious community in Israel, has confronted many political pressures that have challenged its existing theological and social structures. No analysis of religious Zionism in Israel would be complete without acknowledging some of these factors.

8.2 - **Yeled Kafot:The Challenges of Religious Zionism**

In June of 1967, after months of built up tension, Israel went to war with its Arab neighbors. After 6 days of fighting, Israel had captured the Gaza Strip, the Sinai

Peninsula, the Golan Heights, Eastern Jerusalem, and the lands of Judea and Samaria up to the Jordan River. Israel had also inherited the large Arab populations of those areas. I sometimes heard people who lived through the period describe the feelings of exuberance and euphoria that seemed to pass throughout Israel at the time. They had went from the certain feeling that Israel was about to turn into a small footnote in the history of the 20th century, to being parties to one of the greatest military victories of the century.

Israeli's - both secular and religious - began to rediscover areas of the Holy Land that were cut off to them for close to two decades. Moreover, Jerusalem was once again a formally united city, and for the first time in 2,000 years, under Jewish control. The famous radio communication of General Mota Gur, "*har habayit b'yadeinu*" (the Tenple Mount is in our hands), sent excited shockwaves throughout world Jewry, the Israeli public, and within religious Zionism in particular. While *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Israeli Independence Day) is a national holiday for all Israelis, it is often noted that *Yom Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem Liberation Day), is truly sacred for religious Zionists.

In October of 1973 on Yom Kippur day Israel was attacked by Egyptian and Syrian forces along the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights. After a month of fierce combat, Israel emerged a technical victor, with the majority of both Egyptian and Syrian forces pulling back into their own territories. For many, however, this victory rang hollow. Israel had suffered 2,000 casualties, a part of the Egyptian army was still camped (besieged) on the eastern bank on of the Canal, and the myth of the inviolable Israeli Defense Forces was shattered. The difficult results of the war posed an existential challenge to religious Zionism in particular. Many units of *Hesder* soldiers were decimated. At *Yeshivat Har Etzion* for example, the names of the fallen are permanently

etched into the walls in commemoration of the fallen. The 1967 war that ended in a complete victory after only six days gave strength to the religious Zionist notion that the Jewish People were progressing, (perhaps not so) slowly but surely towards an ultimate and supernal redemption. October of 1973 shattered this theological euphoria. As the Rosh Yeshiva of *Har Etzion*, Rabbi Yehudah Amital asked

> A) What was the purpose of this war? The land is already in our hands, and therefore, why was there a war? B) A more poignant question: Is there not, God forbid, some kind of backward movement? Does not the very essence of an outbreak of war, in all its manifestations, raise the possibility that there is here some kind of backward movement from the divine process of the beginnings of redemption? (Amital. 1974: 12)

For Rabbi Amital and others the very idea of war acted as a check to the divine process of redemption. As one inhabitant of the Jewish community of Hebron told me, there was also "a sense that the State was missing something after the war. That somehow, somewhere, Zionism's traditional values went awry". This religious critique mirrored what was being said outside of religious Zionist communities concerning Israeli hubris and military unpreparedness (Shlaim 1976; Handel 1977).

Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful) a religious Zionist non-governmental body offered a response to this existential sense of loss; the settlement project in Judea, Samaria and Gaza (known by the Hebrew acronym YESHA).[73] These communities were meant to house the best and the brightest. They were meant to be home to the elite of religious Zionism, and to showcase the ideals that Israeli society ought to aspire to. As Gush Emunim's first position platform stated;

> To bring to motion the great awakening of the Nation of Israel, for the sake of realizing the Zionist vision to its fullest extent, through understanding that the

[73] *Yehuda* (Judea), Shom*r*on (Samaria), Aza (Gaza).

> source of this vision is in the heritage of Israel, and in the roots of Judaism, and whose purpose is the complete redemption of the Nation of Israel and the entire world.

In 1982 Israel concluded its peace agreement with Egypt which required the complete Israeli civil and military withdrawal from the region. Under orders from Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and through the guidance of General Ariel Sharon (who would later order the evacuation of settlements in the Gaza Strip), Jewish communities in the Sinai were evacuated. Only six years later, concurrent with the outbreak of the first Palestinian Intifada, secret peace talks were being held with the Palestinians that culminated in the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords. Political autonomy was given to certain Palestinian areas beginning with Gaza, and continuing to Jericho, Ramallah, and beyond. Part of the accords - either explicitly or implicitly - entailed the evacuation of Jewish (and mostly religious Zionist) communities in these areas.

In 1998 the Israeli government signed the Wye River accords, which divided the city of Hebron in Jewish and Palestinian areas. As peace talks fell apart in 2000, the second Intifada began. Suicide bombers attacked busses and cafes within Israeli cities. For a while in 2001 there was an explosion in some city almost every week. Riding a bus in Jerusalem began to feel like a game of Russian Roulette. Armed attacks on Israeli settlers became commonplace -both within their communities and on the roads. Jewish communities within the Gaza Strip encountered nightly rocket and mortar attacks. During this period towns in southern Israel, such as Sderot began to experience their first rocket attacks (a phenomenon Israel is still dealing with in 2013). As a backdrop to this tale of violence, Israel had still to deal with a growing Palestinian population who had been living under military occupation since 1967.

In 2004 Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided to unilaterally remove the Israeli presence from the Gaza Strip and parts of Northern Samaria. All civilian communities and military outposts were to be evacuated. Thus began a year long struggle among religious Zionists to put a stop to this unilateral disengagement. Orange became the color of the struggle and religious Zionist teenagers could be seen throughout the country passing around orange ribbons, which were later tied to back packs and car antennae's. Some of these ribbons – crushed and well worn - can still be seen attached to back packs in 2013. As the month of the disengagement drew near, demonstrations reached a frenetic pace. Mass rallies were held throughout the country. Some Religious Zionist teenagers simply missed a year of schooling as a result of all the rallies. Several well-known rabbis began telling their followers that the disengagement would never happen, that at the final moment, it would be prevented by divine decree. Some religious Zionist rabbis called on soldiers not to fulfill orders to evacuate the Jewish communities. I met many religious Zionist soldiers who did disobey orders and served periods in prison. The issue of refusal of orders is still a tense topic within Israel and among religious Zionism. The issue arose in the 2013 Israeli parliamentary elections, and almot derailed the campaign of a revitalized religious Zionist party under the leadership

In August of 2005 one final mass rally was held at Kfar Maimon, a small *Moshav* along the Gaza border. For three days thousands of religious Zionist protestors camped out in the Moshav, with the intention of breaking the military closure of the area and marching into Gaza. How would the army disperse such a march? Would violence break out? Would the Army fire on its own citizens? In what for many was viewed as a major

betrayal by the mainstream religious Zionist leadership, the Yesha Council agreed to call off the planned march.

A large portion of the masses were not deterred. Entire families tried to make their way into the Jewish communities of the Gaza Strip. Weeks earlier Gaza was closed off to non-inhabitants, so identity cards of Jews who did live in Gaza were passed around among the protestors. Those with navigational training were put in charge of small groups to somehow try and make their way into the Jewish communities. Some were caught by military checkpoints and patrols but many did find their way in.

The Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and Northern Samaria took place over the course of two weeks in August of 2005. The final moments of these communities were caught on Israeli television. As one newscaster said at a panel discussing the media and disengagement, “it simply made good television, there was tension, passion, and uncertainty”. One of the major scenes that the television crews were able to capture was the communal prayer in the central synagogue of Neve Dekalim. Religious Zionist boys, men, young girls, and middle aged mothers were gathered, swaying back and forth, all of them intoning Psalm 102. The television caught their tears as they sang;

> A Prayer of the afflicted, when he fainteth, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD. O LORD, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto Thee.
> Hide not Thy face from me in the day of my distress;
> incline Thine ear unto me; in the day when I call answer me speedily.

This song is now featured on continuous playback in the Gush Katif Museum in Jerusalem. A character in the well-known Israeli television show *Srugim* commented on this scene. In the show she was a young religious girl living in Gaza during the

disengagement. Afterwards she began experimenting with a secular lifestyle. Her cousin confronted her at a bar. Once home, the girl bitterly exclaimed. "When was the last time you prayed? Have you ever prayed for something in your life? I mean really prayed"? Her prayers did not come true. This is one of the challenges that religious Zionism had to confront (is still confronting) in the years following the Disengagement. Another challenge was the seeming fecklessness of their settler establishment. The Yesha council, despite all its political connections, was unable to halt the evacuations. A bitter feeling was left in the hearts of some religious Zionists. As one woman who worked in the Gush Katif Museum in Jerusalem told me,

> We felt like, not that we lost the struggle, but that we didn't properly fight. Look at how the ultra-orthodox react to moves against them. Hundreds of thousands come out in protest they burn down garbage cans and riot in the middle of streets. We never did anything close to that.

In 2006 the Olmert government decided to evacuate a small settlement outside of the community of Ofra, named Amona. Here religious Zionist protestors decided to do things differently. They violently stood against governmental action, and the government responded with violence in turn. This evacuation was not done quietly. There were no tearful moments in synagogues. Many people were injured, and much of the violence was caught on television. As one friend of mine -who was not in Amona, but was arrested elsewhere - said, "Those were difficult days, it's hard to think about them". After 2006 there was a lull in the evacuation of outposts. Many activists credited this to their willingness to "go the extra step", as a major factor in that lull.

These are the events that Gadi was referring to when he asked me - perhaps whimsically - "do you think we are a *yeled kafot*", a whipping boy? The effects of two

decades of political and social uncertainties for religious Zionism are also played out in the theological realm. Religion, politics, and society reflect one another in the ways in which Jewish political pietists respond to these tensions.

8.3 - **Disenchantment with Classical Religious Zionism**

In the eyes of many political pietists the classical religious Zionist theological models - whether they are centered on Rabbi Kook or Rabbi Soloveitchik - have had difficulty in confronting these political challenges. Rabbi Kook's progressive process towards a universal redemption, for example, is one that is saturated with certainty. The return of the Jews to their homeland *must* usher in a redemptive era. The power of secularism within Jewish Nationalism will *certainly* add a spiritual force that mystically strengthens the nation. Almost in a Marxist vein, society marches indelibly through theological and social stages, to finally emerge redeemed. Yet as Rabbi Yoel bin-Nin, a one-time leader within the Settler Movement said to a class of mine in 2004, "what at one point seemed so certain and obvious actually turns out to be very complicated and problematic".

Likewise the ideas of Rabbi Soloveitchik however seem too dry, intellectual, and academic for the masses of religious Zionists who are searching for something…*more*. As one religious Zionist Rabbi told me "I never really found within him the spirituality, the excitement that I was looking for".

This disenchantment with classical religious Zionist theologies mirrors a larger disenchantment that is occurring within Israeli society as a whole. The early Zionists who arrived in Palestine were deeply rooted in socialist values (Cohen. 1987). Social justice

and equality, workers' rights (sometimes international workers' rights) and communalism were common ideals that later became an important part of the State of Israel's social and legal framework[74]. Israel has a centralized healthcare system, a centralized Rabbinate, a social security system that is famed and feared for its *bureaucracy*, and extremely powerful workers unions in almost every sector of the economy[75]. In the wake of a severe economic recession however in the 1980's, Israel introduced certain neo-liberal reforms into its economy. Indeed beginning in the 1970's Israel's communal values began to lose sway in the hearts and minds of the populace. One small example of this shift can be seen by the fate of Israel's famed kibbutz movement. What began as a successful experiment in social equality and economic ingenuity has ended in failure. Nearly all kibbutzim have now privatized their industries. Where once all kibbutz members received the same wage regardless of employment position, most now receive differential wages dependent on position. The all-important communal dining halls have also privatized on most kibbutzim. They have either closed entirely, or members are forced pay for the food they eat. The idea of communal values, sacrificing for the good of the collective, simply is not as compelling a call as it once was (Weiss. 2011: 38).

Israeli social and economic shifts are paralleled by theological shifts within religious Zionism. Rabbi Kook's theology of transcendental harmony places an emphasis

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[74] This was true for both the secular as well as for religious Zionists. In the first decades of the State (and well into the 1990's) religious Zionist political parties regularly joined coalitions with secular socialists. These alliances were not merely based on a pragmatic confluence of interests. Religious Zionism had deep roots within the Kibbutz movement (Katz 1995).

[75] For an informed analysis of Israel's nationalized healthcare system – and its neoliberal reform see Dani Filc's, "Circles of Exclusion: The Politics of Health Care in Israel" (2009).

on the ultimate unity of all creation. If God is one and unified then his creation must also be one and unified. As Rabbi Kook wrote in the Lights of Holiness,

> The affirmation of the unity of God aspires to reveal the unity in the world, in man, among nations, and in the entire content of existence, without any dichotomy between action and theory, between reason and imagination…In the content of man's life this is the entire basis of holiness (Bokser.1978: 225).

Jewish national existence is one step towards this ultimate unification. This is why the Jewish State is a sacred entity. It follows then that all institutions, functions, and branches of that state, in all their manifestations, are also sacred. The redemptive vision – otherwise known as Mamlachtiyut - for these religious Zionists was predicated upon progressive political, social, and theological unity. As Moshe Koppel argues, "Mamlakhtiut – and its economic twin, socialism – both involve centralizing in the hands of the state powers and resources that would otherwise be left to the free market or to voluntary associations" (2008: 124).

It is no wonder then that Rabbi Kook was such a supporter of the Kibbutz Movement, nor that he was a major supporter for the founding of a centralized rabbinate in the Land of Israel. Here the social and political vision of secular Zionists mirrored the theological and mystical visions of religious Zionists[76].

The disenchantment with classical religious Zionist theologies implies then a deep distrust of both centralization and communalism. The primary question many ask of the classical religious Zionist theological outlook is "where do I fit in"? Where does the individual work his or her way into the great progressive movements of history that

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[76] Indeed up until the early 90's religious Zionist political parties had no trouble sitting in coalitions with labor governments. Much of this can be attributed to particular political exigencies. It is also possible, as I am suggesting, that there are deeper, more ideological connections between these two groups

ultimately culminate in redemption? Where is there some space for individual freedom that is perhaps disconnected from such redemptive visions, and what might that space look like ethnographically? These questions become even more pressing in light of the recent tensions between religious Zionism and the State (particularly over the fate of the settlements in Judea and Samaria). This chapter will ethnographically trace the political and religious position of the individual via-a-vis the Sacred State.

8.4 - **Where does Talya Fit In? Individual vs. Collective**

To begin answering these questions I would like to present a thicker description of Rabbi Menachem Froman's Sunday night classes as well as of the people who attend them. Menachem Froman, the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish settlement of Tekoa in the eastern section of the Gush Etzion Bloc, was one of the early leaders of Gush Emunim. Along with such personalities - students of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook - as Chanan Porat, Moshe Levinger, and Benny Katzover, Rabbi Froman led the push to settle portions of Judea and Samaria in the period after the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Rabbi Froman, however, is something of a maverick. Although a student of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda in Mercaz Harav, he is deeply influenced by Hasidic thought, in particular the works of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. One can see this influence in the large white shtreimel[77] he wears on special occasions, by his large knitted white *kippa*, as well as by his long side locks. Moreover he is the Rabbi of one of the few communities in Judea and Samaria that is mixed between secular and religious Jews. Tekoa is known as a 'maverick' community, one that is inhabited by religious Zionist Israelis, secular Russian

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[77] A round fur hat commonly worn of Hassidim on the Sabbath, Holidays, and special occasions.

- Israeli immigrants, and a few Lubavitch families. It is a community whose members span the gamut of political allegiance. The community is known by many as being more accepting of religious and political difference.

Believing that Arab-Israeli peace can best be achieved through the prism of religion and *not* politics, Rabbi Froman has never shied away from meetings with (very religious) activists of Hamas for example (Sheikh Ahmed Yassin). The Israeli left sees him as the settler rabbi who supports peace. Many on the religious Zionist right simply ignore him, seeing his ideas as being so crazy as to be irrelevant. Despite this, he does have a small but fervent following among religious Zionists, particularly those are more influenced by Hasidic thought.

Rabbi Froman's eclectic theological and political interests are well reflected within his family. As Yossi Klein Halevi described in At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden A Jew's Search for Hope with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land (2002), an exploration of interfaith dialogue and politics in the Holy Land;

> Despite its strict Orthodox Judaism and ideological commitments, this was a house of freedom. When one son flirted with the far right Kach movement, Menachem and Hadassah didn't try to dissuade him, even though Kach, spiritual home of Baruch Goldstein, represented the antithesis of their Judaism. Nor did they intervene when a daughter joined the meditation group of a Hindu guru in Tel Aviv (2002: 91).

Before his illness, every Sunday night between nine and whenever he would finish (usually at midnight) Rabbi Froman would host a *shiur* (lecture) on the Zohar at his home in Tekoa. I remember attending one of these lectures. There were only about 7 people present that night, and we were all sitting on the well-worn couches in his modest

living room. His wife, Hadassah, would pass around juice, and the Rabbi would read from the *Ba'al HaSulam* - the monumental Hebrew translation of the Zohar by Rabbi Yehuda Aschlag (1885-1954). Every once in a while Rabbi Froman would pause, look up from the text and offer his own interpretation of a passage. Now and then towards the end of the evening the Rabbi's eyes would close and he would nod away into sleep, only to reawaken a few moments later.

After his illness there began to be more interest in these Sunday night *shiurim* (lectures), and they were moved to the synagogue in Tekoa Bet (one extension of the main Tekoa community). His lectures were accompanied by musical and theatrical performances, and both men and women attended, each group sitting on different sides of a *mechitza*[78]. At the end of each lecture students would often dance in circles to the music, the Rabbi – depending on how he was feeling- would join along, or would sit on the side smiling. Such dancing could get unpredictable. I remember one evening during the dancing one student got down on his hands and knees, and Rabbi Froman rode on his back.

Figure 11 Rabbi Froman hands clapping, at a lecture he gave during one of his stays in Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital. Well known Israeli performer, Yonatan Razel, is standing over him.

[78] A partition between males and females found (though not exclusively so) in all Orthodox Synagogues.

I always wondered how an individual with aggressive cancer could stand the physical and emotional pressures of such an event. I remember I once hitched a completely random ride to Tekoa with Rabbi Froman's son and his wife. I had arrived early to the community, and being as spontaneous as the family often is, the son invited me to spend the remaining time waiting in his home, rather than in the cold. This was 45 minutes before the lecture, and Rabbi Froman was sleeping in his bed well into the time the lecture was supposed to start. He was so ill at the time, that the family wanted to give him as much time to sleep as possible. At the conclusion of each lecture the Rabbi tended to be so tired that he often had to be almost carried out of the synagogue. His family tended to hover around him, giving him as much help as possible. During the lecture, however, - while he may have been weak - I never once saw him falter. I never understood how he did it. I concluded that it must have been the teaching. Here was a man who lived to teach, and his students drank from his performances.

Perhaps echoing Shakespeare, Rabbi Froman used to say that the entire world is a stage, and humans are God's actors. All people can do is play their individual parts as best they can. It seemed as if one could see this outlook (perhaps philosophy?) in the Rabbi's eyes. There was something there – perhaps it was the spirituality, the iconoclasm, or the wry smile that betrayed an ironic sense of humor - that simply drew people into Rabi Froman's performances.

Waiting at the *trempiada* in Jerusalem trying to catch a ride to Tekoa on Sunday evenings, I would invariably meet individuals, both men and women who were also attending the lectures. I could usually tell who they were based on their facial hair, styles of *kippa*, or other forms of clothing. Different people had different reasons for attending

this weekly event. There were people who attended these lectures for the musical or theatrical aspects. Some attended however, just for the *shiur* on the Zohar. One man I met commented how the shiur used to be more personal, intimate, and somehow more authentic when it was just a simple lecture in the Rabbi's living room. Somehow when Rabbi Froman was in front of a crowd he had to play to that crowd. Aside from myself, there was even another anthropologist in regular attendance. I always tried to understand the fine points that were made on the Zohar. Although I did manage to take a few notes each week, I always fell short of that goal. Instead I usually ended up simply enjoying the eclectic atmosphere, and the interesting music, which included many popular Israeli musicians including Yonatan Raziel and Ehud Banai

Figure 12 Rabbi Froman in the center

When the Rabbi’s Sunday night lectures ended, I would usually have to scramble to find a ride back to Jerusalem. There were always many people present and free spaces in the cars present was always limited

One night, I was lucky enough to get a ride with a girl named Talya, and three of her friends. A recently constructed bypass road is used to drive from Tekoa to Jerusalem (and vice versa). Known (somewhat pejoratively) as ‘Liberman’s road[79]’, this two lane highway cuts what was once a half hour ride through several Palestinian villages down to

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[79] Avigdor Liberman, a well-known Israeli politician lives in the nearby settlement of Nokdim. He uses the road on a daily basis, and it is said that he is the primary reason the thoroughfare was constructed.

15 minutes[80]. There is a particular bump in the curvy road that always caught me by surprise, usually forcing my head into the car's ceiling. As I was trying to find something to hold onto (other than the two girls next to me), I was listening in to what my fellow passengers were saying about the evening. One said that she never understood everything the Rabbi said, but there were always one or two things that usually stuck out for her. For example, the previous week, she explained, Rabbi Froman spoke about the difference between the 'fear' of God, and the 'love' of God. As she described,

> 'Love' of God occurs when someone looks deeply into things, and realizes that they turn out for the best. Fear of God comes from the word 'y*ira'h*', to see. Here one sees reality clearly and starkly. One confronts reality in all its authenticity, without any masks, just the world as it plainly is. You can obviously see how he's also talking about his illness.

Indeed during the musical or theatrical interludes, I would look up and into the eyes of Rabbi Froman. At times it appeared as if he was looking into the face of death. While at other times, his face was aglow with a wide and contagious smile.

I then asked the girls what they were drawn to in the Hasidism of Rabbi Froman that they didn't find in the redemptive messianism of Rabbi Kook. After all they seemed to have all grown up in the religious Zionist community. This experience in Tekoa seemed like something that was very different from what they might be used to. Talya the driver responded,

> "I can't really tell you what's lacking in Rabbi Kook, but I can tell you what I see in Hasidut. It just speaks to me. Hasidut speaks directly to me. Rabbi Kook writes about the nation. Well…he also writes about the individual, but mainly about the nation. Hasidut speaks to me as an individual. What I have to do and where I fit into things."

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[80] Both Palestinians and Israelis use the road.

Talya was grasping for something personal. She wasn’t just looking for an individual connection to something personal. The story here is much more nuanced. What Talya, and thousands more like her seem to be seeking, is some understanding – theological or otherwise - of where they personally fit into the religious Zionist narrative. For Talya, redemption as a national goal is less important than her *individual* role in that drama.

This tension between the collective and the individual that Talya felt so personally, can also be intuited from the lesson that she found most interesting in Rabbi Froman's lecture. The difference Rabbi Froman drew between ‘love’ and ‘fear’ of God, seems to parallel how the classical followers of Rabbi Kook interpret political events. In their worldview, life on the grand scale is ever progressing towards a harmonious transcendental unity. On a personal level however, progress is not always smooth, reality is never as simple or as easy as our ideologies would like it to be.

Classical messianic religious Zionist thought is very optimistic. As my *chevruta* in Machon Meir would often remind me, one has to have faith that the ‘bumps in the road’, are part of the grand process of redemption. When transcribed onto the political scene, this is how classical religious Zionists have always come to terms with governmental decisions to trade land for peace (to take one example). Such moves by a secular government were viewed as minor bumps in the road, which would eventually prove to be irrelevant in the ‘grand scheme of things’.

Indeed this kind of faith echoes how Rabbi Kook understood ‘*Teshuva’* (‘Return’ or ‘Repentance’). For Rabbi Kook the ‘Repentance of Faith’ is the ultimate form of repentance. It is the deep understanding that all our sins - although they were wrong - and

we regret them, have a purpose. In an ultimate show of mystical unity and optimism, repentance of faith is the understanding that even our sins were a kind of blessing.

Rabbi Froman veered drastically from this Kookian mystical optimism. He preferred to focus on the 'fear of God'. For him 'fear' meant facing reality in all its stark contrasts. Here optimism does not hold reign. There is not always a happy redemptive ending. Rabbi Froman's comment was not only a homily on the difference between 'love' and 'fear', and it was not only a personal reflection on death. It was also a theological interpretation of larger political realities. These realities include the fact of Palestinian life side-by-side to that of settlers. That at a certain point, for Rabbi Froman and his disciples – it seems that the Palestinian presence in the heartland of the Jewish People must be accepted and perhaps even welcomed. On the other hand, 'reality' also meant Jewish existence in the Land of Israel. Someone once asked Rabbi Froman what he would do if the government forced him to leave his home and his land in the interests of peace. The Rabbi in his classical simple style stated, "I'll die" (אני אמות) (Friedman and Leshem.Times of Israel. 5/52013). The Jewish need and desire for an 'authentic' life in their ancestral spiritual homeland was also a fact that had to be faced starkly, and without apology.

At the conclusion of one midnight study session in 2010 Rabbi Froman asked those present to pray for him. He was going to be traveling to meet the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Erdogan. Rabbi Froman was willing to meet with anyone whom he felt would advance the cause of coexistence within the Holy Land. Yet he was not naïve about it either. That night he distinctly asked us to pray for him, because he was going to

meet a *rasha* (an evil person) and a *soneh yisrael* (a hater of Israel). There are certain, political, social, and even theological realities that cannot be circumvented.

'Fear' of God, and the uncomfortable questions that fear inspired may have been a more honest means of engaging with not just the realities of his terminal illness, but with political realities as well. In place of transcendental political optimism, once is faced with reality, stark, pure, and simple. This reality is frightening, overpowering, oftentimes unintelligible, and the individual faces it alone.

8.5 - **The Impact of Hasidism on Religious Zionism**

Hasidism's focus on the individual has had a far reaching impact on religious Zionist thought and practice in recent years. One can find its presence in some of the most surprising places. Generally speaking Modern Orthodox religious Zionists in America are not very influenced by Hasidism (nor are they very much moved by mystical messianism in the style of Rabbi Kook). They follow the rationalist and pragmatic teachings of Rabbi Soloveitchik. Once moving to Israel, however, things can change. One evening, I was in Efrat – a city with many American religious Zionists - visiting a friend who was going to give me a lift to Tekoa. We heard that a charismatic

Figure 13 Notice the knit kippa with theAmerican and Israeli flags in the center.

English speaking Hasidic Rabbi was going to be giving a talk in one of the main synagogues. We could only sit for a few minutes but the room was crowded with American-Israeli immigrants, all of them speaking English.

It is hard to imagine that, back in America, all of these people would spend an evening going to listen to an inspirational Hasidic talk. It shows, however the extent to which Hasidic views have influenced rank and file religious Zionists.

My friend Chovav – a rabbinic student in Efrat, told me in his caravan one stormy night, “When a kid becomes interested in Hasidut he’ll open up a book of Rabbi Nachman (Breslov Hassidism), it’s easy to understand with lots of stories. He may grow *peyot*, and wear a large kippa. But then, if he wants to continue and study a little deeper he’ll open up some works of Chabad, the Tanya (Lubavitch Hassidism). That’s more of an intellectual path”.

Three months of preliminary fieldwork drew my attention to the contemporary relationship between Hasidism and religious Zionism. As a result, during one intercession I decided to spend a little bit of time learning in 770, the Lubavitch movement’s headquarters in Brooklyn. I walked into the huge *Beit Midrash* and just picked a seat. Looking around I took note of all the Hebrew I was hearing. Most of the Israelis seemed to be congregated on the left hand side of the room. That was exactly where I needed to be. I took hold of a Jewish text (always a useful prop) picked myself up and moved to the left hand side of the room. We were sitting on wooden benches and the tables were very narrow. To move from one bench to the other students would walk over the benches (sometimes stepping on them), as well as over other students. I sat down next to a thin 18

year old with short curly blonde hair. After about 15 minutes he must have noticed that I was the only person in the near vicinity not wearing a white shirt and black pants. He introduced himself as Netanel and we started talking. It turned out Netanel was from a religious Zionist family in Jerusalem. He had found his way to Chabad, and decided to learn in 770 for a few years. I asked him why he chose 770, and not a Chabad yeshiva in Israel. He answered me matter-of-factly, "I wanted to be close to the rebbe". That sounded reasonable to me, but I was curious and so I asked him the next logical question.

"You're from a religious Zionist family. You went to Netiv Meir [a well-known religious Zionist high school in Jerusalem), how did you find your way to Chabad? What happened"? I already suspected. If Netanel was 18 in 2010 then he would been about 13 or 14 at the time of the disengagement from the Gaza Strip. A little bit too young to take part in the protests…but perhaps not.

I was not disappointed. "It was honestly Gaza. After the disengagement I just fell out of it. I'm looking for the truth, and I found it with the Rebbe[81]." Netanel went on to say that there are a few other students learning who come from a similar background. His story, though certainly interesting, is not terribly unique. Here is a very personal, and brief, example of the complicated interrelationships between politics, theology, and even family life (Netanel's entire family were religious Zionists with knitted *kippot*!).

Hasidic thought offers an alternative to classic religious Zionism. A complete discussion of the different strands of Hasidic theological thought is beyond the scope of this study. This is not an analysis of textual material, or theological principles in and of

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[81] Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson passed away in 1994. He was the seventh and last grand Rebbe of Lubavitch Hasidism. When Israeli Hasidim visit Lubavitch Headquarters at 770, they say there are going to "visit the Rebbe".

themselves. I am primarily interested in the ways in which these texts and theological principles are *received* by individuals and within communities.

My *chevruta* with Chovav offered a good entrance into the ways in which Chabad Hasidut has entered into the thought of religious Zionists. During our weekly sessions we primarily focused on the works of Rabbi Kook, mainly *Orot HaTeshuva* (The Lights of Repentance or Return). Yet Chovav would often compare the principles we were exploring to those found within the *Tanya*, the seminal work of Lubavitch philosophy written by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi.

I am not a scholar of Hasidic thought. My own exploration of the Tanya came through another chevruta, this time with a student in *Mercaz Harav*. Another important medium for my analysis was the multivolume translation and running commentary of the Tanya published by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. Steinsaltz is a famed Talmudic translator and is also the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Tekoa, a *hesder* institution that is known to be deeply influenced by different strands of Hasidic thought. As a result, my analysis of the Tanya is inflected and read through these ethnographic and textual sources. The disadvantage here is that I have not read the material as a primary source. Nor do I have a comprehensive and holistic view of the textual material. The advantage of my approach however, is that my analysis is one that is entrenched in ethnographic fieldwork. In other words, whether or not my readings are objectively ‘correct’, they do reflect how religious Zionists on the ground in 2012 interpreted the textual material.

One evening Chovav and I were discussing how, for Rabbi Kook, repentance is a continual process of encountering, and then distancing oneself from divinity. There is

however, some end to the process. Rabbi Kook envisioned a moment when all would be unity. The same God who created sin and transgression, also created their opposites. Ultimate harmony would eventually be reached. The hero for Rabbi Kook, was one who could at some point transcend these spiritual vicissitudes and achieve that ultimate harmony. The *Ba'al HaTanya* (the author of the *Tanya*) envisioned a very different world. For him life was a constant struggle against the forces of sin. The existential hero of the *Tanya's* world was one who could fight this never ending struggle. These are opposing worldviews. One is a tale of harmony, and the other, of struggle. Indeed as Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, once asserted, the revolution of the Tanya is that,

> In this book comes the novel idea that there are some people for whom the conflict for good and evil is never solved completely, and there are people for whom the struggle will be permanent and eternal. These people are important people, not failures, and are fulfilling the divine plan, by their permanent struggling[82].

This idea of struggle can be seen – to take one example – through the concepts of Chillul and Kiddush Hashem (as we have seen, the desecration and sanctification of God's name). Chapter 5 of the Tanya's *Iggeret HaTeshuva* (Epistle on Repentance), discusses what occurs within the soul (and within the cosmos), when it becomes disconnected from the source of divinity (i.e. when it experiences sin). When such a disconnection occurs– according to Rabbi Steinsaltz – an empty space (a *challal* in Hebrew) is created within reality. Divine will is not present within that space.

> This is the simple explanation to the notion of the "desecration of sanctity", that one creates "as it were" a hole within sanctity. Reality is not empty she is entirely filled with the divine presence. But a sin makes an empty space within sanctity, and creates as it were a reality of having an empty space within the divine presence" (Steinsaltz. 1997: 101).

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[82] http://www.jewishjournal.com/arts/article/q_a_with_rabbi_adin_steinsaltz_20031107

Within Chabad thought, the source of sin, or of evil, is man's ego. As Rabbi Steinsaltz comments, "The sin is only the result of raising up the ego above all other considerations. When the "ego" wants, when the "ego" desires…that is the source and the essence of evil" (1997: 133). One technique that is used to preserve the connection of the soul to its divine source can be called the 'nullification of ego'. "Whoever surrenders before God's glory, who sees himself within the creation as connected and nullified to the source of all life – already complete evil cannot exist there" (Ibid: 132).

8.5A - The Tanya and Kahane

There is a certain theological equivalency here between the Tanya's 'sin' and the 'powerlessness' of the Kahanists'. Both emphasize man's ability - "as it were" - to remove the divine presence from reality. Divinity itself is sensitive to man's actions. Both understand man's 'ego' as being that which influences a connection to divinity. For the Tanya controlling one's ego limits man's ability to sin, thus preserving his connection with the creator. For the Kahanists personal self-negation is the force that brings divine power into the world. As Rabbi Kahane wrote, controlling one's ego, "crowns God over him [Man] as a king, and publicizes his [God's] name throughout the world" (1993: 153). To draw out the analogy, for the Tanya '*sin'* is caused by the expression of man's ego, which jeopardizes God's presence in the world, and endangers his connection to Man. For the Kahanists, ego takes away from God's presence in the world, and helps to weaken God's *power*. Both Kahane and the Tanya viewed their topics (powerlessness and sin respectively) on the cosmic scale. That is the Tanya, was not merely writing about the individual sins of individual Jews, rather the text also understands sin in its

broader cosmic implication. The same was true for Rabbi Kahane's understanding of powerlessness.

This theological similarity is important because it also mirrors a certain ethnographic similarity between the two. I sometimes saw Kahanist themes (symbols, ideas, personalities) in close proximity to Lubavitch themes. In places like the Jewish Community of Chevron, Yitzhar, or Kfar Tapuach, the connection was quite apparent and I even heard people comment on it. The theological equivalency may explain this association. The relationship between political activism, power, and pietistic self-negation among Orthodox Jews maybe be a fertile topic for future investigation.

Hasidism (as well as Kahanist thought) adds a measure of individuality into what is seen as the classical collectivist theology of religious Zionism. Here the individual must conquer his own ego, and it is the individual who struggles to secure God's presence in the world. What's more, in Lubavitch thought at least, most people throughout most of the world are neither righteous, nor evil. People live with, and struggle with sin[83]. If the source of sin is the individual ego (which makes no room for God) then there exists some space removed from the divine that is distinctly human.

Rabbi Kook's theology of transcendental harmony – with all its collectivist political and social implications - speaks to the vast majority of religious Zionists in Israel. At the same time there is a growing discontent with this kind of theological (as well as social) collectivism. This era of discontent is expressed through Hasidism's individual relationship with God. Examples of this kind of discontent transcend political

[83] In fact the Tanya is called '*Sefer shel Beinonim*' (The Book of the Average Men).

boundaries. They can be found on the Left through the Breslov inspired Hasidism of Rabbi Froman in Tekoa, as well as in various places on the Right.

8.6 - **The Theological Vectors of Neo-Liberalism**

8.6A - Fabrengen in Yitzhar

I saw this trend in Yitzhar, at the Od Yosef Chai Yeshiva when I visited for the 19th of Kislev celebrations. Yitzhar is a settlement perched on a mountain south of Shechem (Nablus). The Od Yosef Chai Yeshiva was originally located at the putative grave site of the patriarch Joseph in Shechem. When the site was attacked and ransacked by Palestinian rioters in the year 2000, the I.D.F pulled out of the location along with the yeshiva. The 19th of Kislev is the date on the Jewish calendar when the first Lubavitch rebbe, Schneur Zalman of Liadi, was released from a Czarist prison. It is an important holiday for Chabad Hasidut, and in Israel it is difficult to miss as there are events throughout the country. That night I attended a *fabrengen* or a festive Hasidic gathering with music food and Torah study, at the yeshiva in Yitzhar.

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, a well-known Lubavitch Rabbi in Israel and the Rosh Yeshiva at Yitzhar was the highlight of the event. Ginsburgh is perhaps most famous (or infamous) - beyond religious Zionist circles - for publishing a pamphlet entitled *Baruch HaGever* which offered a kabbalistic rational for the 1995 Hebron massacre perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein (Seeman. 2005). Rabbi Ginsburgh however, is a prolific writer who has authored dozens of books that relate Kabbalah to everyday issues. What makes Rabbi Ginsburgh theologically unique within Chabad Hasidism, is that he teaches (and

writes about) mysticism directly, and not through the lens of the last Lubavitch Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schnerson.

For religious Zionists Rabbi Ginsburgh is lauded by very different kinds of people. Firstly those who are drawn towards Hasidic thought and mysticism gravitate towards Rabbi Ginsburgh and his texts. Amichai, one of my roommates in reserve duty, a very soft spoken individual, used to lie down on his cot and read a book by Rabbi Ginsburg during his free time. I asked him once what he thought about Rabbi Ginsburgh's pamphlet on Baruch Goldstein. Amichai simply explained that Rabbi Ginsburgh has written many books, and there is a lot of depth to his writing. Another friend of mine from yeshiva in Efrat seemed somewhat offended when I asked him about *Baruch HaGever*. It was almost as if the question insulted the honor of his Rabbi. I fear my question ruined the relationship I was trying to start with him. It is also commonly known that Rabbi Froman in Tekoa is very good friends with Rabbi Ginzburg. Secondly Rabbi Ginsburgh is something of a religious icon for those youngsters who are commonly called the 'Hilltop Youth'. They carry his texts around and study them in depth. Many of these youngsters are also influenced by Rabbi Kahane and his thought[84].

I heard about the *fabrengen* from one of the *alonei shabbat*. I then joined a rented van that was taking people to the event from Jerusalem. There were many different kinds of people on the van. From elderly women to Chabad Hasidim, to religious Zionist youngsters….and then there was I, the anthropologist. The 19th of Kislev that year happened to fall out a day after a dozen or so youngsters broke into the army's Ephraim

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[84] Not surprisingly in the 60's and 70's Rabbi Kahane appealed mainly to youngsters as well as to the working class.

regional headquarters causing some injuries and property damage. During my fieldwork such attacks were becoming more common. They were called ‘price-tag’, and were generally – though not exclusively - perpetrated against Palestinians. The idea being that Jewish violence against Palestinians would invite a Palestinian response. That situation would be the ‘price’ the government would have to pay for removing Jews from settlements. Yitzhar is thought to be one of the more difficult communities, both in terms of violence and in how people are thought to relate to the authority of the State of Israel. I’m not sure how to judge the veracity of this belief. On the one hand I do know that violence regularly breaks out between Jews and Palestinians at Yitzhar. Tensions are especially high during the fall when both Jews and Arabs harvest olive trees.

Unfortunately, I was never able to spend a Shabbat (or a few days) in the community. This is not for lack of trying. I kept on calling a man I met on a brief visit there during Succot. He lived on one of the hilltops surrounding the main community, He was very Hasidic, and it seemed like an interesting place to spend a weekend. In Israel it is customary to invite oneself over for a weekend, and not wait to be invited. For some reason, however, he kept on putting me off telling me that perhaps another week would work better. At some point not wanting to be a bother, I simply stopped calling[85].

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[85] My failed attempts to spend Shabbat in Yitzhar did teach me something about suspicion in these kinds of communities. I got the sense that my contact kept on pushing me off because he was suspicious that I may be an informer for the authorities. I was a new face, who just showed up one morning. I have an American accent. I do not wear the classical large round knit *kippa* with unkempt *peyot*. In short I did not fit in. In my research I started to notice how some settlers living in Judea and Samaria would talk about who they thought might be an informer. Some theories claimed that anyone who was very outspoken ought to be suspected. Other’s would say that suspicion ought to rest on anyone who was arrested often and then released rather quickly. I heard people mention names of individuals, they thought were suspicious, who were surprisingly

On the way to the *fabrengen* we passed a military roadblock at the junction below the community. The night before a military base in the Ephraim region of Samaria was attacked as part of a price-tag action. The roadblock below Yitzhar was meant to stop Jews (and not Palestinians) going up to the settlement. After briefly stopping at the roadblock one of the Chabad guys joked "It's ok guys, we're going to do a price tag, we'll be right back in 20 minutes". The *fabrengen* was held in the Yeshiva's Beit Midrash. Rows of tables were set up in the middle where people (those who came early enough – mainly students) would sit and eat. Rabbi Ginsburgh sat on the dais in the front next to a large screen. The Rabbi has a very low voice so, in front of him were individuals typing his remarks onto the computer screen. Next to Rabbi Ginsburgh was a band that would play music for 20-30 minutes in between the Rabbi's remarks. In the back of the room Rabbi Ginsburgh's books were being sold at a discounted price. Some people walked out of the event with their arms filled with Kabbalistic texts.

The Rabbi spoke for about six hours with a few brief interludes for music and dancing. I do not know how he had the stamina, but it seemed to be a long night for everyone involved. Unfortunately, I did not understand what Rabbi Ginsburgh was saying for 6 hours. He spoke very low and quickly, and his ideas are rather complex to follow. Instead I tried to pay attention to the ethnographic context of the event. The atmosphere was very festive. Even while Rabbi Ginsburgh was lecturing, I would hear

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rather well known and important among settlers. In another instance I was sitting in an office in the Jewish community of Hebron, and the person who I was supposed to talk to said half-jokingly, "everything we say here is recorded". I remember thinking that he was probably not wrong, and he probably knows that he is not wrong. Suspicion is a very real part of the lives of some West Bank Settlers, and it certainly affected my research.

people on the sides talking and laughing. Throughout the room were posters of Rabbi Ginsburgh calling him a leader and a righteous person. This may have been connected to his lectures that night which seemed to focus on the nature of the messiah.

According to one student I spoke to Rabbi Ginsburg wants to re-establish Jewish kingship in Israel. I do not know, however, if he claims to be that king (or if his students make that claim). There were other interesting pamphlets around the room. One of them described how to disrupt military operations (when they involve destroying Jewish homes), such as when and how to puncture tires.

The musical interludes were fascinating. People would around the room put their hands around each other's shoulders and sway with the music, as the circle slowly made its way around the room. In the back there were individuals simply dancing by themselves. Many were wrapped in shawls or scarves (it was cold outside) that looked almost homespun. They were jumping up and down, their side locks swinging back and forth. In the back it almost looked like a rock concert. Towards the end of the evening the dancing started to center around Rabbi Ginsburg himself. Children and young adults would crowd around him singing, jumping up and down.

Figure 14 Students dancing around the Rabbi.

Around the margins I saw teenagers congregating in small groups discussing price tag attacks, particularly the most recent clash in the Ephraim regional headquarters. They would talk in whispers, smiling, and looking around. I couldn't make out the details of what they were saying, nor did I try. I was somewhat surprised though that they would talk about these things so openly.

This Hasidic style *fabrengen*, in a religious Zionist settlement, that attracted so many youngsters, is very different from the classical religious Zionist celebrations in places that affiliate more closely with the thought of Rabbi Kook. The dancing was wild and individualistic, there were no concentric circles swinging around and around. There were no Israeli flags. The references to price tag activities were also very individualistic. In contrast to their counterparts in Mercaz HaRav for example, these religious Zionists are experiencing not just religion, but also political shifts in a very personal and individualistic manner.

The national religious community is shifting its focus from collectivism towards more individualistic modes of experience. This is true in the domain of politics, but particularly so in the realm of religious experience. I term these shifts from theological and political collectivism towards individualism the 'theological vectors of neo-liberalism'. We see these vectors most poignantly (and most exotically) when looking at current settlement practices within Judea and Samaria. Scholars such as Hadas Weiss, Michael Feige, and Joyce Dalsheim have pointed to how settlers respond to neoliberal shifts. For all three anthropologists for example, the settler emphasis on collectivism stands in contrast to the current Israeli neo-liberal ethos. Settlers must then somehow deal

with this cognitive dissonance. When they look at the 'hilltop youth' or 'disaffected youth' in the West Bank, they see Gush Emunm messianism gone awry to the extreme.

By analyzing, however, shifts in religious experience, a different story emerges. Settlement activity is increasingly becoming a part of (and not a contrast to) the neoliberal shift within Israel. This is particularly so in the outlying areas of Judea and Samaria, and within satellite communities of much larger settlements. For those who live in such communities, or for the hilltop youth, such endeavors are not messianic in the classical religious Zionist sense of the term. Their neighborhoods and communities are not meant to be a city on the hill for the rest of Israeli society, or to progressively unify the nation to reach a transcendental redemption. Although (I doubt) any of them would negate the importance of the messiah – it is after all a basic element within Orthodox Judaism - these religious Zionists are doing something very different. For them settlement activity is a practice that frees them from government control. It neutralizes the progressively messianic forces inherent within the mystical religious Zionism of their Gush Emunim forbearers.

8.6B - Escaped Sheep, and Stolen Bee Hives: Searching For Heroes and Villains

I saw several examples of this kind of individual experience. Before Pesach (Passover) 2011, I volunteered for a few days on a small farm adjacent to the Samarian community of Kfar Tapuach. Small farms often utilize volunteers during the major holidays of *Succot* and *Pesach* as these coincide with the semester breaks offered in the

Yeshivot, known as *bein hazmanim* (or between the times)[86]. I saw an advertisement for the farm on one of the message boards outside the *beit midrash* at Yeshivat Machon Meir. I didn't really know what to expect, but I thought a few days in a new place couldn't be so terrible.

The farm was part of a community of six caravans (there are no permanent structures) on a hill adjacent to Kfar Tapuach. Eitan the farmer, was a tall Yemenite with long *peyot* and a large knit *kippa* who keeps Breslov texts in his shed. He has 6 children all of them younger than 9. The small community, including the farm, acts as their playground. They went everywhere (were allowed to go everywhere) and did not seem to be afraid of anything. On their time off from school, the children help their father manage the farm, and I did not hear a peep of complaint out of any of them. Even as young children they knew their way around the farm. For example, one day Eitan left me alone with his kids to manage the farm while he delivered some goods in central Israel. One of the things I had to do was feed the sheep. That entailed pouring up 2 large pails of grain into the sheep's enclosure. To make sure all the sheep were fed I actually had to walk into the enclosure and pour the grain in several locations. Of course I forgot to close the opening to the enclosure when I walked in. Sheep may not be the smartest animals in the world, but they know freedom when they see it. All of a sudden these sheep started running out. His six year old son Micha starts yelling at me. Eitan was going to lose all

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[86] The yearly yeshiva cycle begins in mid to late august and runs for a month until Yom Kippur. This period is called *Zman Elul*. There is then about a 3 to four week break, or *bein hazmanim* that coincides with the holiday of *Succot*. Yeshiva is then in session for about 4 months until the holiday of *pesach*. This is called *Zman Choref* or the Winter Session. At Pesach there is another Bein Hazmanim break for a few weeks. Summer session, or *Zman Kayitz* then runs from about May the fast of the Ninth of Av around July. The year begins again at the end of August.

of his goats, and it was going to be my entire fault! But how in the world does an academic from Brooklyn stop a sheep stampede? Micha runs in front of the sheep waving his arms. He yells at me to shake the food pail in front of them, and they'll run back into the enclosure. Apparently, that is precisely how one stops a sheep stampede.

I did not really understand the economics of the farm though. The farm is fairly big for one family, and requires a lot of work. It must be terribly expensive to run. When I was there Eitan sold five cases of wine for about1400 shekels ($388). I did not understand how that covered the cost of production with a reasonable profit. I also did not quite understand why the farm was still there. There are no permanent buildings on the hill, which implies that, at least some portions of the buildings were not built with the legal consent of the State. During my fieldwork outposts were regularly being torn down. I did not understand why this outpost outside of Kfar Tapuch in Samaria was allowed to remain standing, while another outpost outside of Kiryat Arba, for example, was torn down.

I asked Eitan this question. He told me that he does not know, and it is not an issue that bothers him. He said that what the State does or does not decide to do was no real concern of his. He does not think about the State of Israel.

One day after work, however, I was sitting on an overturned pail in front of the grinding room taking a short break. I looked out passed the valley at a Palestinian village perched atop a far hill. Despite the distance I could clearly make out the white black and green Palestinian flag waving in the wind. I just realized then, that there was no Israeli flag anywhere on Eitan's farm.

That does not mean however, that Eitan lacks strongly held beliefs regarding the role he plays in the Land of Israel. One of the farm's larger endeavors is bee keeping. Bee keeping is a very versatile pursuit. Profit not only comes from the honey, but also from breeding, and then selling the bees themselves (specifically the Queen bee). The bees are raised, and honey is produced within hives that are wooden boxes which are about 2x2 feet in length and width. Within each box are ten wooden frames with either plastic or metal wires running widthwise. The beeswax forms around the wire, and honey is produced. Since the hives sit out in the open for a while they can become worn and break. One afternoon Eitan gave me the task of organizing the empty bee hives. I had to separate the boxes that contained broken frames. I noticed that Arabic writing was etched onto the outside of about a quarter of the boxes. I asked Eitan about this oddity. Why would a Jewish settler have Arabic writing on his bee hives? He answered me calmly looking me straight in the eye.

One day the police informed Eitan that someone had stolen some beehives from him as well as from a local Palestinian. Both Eitan and the Palestinian were called to the location to collect their stolen property. By the time they both got there it was already dark outside. The Palestinian wanted to sort through all the boxes then and there. Eitan said no, either they divide the boxes evenly, or they ought to just wait till the morning when they could both see properly. "The Arab knew we couldn't leave the boxes there till the morning. The thief would just come back and move the stolen property. And I knew [he said waving his hands a bit] that most of the hives weren't mine anyway". By splitting the stolen goods in half, Eitan would in reality be gaining more hives. I do not know for sure, but I imagine the Palestinian did not have much of a choice in the matter.

It may not be worth it for him to complain to the military commander of the area or to the police over a few beehives.

Eitan then referred to the Biblical commandment that one should not allow the Canaanite inhabitants of the Land of Israel to establish themselves. By taking more bee hives than were rightfully his, Eitan was upholding this commandment. Eitan clearly sees himself as taking part in a struggle that is biblically mandated, yet this was not related to any larger messianic vision. He was just a simple farmer following a biblical commandment.

One thing that was implied in the transcendental Progressive Messianism of Rabbi Kook were ethics. A part of redemption was what kabbalists called "*Bisum Ha'Olam*" or "the sweetening of the world". As my *chevruta* in Machon Meir explained it, "it used to be that kings went to war and killed people for little or no reason, now they need to find some sort of cassus belli. This is what Rabbi Kook meant by 'sweetening'". In this view we are all caught up in this process and haves no choice but to be 'sweetened'.

Once an individual removes himself from the grand theological movements of redemption however he is entirely free to choose right from wrong, theft from honesty. It is difficult to account for the decisions individuals make and I cannot pretend to understand Eitan's seemingly nonchalance at what amounted to theft. I can say that Eitan was always cheerful, gracious, and he never lost his temper (even when I made stupid mistakes). Anthropology has a tendency to look for heroes and villains. At one point Savages were the villains and the Civilization was the hero. At another colonialists were

the villains, and natives were the heroes. By looking at the changing role theology plays in the daily lives of religious Zionists I am reminded that in real life…there are very few heroes and villains.

8.6C - *Shabbat in Chomesh: Violence, Individualism, and the Neutralization of the Messianic Impulse*

Figure 15 Passover Gathering at Chomesh

The ambiguous ways in which religious experience, politics, and individual ethics may coalesce and sometimes contradict one another, were further clarified during my visit one Shabbat to Chomesh. Chomesh was one of 4 settlements in northern Samaria that were removed as part of Israel's 2005 disengagement plan. Chomesh the closest community to larger Jewish settlement blocs has been a focus for activists who call for a return to these evacuated communities. Every once in a while, especially during holidays , there is a large 'return' to Chomesh.

I attended such a gathering on Passover. With special military escort and protection, hundreds of people gather along the old roads and ruins of the settlement. They listen to music, speeches are made, and there are nice activities for children. These events are social in nature, but they serve a political purpose as well. Firstly they offer

right-of-center politicians the opportunity to demonstrate their political beliefs. Secondly, it gives political organizations within parties the opportunity to demonstrate their strength among voters to party leaders. This then influences the political positions those parties choose to take. Thirdly the gatherings are also meant to demonstrate to the government that there is a critical mass of people who desire to return to the evacuated areas.

There are also smaller, more private efforts to return to Chomesh. Yeshivat Chomesh in particular which has a permanent presence in the nearby community of Shavei Shomron sends its students a couple of times a week to learn Torah in the destroyed settlement. They also spend Shabbat there about once every other week. Jewish civilians are only allowed inside Chomesh and its surrounding areas with special military permission. The army sometimes puts a checkpoint on the main road between Shavei Shomron and Chomesh, whose purpose is to deter Jewish entrance into the area. Those students who do visit Chomesh are in violation of the law. As such, I really wanted to spend Shabbat with these students in the destroyed settlement.

I had met my contact, Ariel, while in Hebron. Ariel's family lives in Beit Hadassah, one of the Jewish buildings in the city. They were a very nice family with 7 children, and from time to time I would spend Shabbat with them. Ariel is the second oldest in the family, and he learns in Yeshivat Chomesh during the week. He wears a large colorful knitted *kippa* and his blonde side locks are beginning to curl and grow long. When I heard he learned in Chomesh, Ariel was happy to give me his number told me to call him any week.

So one week, about a month later, I did. Ariel picks up the phone, and after a brief inquiry he told me that they have not yet found a ‘weapon’, and so he was not sure if they could go up that particular week. By ‘a weapon’ Ariel meant someone on leave from the army who brought his rifle home with him, or someone who is licensed – via the Israeli Ministry of Interior - to carry a pistol or a rifle.

“But wait” he said. You have a pistol don’t you?”

“Sorry I don’t” I answered. I was told to call back later in the week. I called up Ariel that Wednesday and was told the good news that they found someone with a weapon. I was to get to Shavei Shomron by Friday at 1pm. The only catch was that Ariel (the only guy I knew there), could not make it. There is nothing like going up to a place illegally that is surrounded by Palestinian villages, not knowing anyone around me. But fortune favors the bold, and after a two hour trip from Jerusalem, I made it to Shavei Shomron.

The “yeshiva” was located in the middle of the community, and was really only several caravans placed together, to make a large building. There were about three rooms with beds in them, a kitchen, a small dining hall, a Beit Midrash, and a shower/bathroom. The building was far from clean, there were some large holes in the walls, and the bathroom did not have proper locks on it. I remember thinking that the building must be really cold during the winter months. Despite this, immediately when I walked in, I was offered a cold drink and some food. David, one of the yeshiva students, right away introduced me to the others and I quickly felt very welcome.

The *Beit Midrash* featured a large Hasidic section, which included texts from various Hasidic traditions. That Shabbat there were 13 people going up to Chomesh. These included: myself, 4 young ultra-orthodox men, a newly married couple, a former student who was a soldier on leave that brought an M-16 short rifle and one magazine with him (which I hoped was full), and five other yeshiva students. Most of the Chomesh students except for David the leader of the group, wore large knitted *kippot*, and they all had longer curled side locks. What I noticed was that most of the students there did not grow up in Judea and Samaria. Or if they did, they were from the larger more suburban communities like Efrat or Ginot Shomron. This also seemed to be a general trend among the "hilltop youth". Most scholars call them "second or third generation" settlers, in general though, I do not believe that to be accurate. These are youngsters who seem to be unhappy with the classical religious Zionism they found in their urban or suburban home communities (both within and beyond the Green Line).

The Ultra-Orthodox contingent was interesting. Three of them learned in the ponevezh yeshiva in Bnei Brak, and another left Ponovezh to learn in a yeshiva in the old city of Jerusalem. The students from Chomesh and the Ultra-Orthodox students would talk a lot about politics, philosophy, and *halacha*. It was as if both were learning about a different world that was somewhat similar[87]. It seemed as if the ultra-orthodox students were gaining some excitement from Shabbat, and the Chomesh students were learning about a group of people who were just as skeptical about the State as they were and who

[87] In general I noticed quite a number of Ultraorthodox young adults hanging out in Judea and Samaria, or were otherwise on the outskirts of religious Zionist yeshivot. During Jerusalem Liberation day a group of Ultraorthodox (Bobov) young adults joined Mercaz HaRav on their annual dancing from the yeshiva to the Western Wall. It seemed that when Ultraorthodox youngsters wanted to 'experiment', they would hang out with national religious youngsters.

did not serve in the army. In fact the only person to have served in the army (or expressed any interest in serving) was the former student who brought the rifle. He was a chaplain's assistant. It struck me, that of all the people present I probably had the most combat experience with an M-16 rifle.

These students were all from religious Zionist families. They attended a yeshiva (Yeshivat Chomesh) that extolled the virtues of the Land of Israel. Yet they had a complex relationship with the army. For them the I.D.F. was not a sacred institution. It was an institution that one had to run from, that chased them off their mountain, and that continues to evacuate Jews from their homes.

During Shabbat I sat with some of the students and heard them talk about the army with the Ultra-Orthodox guests. None of them were very big fans. Finally, I said the army is important. It does not matter how little, or how much one serves, or where one serves. *Ha'ikar*, the essence, is that one serve. Uri a student in the very Hasidic religious Zionist yeshiva in Ramat Gan, with long blonde side locks down to his chest, turned to me and asked? "*Ha'Ikar*, the essence"? For him that phrase echoed Breslov Hasidic concepts of faith in God. Breslov Hasidism is extremely popular among religious Zionists. For them 'the essence' is an individual experience of God. The phrase '*Ha'Ikar*' may have echoed for Uri the popular Breslov song about faith in God "The entire world is a very narrow bridge. And the essence [*Ha'Ikar*] is not to be afraid". Uri went on, "I think there are other things which are essential, maybe even more essential". The unifying, sacred nature of the Israeli army – that is so common in Rabbi Kook circles was missing among this group. Rabbi Soloveitchik, and Rabbi Kahane's understanding of the

army as a way to bring back national power (or honor) to the Jewish people was also missing in this group. In its place rested a very individual experience.

A land rover jeep from the community of Yitzhar arrived at 1:45 pm to take the first group up to Chomesh. Two trips were made, and most of the equipment (and myself) went on the first trip. We loaded up mattresses, sleeping bags, food for the weekend, a generator, and of course, a Torah scroll. We were actually able to fit 10 people (along with most of the gear) in the first trip. It was exceptionally packed inside the vehicle and I could barely see out the window. The jeep, however, was making various twists and turns, and I understood what we were doing. The army sometimes placed a checkpoint at the start of ‘Area A’ along route 60, between Shavei Shomron, and Chomesh. Getting caught by the army would notbe a good idea, so the jeep took us through the back roads and fields in an attempt to drive around any possible checkpoints.

Figure 16 Water tower at Chomesh

Chomesh is located on top a mountain, and the only permanent structure that survived the 2005 evacuation is the large water tower, at the summit. When we arrived at Chomesh we unloaded the jeep and brought all the stuff down a drainage ditch into a clearing that was relatively concealed from the road. There I found a makeshift hut of green tarp and some chairs and tables that were left from the last time the group was in Chomesh.

David gave us newcomers a quick tutorial. He said the army sometimes drives up to Chomesh on Fridays, usually about an hour or two before Shabbat. If we hear the army jeep coming, we were all too quickly run and hide around one of the large trees in the area. This seemed to make the people who were new there (including myself) very nervous, jumping at everything that sounded remotely like a jeep driving up the mountain. The Chomesh guys however, had done this before, and were all calm. The clearing we were in was mostly concealed from the main road, all the same, we had to wait to set up most of our equipment. We did not want the army to drive up and notice the preparations.

About 45 minutes later, the second trip arrived, including the young couple and a few other pieces of gear. I did not hear the young wife say anything the entire Shabbat, other than a few whispers to her husband. They slept in a tent which we set up at the top of the hill. We extended the *eruv* to their tent, so we could all carry on Shabbat within our campsite. Orthodox Jews are forbidden from carrying items outside of their homes (private space) on Shabbat. An *eruv* is a string that is tied around a Jewish community that in effect turns public space, as it were, into the private space of the community. There was some *halachic* discussion over how to set up the *eruv*. I could not help but thinking that this is a discussion that has occurred in every Jewish community for thousands of years. As Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert (2005) has argued the *eruv* acts as a *halachic* and symbolic means of defining the borders and the character of a Jewish community.

While we were waiting to set up the gear a group of the students decided to hike to a nearby water well in order to dip themselves in a '*mikvah'* before Shabbat. The guy

with the rifle went as well. While they were out we heard a vehicle drive up the hill. All our heads perked up. Would we have to run and hide? Would we get arrested? We knew it was not our Jeep however, and by the sound of the motor it was not a military jeep either. The only possibility that remained was that it was a vehicle of Palestinians.

David, who before this was sitting down relaxing, said "we have to get them out of here!" He looked around and found a long iron pipe. Picking it up, he started sprinting up the drainage ditch towards the main road. Everyone else started picking up large stones, and began running after David. I did not want to be left alone so I ran after all of them! I heard David scream, "Give me your identity card! Give me your identity card[88]! Get out of here!" One of the Palestinians screamed something back in Arabic, and then I heard the vehicle turn and with a loud screech, speed down the mountain. I was in the back, and I did not see the incident, I just heard what was happening. I learned later that David had broken one of the vehicle's windows with the iron pipe.

This was far more than I had bargained for. When I saw everyone else picking up large stones and running after David….I do not know…. My heart was pounding. I did not want to get hurt. And I did not want to hurt anyone else. To be completely honest, I also did not want to confront the moral and legal implications of witnessing anyone getting hurt.

These were people who seconds earlier were learning Talmud, or building a box in which to place a Torah scroll. After the incident they all went back to what they were doing as if little had happened. As I commented in my notes of that day, "Weren't they at

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[88] Jibil Awiye in Arabic. This is the first thing soldiers at checkpoints ask of Palestinians. This is a phrase most Jews living in Judea and Samaria are familiar with.

all worried that the Palestinians would be back with some of their friends? Or perhaps with one important friend named AK-47"? I asked David about this later, and he said that he never "saw an Arab defend himself, they always run away". My roommate, who lived in Har Bracha for five years agreed. He used to work in the vineyards around the community. They did not have a gun and when Palestinians would come close, they would just run at them, scream, and throw some stones. They Arabs would always run away (according to him). I believe David, and I believe my roommate. I do not know why Palestinians tend to run away. I imagine (and it is only a guess), for Palestinians there are enough armed settlers to keep them fearful. Moreover from the perspective of the Palestinians, in any real confrontation, the army will almost always defend the Jews.

Violence is a difficult thing to describe and anthropologists have produced few actual descriptions of violence. Violence "escapes easy definition", and is also a formative aspect of the human condition, both for the informant as well as the ethnographer (Nordstrom and Robbens. 1996: 6). On the one hand it is difficult to see people take up and a pipe and bricks and charge towards a car. I was told there were three men in the vehicle. But what if it was children? I was told by the group that families sometimes go up to Chomesh for picnics. Amidst all the running and shouting, it did not seem like anyone was very discerning as to who was in the car. On the other hand, we were surrounded by Palestinian villages. I do not think our presence there was a big surprise to the neighboring Palestinians, who – as the previous Intifada showed - have no shortage of weapons. We were only 13 people. We only had one rifle, with one magazine, carried by a chaplain's assistant.

Looking back, I personally, have some mixed feelings on the event. As Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robbens write,

> Many ethnographers who study violence have experienced bewilderment on first seeing it…it is the confrontation of the ethnographers own sense of being with lives constructed on haphazard grounds that provokes the bewilderment and sense of alienation experienced by most of us (1996: 13).

My own sense of confusion was somewhat different. I was more perplexed by just how quickly individuals can turn violent and by how quickly they can return to their regular routine. More importantly however, I felt uncomfortable with my own self-interested reaction towards the incident.

That night I asked to be put on the list to do guard duty around the campsite. I woke up at 2 in the morning, got out of my sleeping bag (we were sleeping under the stars), and had a 45 minute shift. All I had with me was a large hand held flashlight. And with that I had to walk around the campsite, as well as walk up to the nearby tent in the pitch black. I figured that all I could do if I actually had to confront someone, would be to blind them with the flashlight for a second, run at them, and scream. David was willing to charge without a gun, without even knowing what was over the hill. That is deterrence of the kind that made me feel a lot safer that night upon the mountain. I was glad David was with us…and that made me feel a little guilty.

This violence however was not tinged with messianism. David's call to us "we have to get them out of here" was not messianic. National and transcendental redemption had no place on that hill. Indeed the national and "sacred" army was just as much an adversary as were the Palestinians. Chomesh was simply our mountain, and David was going to defend it with an iron pipe and bricks.

Gershom Scholem argues that early Hassidic theology worked to 'neutralize' the messianic impulses within Lurianic Kabbalah. For Scholem the Sabbatianism of the 17th century turned the mystic desire to unite the different aspects of divinity, from a general theological principle into a real-world political effort. The early Hasidic focus on 'cleaving to god" or *dvekut* turned this political push into a personal religious experience.

> When the Baal Shem Tov and his pupils made it [*dvekut*] the very center of Hasidic life, the emphasis shifted from Luria's stress on the Messianic action of man in the process of *tikkun* – i.e., of the restoration of the broken state of man and the whole universe to its former harmony and unity – toward a strictly personal relation of man to God (Scholem. 1995: 186).

I do not know if Scholem is 'historically correct'. Yet as I walked back down the drainage ditch after the confrontation, my pulse racing, Scholem's words were echoing in my head. These youth on Chomesh (some might call them Hilltop Youth) had neutralized the messianism of their Mercaz HaRav and Gush Emunim forbearers. The political push towards harmony and unity (as Scholem notes) that led to settling Judea and Samaria were not present. In its place I found a strictly personal drive to cleave to our mountain. Through that *dvekut*, perhaps they were also attempting to cleave, in a very personal sense, to God.

We prayed that night in the makeshift hut that also served as the dining hall, Beit Midrash, and a shady spot for a nice nap in the middle of the day. One guy, Dvir, with a soft gentle voice and a quick smile went off into the surrounding trees and prayed alone, without a minyan. Every once in a while we would hear him scream. He was crying out to his God, on his mountain. The phenomenon of young men choosing to pray by themselves and not with a *minyan* was not new to me. I often encountered religious

Zionist men, influenced by Hasidut, who preferred the individual experience of prayer, over that of the collective. The religious collective is less important than the individual relationship with his (or her) creator. The same was true on the mountain of Chomesh that Shabbat. It was a very exciting Shabbat, I was with friendly people, and the food was surprisingly good. In the end though, I was glad to leave. This was a type of almost anarchic non-messianism that I personally felt very uncomfortable with.

8.6D - *Begging the Question: Political Critique, and Personal Experience in Beit Rimon*

This kind of individualism that is steeped in both Hasidism and contemporary politics is not exclusive to Judea and Samaria, but can also be found within Israel Proper. In many ways it is also implicated within the *sturm und drang* of young adulthood. Amichai, the avid reader of Rabbi Ginsburg's works, and my roommate in reserve duty was also – in his civilian life – a religious teacher in a pre-military seminary (mechina) called *Carmei Chayil* (Vineyards of Valor). *Carmei Chayil* is located in a privatized religious Zionist kibbutz in Israel's north called Beit Rimon. Amichai had studied in the mechina as a young man ten years earlier, and returned to teach there.

In mid-2013 I decided to visit Amichai and the mechina for a Shabbat. Traveling up to the community (which involved three busses and a hitchhike) I was expecting to find classical yeshiva students. This included young adults who were *kippot*, *tzitzit*, and maybe even have the long Hasidic side locks. What I found was something very different and surprising. With me in the ride up to the yeshiva was a young student who just came

back from the Paratrooper Corp tryouts[89]. His blonde hair was long flowing and unkempt. There was no *kippa* on his head, and as not wearing *tzitzit*. When we entered onto the grounds of the yeshiva I noticed that many students lacked the classical garments that mark religious observance within the national Religious community.

I met my friend Amichai in the Beit Midrash (study hall) of the mechina. With his long sidelocks, bushy beard, and wide friendly smile, Amichai ignored my tentative outstretched hand and gave me a large bear hug. "Shalom! How are you? Thank you for coming!" he exclaimed. After organizing a few things around campus Amichai took me into his car for the short ride up to his house for some lunch.

"I don't know if you noticed what's here, but maybe I should explain" Amichai said as he started the engine. "The students in Beit Rimon, some are religious, some aren't. Like….they all come from religious homes, but somehow they fell away.

Laughing a little, I said "Yeah I think I noticed, a lot aren't wearing kippot"

"We don't push them here. We don't allow public violations of Shabbat here, but we don't force what they do privately. It doesn't come from a position of pluralism mind you. We just let them come to religion in their own way". Amichai's students have 'fallen away" or grown disenchanted with the religiosity of their families as well as with the modes of classical religious Zionist thought and practice. What is important for Amichai (and presumably his students) are their very personal and individual religious desires.

[89] The Paratrooper Corp is a volunteer regiment which selects applicants after undergoing a two day tryout known in Hebrew as a *Gibush*

Amichai pulled the car up to the curb and parked in front of his house. We both jump out, and I decided to ask a risky question. I remembered how on patrol once, looking out over the vast expanse of the Hadera valley some 15 Kilometers from Jenin, Amichai told me about his service during the disengagement from Gaza. His paratrooper unit was called up to switch another unit that was participating in the disengagement. He said he had felt rather guilty 'participating' in this way. I was wondering what my friend was like during his yeshiva days (before his military service).

"So Amichai, were you like that too? Not so religious, perhaps searching, during yeshiva"?

Amichai smiled and mysteriously responded, "that's kind of begging the question isn't it?" I suppose it was. I never really got a straight answer though.

As we entered into his house I immediately took a look at his book shelf. This was a common practice for me. I would often look to see what Jewish political pietists were *reading*. I felt it gave me some insight into how they viewed their world. I noticed in his bookshelf several books by Rabbi Kook, as well as some texts by Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh from Yitzhar. On the table next to the bookshelf though I saw two books by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, the past rabbinic mentor of American religious Zionists in Israel, and as we have seen a firm believer in an immanant kind of sanctity!

"Amichai I'm sort of surprised. Rabbi Soloveitchik? That's interesting" I chided a little.

"Surprised huh? What's so surprising?" Amichai said smiling back and taking the ethnographic bait.

"I don't know, it's just not something one normally sees in Israeli households, certainly not with a bookmark in one of them!"

"Yeah I guess it is kind of unique. I try to read a lot of things. I didn't grow up with Rabbi Soloveitchik, but he sort of echoes my Zionism.

"His Zionism is sort of more critical" I added "The State is only sacred so long as it advances Jewish interests"

"Exactly, it expresses a lot of what I've been thinking and feeling. I'd like to read more of what Rabbi Soloveitchik has to offer."

Curious I asked "But your still Israeli, Rabbi Kook is still a big part of who you are, no?"

"Not so much really…." Amichai said. I then not so innocently pointed to the portait of Rabbi Kook staring down at us from his wall. "You don't miss a lot do you?" He offered an ironic laugh.

"It's sort of my job" I winked.

Sitting down to lunch in Amichai's house and listening to him talk about Rabbi Soloveitchik, with some Rabbi Ginzburg's texts in the background, and a portrait of Rabbi Kook staring down at us; it became clear how eclectic religious individualism could be. Theological and even political opposites could coexist under the same roof. That kind of coexistence only echoed the myriad ways in which individuals could mix and mingle religious experience, political expression, and personal beliefs in surprising and paradoxical ways. This individualism which emerges alongside political critique, and

personal religious quest, was expressed very poignantly in the Friday night prayer service and in the ritual meal that followed.

Most yeshivot and mechinot incorporate some kind of singing and even dancing into their Friday night prayers. The singing is not coordinated like a choir, but everyone knows the tunes, and follows them. The dancing is also usually done in concentric circles around the center of the synagogue. The prayers in Carmei Chayil were very different. Individual students – in the middle of a tune – would invent their own variation. The dancing was completely free. Students would swing their arms, jump around, yell out in their own individual and unique ways. No one seemed to be afraid to do something different, and unique, no matter how silly it might appear.

I come from a very Austrian Jewish family. We do *not* dance. Or to be more precise, we *never* dance during prayers. But Amichai was insistent, and so I stood up and tried my best. It just turned into me walking around though. On the one hand, I felt very out of place. On the other, I appreciated the personal expressions that the mechina seemed to encourage in their students.

During the meal Amichai gave a *Dvar Torah* based on the weekly Torah reading alongside a Hasidic text. Thus particular homily was very interactive. All 20 students or so had to go around the table and offer two pieces of information to those present. We had to say something which makes us feel truly happy and fulfilled, and then something which makes us feel terrible, something which holds us back from fulfilling our potential. Just like that people shared around the dinner table some very personal information. I remember how one student revealed that an act that made him feel terrible was going

against *Shmirat Ha'Brit* (Guarding the Covenant), a common euphemism for masturbation. I was the last person around the table, and when my turn came, feeling very awkward I just said that what made me feel terrible is wasting time on Facebook.

Amichai walked me back to my room that night, and I had a chance to talk to him about the issue of individual and (sometimes very) personal expressions in the mechina and their relationship to Hasidism.

"So what did you think of the night?" Amichai asked

"I thought it was interesting. I liked how you offer room for personal expression. I just don't really understand one thing, isn't it important in Chabad, to negate the self? The Self is the source of sin, and so we have to somehow go beyond it?"

"That's true, but before you negate yourself, you have to accept that you have a self. People tend to jump to the last step, and they never really get to know themselves"

"And so that's what the dancing, and singing was all about?"

"Ah that, you didn't like it?" Amichai was smiling, but he was also genuinely curious.

"Haha it's just different, I might be too Yekke [a German Jew] for this"

"Don't worry we'll work on you". With that Amichai said good night and gave me a big hug.

"You guys are also very touchy feely here aren't you?" I said grimacing a little. After all Yekke's do not like to touch.

“That’s also part it”. With that Amichai laughed and said good night.

That Shabbat in Beit Rimon offered a good illustration of several factors affecting both religious Zionism in particular and the scholarly analysis of national pietistic movements in general. Firstly, it showed how religious Zionist youth who turn towards Hasidism are responding to political, social, as well as personal rifts. Secondly, an interest in politics, or the use of violence is only one aspect of Hasidic religious Zionism. These students in Israel’s north were far more interested in self-development than any political or even messianic message. Thirdly, political pietists can be very creative in the ways they meld different theologies and ideological persuasions into their everyday lives. Amichai for example, was able to meld critiques of statism which were pragmatic and rational on the one hand (Rabbi Soloveitchik) and very Hasidic and highly political on the other (Rabbi Ginsburg). All the while a representative of religious statism (Rabbi Kook) was hanging on his wall. I remember spending 8 night-time hours with Amichai in a military jeep patrolling a road in Northern Samaria. There while wearing 30 pounds of gear and trying to awake and warm at the same time, we discussed, politics, religion, and Zionism. For Amichai, collective redemption and state loyalty was not as important as one’s personal connection to God. Or to put it more precisely, a personal connection with the divine was an essential precursor to state loyalty. He said all this while fulfilling over 20 days of service to the State. Amichai taught me that individuals, on the ground, in their daily lives do not often follow the common theological or political scripts that scholars sometimes tend to set out for them.

8.7 - **Pedagogy, Politics, and the Loss of Mystical Certainty**

The turn away from theological and political manifestations of collectivity, and towards individualism within religious Zionism can also be seen in debates surrounding pedagogical methods of teaching and studying Torah. Yeshivot are of central importance for religious Zionists in Israel. As a result, methods of study become emblematic of larger tensions within the movement.

In 2003 a scandal of epic proportions rocked the campus of Yeshivat Hakkibutz Hadati in Ein Tzurim. The Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yoel bin Nun, a one-time central figure in Gush Emunim, as well as a *halachic* and political maverick, wanted to remove texts of scientific biblical scholarship from the *Beit Midrash*, and place them in the library next door.

It was not that Rabbi Yoel, as he was affectionately known by his students, was opposed to different methods of biblical scholarship. Indeed Rabbi Yoel is a big proponent of *Tanach B'Govah Ha'einayim* (literally translated as 'eye level Bible Study, though more idiomatically, 'Unmediated Bible Study'[90]). In this method, the Bible is *not* primarily viewed through the mediated lens of subsequent Jewish rabbinic scholarship. The major issue at stake is one of perspective. Biblical characters are viewed as normative individuals who face challenges, and who even make mistakes. This method of Unmediated Biblical Study is very controversial within Orthodox Judaism in general and religious Zionism in particular. Its opponents claim firstly, that such an approach lessens ones respect for these biblical characters. Secondly they claim the Bible was written with

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[90] I thank Avi Woolf for this idiomatic expression. It is probably the first technical translation of the term into English.

a particular interpretation in mind, one that presumes a certain amount of infallibility on the part of its characters [91].

Rabbi Yoel is a proponent of Unmediated Bible Study. Yet somehow in 2003 He felt that scientific Biblical scholarship was not within the ken of "Torah". It fell beyond the category of 'sacred study' (*limudei kodesh*). As a result it did not belong in the *Beit Midrash*, but rather within the library next door. Indeed many often-used texts, such as atlases, or secular history books were housed in the library.

The *yeshiva* in Ein Tzurim was affiliated with the Religious Kibbutz Movement. Religious Kibbutzim are widely seen as representing a different 'type' of religious Zionism. They are seen as being more 'open' to the secular world, and more lenient in their *halachic* rulings. To a certain degree, the religious Kibbutzim cultivate this image. At that time, the religious kibbutz movement sponsored two *yeshivot* one in the south on Kibbutz Ein Tzurim, and one in the north on Kibbutz Ma'ale Gilboa. Both institutions attracted (Ein Tzurim has since closed) students who did not feel religiously comfortable in the theological environments of some of the other yeshivot. These students questioned rabbinic authority, questioned the separateness that classical *hesder* military programs

[91] A good example of this approach can be taken from the last third of the Book of Genesis. A famous question that perturbed most Jewish commentators touched upon the issue of why Joseph did not contact his father when he was taken down to Egypt. Rabbi Yoel bin Nun takes a perspective on the text that is not mediated through subsequent rabbinic literature. For him Joseph is not an infallible character. Joseph was well aware of the history of his family. In each generation one child was sent away. Perhaps Joseph thought that his father *wanted* his other children to sell him into slavery. To support this view Rabbi Yoel bin Nun marshals Genesis 44. Joseph only reveals himself to his brothers once he learns that his father thought, a wild animal had killed him. Here Joseph is not infallible, he is not all knowing. Most importantly, he does not have the spiritual understanding – that is later assumed by rabbinic authorities - of the role his family's sojourn in Egypt will play in Jewish History.

seemed to encourage, and generally supported a good deal of openness towards the 'secular' Israeli society. For some of these students, Rabbi Yoel[92] caused a minor uproar, when he pushed to remove certain texts from the *beit midrash*. An anonymous letter criticizing the Rosh Yeshiva was written and posted. Then a letter in defense of the Rosh yeshiva was drafted in response. In the end, the texts were removed, but the incident caused a permanent rift within the ranks of the yeshiva.

The rift in Ein Tzurim is an extreme and marginal version of a much larger tension that revolves around what ought to be included in the definition of "Torah study". This debate divides different rabbis and the communities they lead. Every year for example Yeshivat Har Etzion hosts a three day *Tanach* conference. It features a wide array of lectures and panels that revolve around *Tanach* study. A great deal of them approach this study through the perspective of *Tanach B'Gova Ha'einayim* . In 2012 several religious Zionist rabbis hosted a conference, whose purpose was to compete – theologically - with the one in Har Etzion. This conference eschewed the unmediated approach to Bible Study. The two conferences exemplified very different kinds of religious Zionism's. The competing conference was held by the –*Rabanei HaKav* - those rabbinic figures that see themselves as preserving the classical understanding of Rabbi Kook's messianic and redemptive thought. For them the unmediated approach to *Tanach* study lacks a certain spiritual connection to God. As Rabbi Shlomo Aviner said in an interview to Kipa.org (a religious Zionist news and cultural website website), "A child [using the unmediated approach] does not connect to God. Rather, he connects to himself" (Uri Folk. Kippa Website [Hebrew] 6/21/2010).

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[92] who coming from Har Etzion and earlier from Mercaz HaRav was viewed as somewhat of an outsider

This is indeed the crux of the tension for the *Rabbanei HaKav*. The primary purpose for Torah study for them, is not personal satisfaction, or even intellectual enquiry. Rather the study of Torah is meant to aid man in connecting to his creator. One hears in this, echoes of Rabbi Kook's transcendental harmony and unification. Many in Har Etzion would not fundamentally disagree with this assertion. For them however, the intellectual delight in an unmediated approach to the biblical text may *serve* as a means of approaching God. In this regard Rabbi Aviner's critique is on the mark. For Har Etzion it is through the efforts of the *individual* that sanctity is produced.

These tensions surrounding the question of Biblical study are a relatively recent turn. The study of Tanach used to be – throughout most of modern Jewish history - only a very marginal component of the yeshiva students' curriculum. Har Etzion in many ways changed that view, although Tanach is still *not* the primary focus of most *yeshivot*. That role is taken by the study of Talmud

It is difficult to overestimate the importance that *yeshivot* place on proficiency at Talmud study. Indeed the measure of scholarship within Orthodox Judaism is placed, almost solely, on the basis of Talmud proficiency. As stated above, the Brisker method is the classical approach to Talmud study in most *yeshivot*. Here legal concepts are categorized and precisely analyzed in an attempt to resolve contradictions. For many, the primary goal of this method is the analysis of the concepts themselves, and not necessarily the resolution of contradiction. There is a recent disenchantment with this method of Talmudic study, which revolves around wider dissatisfactions and tensions within religious Zionist political and theological thought.

There is a bookstore in Jerusalem's central bus station that exclusively sells Jewish religious texts. Their primary focus is on books with a distinct religious Zionist viewpoint. The store is located on the third floor, where all the busses depart, and they have a smaller stand by the main entrance on the first floor. I would always stop by these stands to peruse through the texts that were being sold. I felt it was a good way to follow the theological pulse of the religious Zionist community. I have a yeshiva background in America, and had at least a passing familiarity with most of the books being sold. A series of books, however, by a Rabbi Shaga"r, were a mystery to me.

I quickly learned that Shaga"r was an acronym for Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg who passed away in 2007. Rabbi Shaga"r was educated in the traditions of Rabbi Kook, and eventually became the *Rosh Yeshiva* of a small – though influential - yeshiva on the northern outskirts of Efrat, called *Siach Yitzchak*. Rabbi Shaga"r was deeply influenced by Hasidic thought, and his students see him as the one who introduced Hasidism into the theological cannon of classical religious Zionism.

For Rabbi Shaga"r the fundamental break with classical religious Zionism occurred during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The mystical and messianic possibilities which appeared on the horizon in 1967 were shattered on the battlefields of the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. The trauma of this mystical loss would follow Rabbi Shaga"r through his entire life. As Rabbi Elchanan Nir said at a memorial event for Rabbi Shaga"r in Siach Yitzchak, "all of his efforts, whether it be in Talmud – which was the essence of his efforts – or in Hasidut, or Jewish thought, or mysticism….it was all a conscious effort to start anew, start fresh"

For his students in Yeshivat Siach Yitzchak, the traumatic loss of mystical certainty that occurred in 1973 and continued with the Oslo peace accords, and finally culminated with the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, was a problem that could only be dealt with on the level of the individual. This concern with the individual role in the grand drama (and trauma) of redemption is felt – first and foremost – on the spectrum of Talmudic scholarship. In Rabbi Shaga"r's view the classical conceptual method of Talmudic analysis has failed to capture the imagination of most religious Zionist youth. Few choose to study Talmud in a serious capacity, and few have the capability to do so in a serious manner. A phenomenological, and personal approach, is one method that Rabbi Shaga"r and his students at Siach Yitzchak used to combat this phenomenon. This method attempts to approach a conceptual issue under discussion in the Talmud on the level of the phenomenon itself. It then attempts to relate that phenomenon to the world at large.

When I visited Yeshivat Siach Yitzchak I was immediately invited to take part in a Talmud lesson given by Rabbi Elchanan Nir. The students were studying *Messechet Bava Kama*, one of the classic Talmudic tractates studied in yeshivot. The particular section under discussion was the five forms of damages that one may be held accountable for in a civil disagreement. One form of damage is 'embarrassment'. In the language of a yeshiva, if Reuven 'shames' Shimon, Reuven may be required to pay damages in compensation for that embarrassment. One can only be held liable, however, if there was 'intention' involved. According to the Talmud, the measurement of 'embarrassment' is based on the social status of both individuals.

The Brisker method would accept the category of 'embarrassment', and go on to examine in what way the category relates to other categories of damage, or other concepts in the tractate. The *lomdus* or the analytical study of theTalmudic segment would be the highlight of the lecture. The actual 'phenomenon' of embarrassment' serves only as a vehicle for intellectual discourse. In Siach Yitzhak, however, we explored the phenomenon of embarrassment itself. What happens when an individual is embarrassed? What are the differences between 'embarrassment' and 'pain'? Is 'pain' an empirical description and embarrassment something 'else'? How can that 'something else' be described? What are the psychological or social causes and consequences? To answer these questions, Rabbi Nir mined Jewish rabbinic, as well as secular sources. Indeed looking around the yeshiva, students were sitting, standing, leaning on the walls, holding their Talmudic texts, and all were discussing the 'phenomenology' of a particular aspect of the Talmud.

I learned in many *yeshivot*, but this one was very different. Here the *lomdus* was not the classical Talmudic argument, but rather an exploration of the phenomenon itself in all its individual particularities. This focus on the phenomenology of a concept, coupled with its real-world implications expands the scope of discourse that can be assimilated into the definition of 'sacred study'. Indeed the yeshiva opens up the sacred space into works of art and literature. The yeshiva actively seeks out writers, songwriters, or other artists to join its ranks. If the classical 'Talmudic exam' is the gateway to entrance into Yeshivat Har Etzion, the ability to expand one's personal horizons acts as the entrance into Siach Yitzhak.

This method of study does far more than expand the definition of 'sacred studies'. It also expands the everyday religious experience of the individual Jew. A poem, a story or a song can become an expression of sanctity, and not just in its redemptive connotations. For Siach Yitzhak, and the neo-Hasidic wave within religious Zionism that they claim to have inspired, individuality itself is an expression of sanctity – beyond the redemptive needs or aspirations of a larger collective. This pedagogical method is a theological revolution that is intimately linked to the social and political upheavals that have affected the Jewish people in general and religious Zionism in particular.

I found the relationship between theology and politics, violence and pedagogy within Israeli religious Zionism to be characterized by unpredictability. I was shocked at how similar theological or political trends can lead to drastically different socio-cultural outcomes. The move away from collectivism and towards more neo-liberal forms of organization, both in their economic and theological vectors, are manifested in vastly different, and unpredictable ways by various actors. Thus, I was quite surprised to learn that Rabbi Elhanan Nir, from Siach Yitzchak, acknowledged Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburg from Yitzhar, in his latest book. I was surprised to learn that Rabbi Ginsburg and Rabbi Froman are known to be very good friends. I was surprised at how youth in Chomesh could at one moment act sweet and caring, and at the other moment appear so violent. It is somewhat unnerving how a non-messianic individualist interpretation of theology can in the one instance lead to an almost Universalist perspective on Jewish knowledge, and in the other instance to youth running away from the once sacred Israeli Army. Theologies that are not classically redemptive within religious Zionism inspire both the

right (students of Rabbi Ginsburg in Yitzhar) as well as the left (students of Rabbi Froman in Tekoa).

8.8 - **Anthropology and Individual Unpredictability**

I once asked my *chevruta* Chovav how such opposites could exist within Hasidic manifestations of religious Zionism. He said, “Hasidut is like fire, it moves quickly, it can be used for good and bad, and is terribly unpredictable”. Redemptive religious Zionism, founded as it was on progressivism, messianism, and the collective, was predictable. History moved in along certain theological and political currents. One just needs to be schooled in understanding those currents to predict them. Transcendence, harmony and redemption *must* arrive.

Religious Zionism that is moved by Hasidic thought on the other hand, is more individualistic. The individual, as any anthropologist knows, is in essence, unpredictable, ambiguous, and potentially volatile. By looking closely at the relationship between religious concepts and their practice, the scholar receives a privileged look into the details of that volatility. The products of such unpredictability are far removed from the two dimensional descriptions that appear so often in the literature (scholarly and otherwise) on fundamentalism.

This chapter has ethnographically explored some of the different ways in which the younger generation of religious Zionists is relating to their land, their Torah, and their nation. All of these actors are staking similar claims to be a ‘free’ Jewish citizen in a free Jewish State. ‘Freedom’ in this respect is an attempt to construct a space for the individual to experience and relate with the nation and God along his or her own terms.

This is an expression of individual political and social desires, along with an individual experience of God, which in many ways overlooks the classical messianism of their forbearers.

This chapter also implied that political and social ambiguities are linked to the vicissitudes of a non-messianic individual experience of God. The following chapter will sharpen this argument by ethnographically exploring one specific way in which ambiguity and uncertainty impact the everyday lives of religious Zionists in Israel.

Chapter 9 - Hitchhiking and Ritual Ambiguity in the Daily Lives of Jewish Religious Zionists in Israel's West Bank

9.1 - **Hitchhiking as Sacred Travel**

The beginning portion of the traditional Jewish prayer for the traveler reads as follows;

> May it be Your will Master, our God and the God of our fathers, that You should lead us in peace and direct our steps in peace, and guide us in peace, and support us in peace, and cause us to reach our destination in life, joy, and peace. Save us from every enemy and ambush, from robbers and wild beasts on the trip, and from all kinds of punishments that rage and come to the world…

A young married religious Zionist female driver once asked me to recite this prayer out loud as I hitchhiked with her across a small portion of Israel's West Bank. On that chilly November day in 2012, we had just left the Jewish settlement of Kedumim and were headed south towards the Tapuach Junction, one of the major traffic crossings in the Northern West Bank. Our path would take us through the occupied Palestinian village of Huwarra, and along roads that have neither a speed limit nor traffic enforcement. She was not the first driver with whom I hitchhiked that asked me to recite this prayer, nor would she be the last. The traditional prayer expresses some of the concerns, worries, and ambiguities that Jewish settlers experience as they travel across West Bank roads that have witnessed both bloody ethno-religious violence, as well as some terrible traffic accidents.

This chapter will analyze the practice of hitchhiking by Jewish religious Zionists along the roads of the West Bank. In so doing it will explore a notion of ritual that pays close attention to the daily risks, and uncertainties that may be produced through

everyday religious practices. I will argue that the open-endedness and the risks of everyday life are mirrored in the ambiguities and fluidity that can be found in the work of ritual.

I position the practice of hitchhiking within the West Bank as a ritual of sacred and ideological travel. 'Travel' has long been the focus of ethnographic investigation. In that regard, anthropological research has placed a good amount of emphasis on the relationship between 'ritual', 'pilgrimage', and 'tourism'. Since the time of Van Gennep (1961) the interest in movement across space and time has closely been associated with ritual and ritual practices. Victor Turner followed Van Gennep's processual approach towards ritual in his analyses of social dramas (Turner. 1968; 1969) and later directly with his study of Christian pilgrimage sites (Turner and Turner. 1978). This focus on ritual processes has been instrumental within studies of tourism and tourist activities (Cohen.1988). At certain occasions the 'sacred travel' of a pilgrim, can also look a lot like the 'recreational travel' of a tourist (Pfaffenberger. 1983; Cohen. 1992; Slavin. 2009). As Turner wrote, "Those who journey to pray together also play together…" (1978: 37).

Turner highlights the status of *communitas* in his classic conceptualization of pilgrimage activities. Here both the journey to the sacred site, as well as the experiences at the pilgrimage site itself (Turner 1973: 217) are moments of anti-structure where feelings of loose commonality and harmony exist among practitioners (Coleman. 2002: 356). This view of sacred travel has been sharply contested, in part for how it tends to overlook the ways in which pilgrimages are frequently sites of tension, complexity, and heterogeneity (Eade 1992; Eade and Sallnow. 2000).

Hitchhiking within the West Bank (and perhaps within conflict zones more generally) however is very different from the classical understandings of either pilgrimage or tourism. For one, pilgrimage (and to a lesser extent tourism) typically includes a culminating feature. Individual are understood to make a pilgrimage to a particular site. Both pilgrimages and tourism also assumes a 'return'. Individuals classically return to their homes and residences after the pilgrimage (Rinschede. 1992). Hitchhiking however is a *mode* of travel that assumes neither a culminating point, nor a return. When practiced by Jewish religious Zionists in the West Bank however, hitchhiking becomes a sacred and highly political ritual of travel that entails wider religious and moral experiences.

The Turnerian analysis of pilgrimage rituals assumes a direct relationship between the ritual signifier and its signified meaning. Individuals here know what a ritual either symbolizes or achieves. Eade and Sallnow's (2000) focus on contestation and heterogeneity is compelling in that it leaves room for the individual variations and alternate meanings that serve as the grist of cultural production. At the same time however, whether harmonious or contested, these symbols are meant to explore and elucidate some coherent structure that can then be mapped and analyzed. As Unni Wikan has argued, analyzing the contextual and coherent arrangement of symbols however "is seductive in that it holds the promise of elegance and order" (1990: 33).

I approach the concept of ritual and sacred travel from a different register. Rituals can be more than just symbolic markers or holders of cultural meanings (Seeman. 2005: 55). Rituals can also highlight in different ways certain moral experiences that form the fabric of local moral worlds. "Moral experience is about the local processes

(collective, interpersonal, subjective) that realize (enact) values in ordinary living (Kleinman. 1999: 71). Values and moral experience (as it reflects human nature) however, can be ambiguous and imperfect. There are some rituals that can then point to *un*certainty, to *im*perfection, and to *ambiguity*. An analysis of hitchhiking, as a mode of sacred travel, can add to our ethnographic understanding of the uncertain and open-ended nature of ritual practices and processes. It can also widen our appreciation for the daily dilemmas and uncertainties that are so much a part of a political and pietistic experience.

9.2 - **Hitchhiking, Religious Zionism, and Redemption**

In Hebrew the word for 'hitchhike' is *tremp*. The word is similar to the British-English term '*tramp'*, and most likely arrived in Palestine during the Mandatory Period (1920-1948)[93]. In Israel hitchhiking is extremely popular among religious Zionist youth within the West Bank[94]. From a practical perspective hitchhiking is the only and most convenient form of transportation in many areas of the West Bank.

I take Zionism to be a political movement for the national liberation of the Jewish people, usually focused on the Land of Israel (Boyarin and Boyarin. 1989: 627) Religious Zionism is a little more difficult to define. For religious Zionism the establishment of the State of Israel in the Land of Israel bears theological implications that go beyond political or even nationalistic considerations. In Israel the most popular form of religious Zionism is both mystical and messianic. Its chief proponents were the first Chief Rabbi of

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[93] Personal communication with Dr. Harvey Goldberg. October 2013.

[94] It was once a more standard practice within the State of Israel more broadly. Of late it has become much less popular among secular Israelis, and among those who live in the center of the country (with many transportation options. Hitchhiking is actively discouraged by the I.D.F. due to the physical risks that it involves.

Palestine, Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, and his son Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. In their general view, the establishment of the State of Israel is viewed as being a part of a linear process towards redemption. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 led directly to a miraculous victory in 1967, which itself served as the stepping stone for the settlement of the Biblical Lands of Israel. A mystical relationship is forged between God, the Jewish people, and mankind in general, when the people of Israel enjoy sovereignty over the 'Land of Israel' (Ravitzky. 1996). Hitchhiking acts as a theological mechanism. It is part of a larger commandment to settle the Land of Israel, and in this way it is one ritual element in the work of national and universal redemption. This is a ritual site however wherein religious nationalists confront and actively negotiate the political, moral, and theological ambiguities that exist around them.

Figure 17 Hitchhikers at French Hill. Jerusalem

Discursively, this progressive process towards universal redemption is one that is saturated with certainty. This is God's plan and it is moving along just fine. In practice though, Religious Zionism's theological message - and certainly its success - is far from assured. The risks involved in hitchhiking are emblematic of some of the risks and uncertainties that are affecting religious Zionism as a whole. Religious Zionists in Judea and Samaria live along the physical and social border between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This makes

settlement activity a very precarious and uncertain endeavor, both politically and economically. They also inhabit a variety of moral and emotional fissures. In this sense love for the Land of Israel may oftentimes confront ones love and concern for family. An honest progressive desire for a utopian redemption may be juxtaposed against the realities of military occupation. Hitchhiking takes places within this ambiguous political, moral, and religious field.

9.3 - **A Note on Methodology**

During my dissertation fieldwork I did not have access to a motor vehicle. As a result, I had to find some other means of transportation. Israel's bus system is extensive and its services to the West Bank are heavily subsidized by the Israeli government. As a friend told me, the government does not want people hitchhiking in the area, and so has an interest in incentivizing bus transportation.

While the public transportation infrastructure in Israel and the West Bank is extensive and regular, its service is often infrequent. This is especially so for more outlying settlements, where there may be only one or two busses a day. Many settlers who did not own private vehicles were unimpressed with the infrequent service of the public transportation system. They saw hitchhiking as a ready and expedient mode of transportation. Likewise, I also found hitchhiking to be the most convenient way to reach many of my ethnographic destinations. I then decided to turn a logistical problem into an ethnographic advantage by focusing a portion of my research on hitchhiking practices. As part of my fieldwork, I would carefully observe and note down practices during each hitchhiking trip. I would then try to imitate those practices myself. After each trip I would also note down interesting or seemingly important conversations.

I learned from my own observations, as well as from the advice of friends, that in Israel it is generally considered rude for a hitchhiker to initiate a conversation with the driver. Oftentimes drivers will seem not to even acknowledge the presence of hitchhikers in their vehicles. In this way they will often have very personal conversations on the phone or with friends – in the presence of complete strangers.

I was oftentimes caught between two opposing impulses. On the one hand, I wanted to ask the drivers and other passengers as many questions as possible. On the other hand, I also wanted to abide by the local cultural norms pertaining to hitchhiking. In this way I found it frustrating siting in a car listening to a conversation that the driver was having over a cell phone or with another passenger and only hearing half of the story, or not fully understanding the entire context of the story. I often had to guess the age or religious observance of the driver or other passengers. At the same time when I did pose a question to a driver I tended to uncover some fascinating ethnographic data.

At times, I felt very out of place in questioning a driver. This unease on my part offers a poignant commentary on the limits of this kind of ethnographic research. In one instance, I had received a ride with a young lady heading out of the settlement of Efrat in the Gush Etzion Bloc. Efrat is a large religious settlement south of Jerusalem. Almost all of the people driving out of the community are Orthodox Jews. The young lady who gave me the ride was dressed according to the cultural norms of modesty that are common in the area[95].

[95] She was wearing a long denim skirt and a loose fitting shirt that covered her elbows.

As is customary, I spent the ride sitting quietly in the front seat. After about 20 minutes she received a call from her friend. Clicking speaker phone, she began the conversation in English:

"You're the biggest slut ever! The biggest slut!" She shouted into the phone.

Her friend (I assumed they were friends) responded in English "What, he just told me to fuck him harder"

Efrat is a settlement that is the home of many Israeli-American Immigrants (Hirschhorn. 2012). As a result, a good number of the children speak fluent English among themselves. Since I was hitchhiking *from* Efrat it seemed reasonable that this young lady would certainly have been aware of the possibility that I spoke fluent English. With that in mind, I would never have expected her to say what she did, and on speakerphone no less! It is a real mystery, and it points to the epistemological limits of this kind of ethnography. Unless I was engaged in a direct conversation with a driver, I really only heard snippets of conversations, or observed incidents that ideally should have been contextualized to a better degree.

The lesson for myself was that the ethnographic method is rarely ideal. As James Clifford noted, "There is, of course, a myth of fieldwork, and the actual experience, hedged around with contingencies, rarely lives up to the ideal" (1983: 119). While our ethnographic methods are rarely ideal, I still found myself day after day standing along the same roads, and in most cases asking the same questions, as other native Israeli

hitchhikers. In that sense, I believe the data I collected to be a valid representation of a demonstrable emic experience.

9.4 - **Safety and Insecurity**

On any given Friday, groups of religious Zionists can be found swarming around specific traffic junctions in Judea and Samaria, trying to hitch a ride home for the Sabbath. Some will be lucky enough to find a ride that will take them to the very door of their destination, while others will have to catch several rides before arriving at their final location

This practice of hitchhiking is very popular among religious Zionist youth (boys and girls). Teenagers have contests, where they pick a destination, and whoever arrives the fastest using two or more rides, wins. They also tell “crazy hitchhike” stories. One humorous urban legend I heard at a Sabbath table was of a young man who was trying to hitch a ride from the center of the country to Eilat (Israel’s southernmost city). A car pulls up, the kid tells the driver he’s going to Eilat, and the driver tells him to get in. They drive to Ben Gurion airport, and fly down to Eilat in a personal jet. As the story goes, the teenager managed to get a *tremp* with one of the wealthiest men in Israel[96].

Regardless of whether this particular story is true or not, it does highlight a few interesting observations. Firstly, hitchhiking is an acknowledged cultural phenomenon among religious Zionists. They realize these stories are interesting and unique to their communities, and so they retell them. When I heard the above story from a friend I asked if secular teenagers also hitchhike a lot. I was told, “not really. But listen, I’m sure

[96] See (Mukerji. 1978) for an analysis of ‘road lore’ among young hitchhiker’s in California.

secular people have their own wild stories to tell. If a religious teenager wants to do something fun and crazy, he's not going to go to a bar. So what we have is hitchhiking".

Secondly, the story points to the most basic ambiguity around the practice of hitchhiking. When you stand at a junction waiting for a ride, you really have no idea when you're getting home…if at all. Hitchhiking locations have been targets for suicide bombers, drive-by shootings, stabbings, kidnappings and attempted kidnappings. Many religious Zionist parents are understandably less than thrilled with their teenagers' choice of transportation.

Figure 18 Memorial plaques at the Jerusalem French Hill hitchhiking station commemorating the victims of two terrorist attacks which occurred at the site.

In the summer of 2011 I was speaking with one religious Zionist mother who in 2005 was expelled from the Gazan settlement of Neve Dekalim in the Gaza Strip[97]. She currently lives with her family in southern Israel, at one of the sites the government used for relocation. They now live in a permanent house, but many of her friends still live in temporary caravans. After the disengagement, her family had the option of relocating to Judea and Samaria, but chose against it. One of the several reasons mentioned, was that she was not comfortable with her children hitchhiking, and she knew that everyone does it. This is a woman who, while living in the Gaza Strip between 2000-2005, experienced a near weekly bombardment of mortar and

[97] See Dalsheim. 2011.

rocket fire. That hitchhiking (of all things) was on her mind when choosing a new place to live, points to the ambiguity, the uncertainty, and the kinds of political and moral negotiations that occur in the daily lives of religious Zionists.

Along the way from point A to point B, hitchhikers cross over political boundaries. They see checkpoints, they pass (sometimes through) Palestinian villages, and they risk life and limb. Hitchhiking as an element of ritual is exceptional because it encapsulates physical risk, moral ambiguity, theological imperative, and political uncertainty. Hitchhiking is a ritual practice that points to the ambiguities inherent in political and pietistic endeavors.

9.5 - **How to Hitchhike: Hand Signals, Bulletproof Glass and General Awkwardness**

Some of the ritualistic (or repetitive) practices of picking up rides can be found in the cultural norms of how to hitchhike. To hitchhike all one has to do is stand (preferably not in the middle of the road) at a junction, a bus stop, or a hitchhiking station known as a *trempiada*, face traffic, lean slightly into the road, and stick out an index finger. At busy intersections, with many people waiting, there is usually no need to stick out a finger. Drivers already know what people are waiting for. Sometimes both drivers and hitchhikers signal with their fingers in the direction they are heading. For example if one is waiting for a *tremp* at the front gate in the settlement of Tekoa, drivers who point to the right are going to Jerusalem. Those who point to the left are heading in the direction of the Gush Etzion Bloc.

Figure 19 Hitchhiking from Jerusalem to the Gush Etzion Settlement Bloc

Not all of these hand signals are understood by everyone all of the time. Sometimes waiting at a *trempiada* I overheard people complaining when a car would pass by without stopping. "He signaled and I signaled, so why didn't he stop"? On some cold or rainy days I have seen some people putting their hands together in a begging motion, pleading for cars to stop. I have not studied the success rate of this particular signaling practice – but it never worked for me.

The practice of hitchhiking in Judea and Samaria is very different from taking a bus. Most busses heading into Judea and Samaria are armored with thick sheets of bulletproof glass for windows. When violence is rampant, metal screens are placed over the windshields. When you take a bus to a settlement, you know very well what you are getting yourself into. Hitchhiking on the other hand is very different. Not all cars are armored, and one gets the sense that the boundary between Israel Proper and the West Bank is only pro forma; only there for security.

There is also a liberating aspect to hitchhiking. As in, even if one does not have a car, one could go anywhere in Israel by just sticking out a finger. Perhaps echoing Turner's view of pilgrimage *communitas* (1973: 193) there is a certain sense of

camaraderie that is practiced among hitchhikers. While hitchhiking from Jerusalem to a northern West Bank settlement one Friday afternoon I saw the same people at each leg of the journey who were all trying to get some place for the Sabbath. Individuals tell each other where they are headed, so when a car passes they can call out its destination to help other people. Of course one cannot be shy. It is important to be assertive.

With that in mind, hitchhiking usually works on a 'first come first serve' basis. Those who arrive at the *trempiada* first are the first ones catch available rides. When first arriving at the station it is important to quickly look around and notice the people already there (who arrived before you), and keep an eye on the people arriving after. This is not always easy (especially on a busy day, or when one is tired), and awkward situations can arise. When a mistake is made, one usually (if one has the gumption) gently asks the offending person "you were here first?". A more assertive "I think I was here first" works as well.

On one hot afternoon I was waiting for a *tremp* in Gilo (southern Jerusalem) to get to Gush Etzion for a scheduled *Chevruta* (partner based learning session). A car pulled up heading in my direction. Like usual I waited half a second, to make sure no one who arrived before me, needed to get in first, and then dove into the car door (at some stations on busy days people tend to crowd around arriving vehicles, making it somewhat difficult to enter into them). As I got in a girl gave me the usual "I think I was here first". *I knew for a fact* she arrived after me, and just said "I don't think so". On one hand I felt kind of bad, but on the other it did make me feel like a pushy Israeli – a real native. These situations can be socially awkward, but they serve to highlight the kinds of

everyday ritualistic ambiguities and contestations – the ones that are not connected to politics, violence, or war zones – that surround the practice of hitchhiking.

Other factors also highlight the ritualistic aspect of hitchhiking. As with many rituals, there are strict - though informal – rules that people abide by as they hitchhike. Firstly Jews never accept rides with Palestinian, and Palestinians never offer. Hitchhikers in Judea and Samaria are often wary of people who are dark complexioned or not wearing signs of being overtly religious. Conversely, male Jewish hitchhikers want to look religious by wearing a skullcap or ritual fringes known as *Tzitzit*. Maybe I was just jealous, but younger girls seemed to have an easier time picking up rides, perhaps because they are less dangerous looking. Once inside the vehicle let the driver initiate the conversation. Indeed, it is to the driver's benefit to talk to the rider to make sure he's not a Palestinian in disguise. In that regard, people on the roads tend to be much attuned to accents[98]. There are also set locations from which people commonly hitchhike, either from within settlements (one person I spoke to called this 'baby hitchhiking'), right outside of settlements, or specific junctions preferably with an army presence. This is why on any given Friday one will find many more people hitchhiking from a settlement called Ofra than Shiloh. Both settlements are located along route 60, which is Judea and Samaria's main traffic artery. The entrance to Ofra however, is directly off of the road, whereas Shiloh is on top of a mountain. If there is ever a problem it is much easier to run into Ofra for safety. As one friend bluntly asserted "you really need big balls to wait at [the] Shiloh [junction]". Finally, if at all possible, wear a firearm.

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[98] For more on Identity, security, and national accents in Israel see; Juliana Ochs (2011: 56)

9.6 - **Confronting Fear and Risk**

These rules that revolve around safety highlight the ambiguity and the risks of living and traveling in Judea and Samaria. There are many such ambiguities. On the one hand, hitchhiking can be dangerous and nerve wracking. But then again it is an element of Jewish sovereignty which is part of the process of theological redemption. For some it may be somewhat frightening, but it is also necessary and cheap. Hitchhiking is a recognized and acceptable part of life in Judea and Samaria, but religious Zionist parents are not always completely comfortable with their children doing it.

These are ambiguities that revolve around fear and they are rarely discussed openly. These tensions do come up however when something 'happens'. I was once hitchhiking during the holiday of Succot to and from the settlement of Yitzhar the week of Gilad Shalit's release from Hamas captivity. There was a noticeable increase in tension, and there was a fear that there would be kidnapping attempts during the holiday. This was discussed in the rides that I received. I heard expressed a strong sense of fear, and even some anger that the Jewish motorists in the area may suffer from the expected prisoner exchange. For example one driver, a young woman with two small children, asked if I wanted to be let off at a junction closer to my destination (*Rechelim* Junction) but with no army presence. She said that she understood if I declined, especially now with the "situation". Believing that discretion is the better form of valor, I declined the offer, and we both shared a nervous laugh.

In another instance I was in a car heading from the Gush Junction to Jerusalem. In the front two seats were sitting a middle aged father (the driver) and his approximately eight year old daughter. The two were listening to the radio anchor discuss the risks

surrounding the Shalit deal with Hamas. One of the risks was that there would be more of an incentive to kidnap Israelis on the roads. Turning to her left, the little girl looked at her father, and in a squeaky voice said simply, "it would be so easy to take me, I'm so small. They'd just have to throw me into a sack". The father took his eyes off the road for a second and responded, "It's not really that easy". In reality though, the father had no way of knowing how easy or difficult it may be to kidnap his small daughter. These are the kinds of personal ambiguities that both parents and children have to negotiate when traveling the roads of Judea and Samaria.

9.7 - **Gender and Political Ambiguities**

Hitchhiking stations and the roads of the West Bank more broadly, are also sites where social as well as political ambiguities are mediated and confronted. In many Jewish settlements, relations between the unmarried sexes are highly structured. There is very little (approved) 'dating'. Religious youth groups tend to be separated in these communities. Additionally, people tend to wed and have children young. It is common to see 19 and 20 year old women married and with children. From what I have been told (and seen) *trempiadot* are one of the few locations where the sexes can mix and mingle in an unstructured environment.

I remember once asking a well-known activist in Judea and Samaria if *Rechalim* Junction was 'safe'. He said "of course! Young girls do it all the time, you might even find a wife". While I did not find a wife, I did once get a date with a nice young woman who gave me a ride at a *trempiada*. At one Sabbath meal a young married couple from the Samarian settlement of Har Bracha was telling those present at the table how they met. While boys and girls do not really hang out in Har Bracha, she said that they do see

each other walking out of synagogue on Sabbaths, or while hitchhiking. "So you can get an impression of what they're like". This is an important point to highlight. The sexes do not really talk to each other at the *trempiadot*, or if they do they are not extensive conversations. But they *see* each other, they gain impressions of each other, how they act, what their friends are like etc. These are ambiguous encounters that are part-and-parcel of gender relations among religious Zionists in Judea and Samaria.

In a similar sense, the roads of Judea and Samaria are also one of the few places where Jews and Palestinians come in contact with each other. This contact is limited, bounded by religion, politics and mistrust, but it is contact nonetheless. Palestinian and Israeli vehicles pass each other on the roads, and Israeli vehicles weave through Palestinian traffic. At the Tapuach junction hitchhiking station a few miles south of Nablus, Jewish and Palestinian pedestrians walk past each other under the watchful eye of the military.

This is a very ambiguous kind of interaction. One Friday afternoon I was waiting at this junction with a group of people, teenagers, young married women, and a few yeshiva students. A young Palestinian man in a military winter coat calmly walked past the station. The conversations continued but slightly quieter, I could see that we were all (myself included) looking at him. I also wonder, if we were all thinking what I was thinking, namely, would there be a violent incident[99]?

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[99] Around the same time period there was a recent stabbing attempt the Gush Junction south of Jerusalem, and that was fresh in my mind. Moreover a year later a Jewish hitchhiker was stabbed to death at the Tapuach Junction.

While traveling the roads of Judea and Samaria, Jews *see* checkpoints, and they *see* Palestinians. Rather than erasing boundaries, or strictly highlighting them, hitchhiking, inhabits a more ambiguous position. This is a daily ritual, where religious Zionists actively negotiate the political and religious cleavages that absorb their daily lives.

In July of 2011 I had a Sabbath dinner in the Northern West Bank Settlement of Har Bracha overlooking the Palestinian city of Nablus. There I was talking to my host family about how the Universalist theology of religious Zionism may be reconciled with the particularistic focus on the Land of Israel and Jewish sovereignty. The husband noted how universalism is very important, but that it doesn't necessarily apply to their Palestinian neighbors who are 'evil' and haters of Israel. His wife who has lived her entire life on the settlement contradicted him. In fact this was the first time she really spoke. "No, not at all, they're not all like that" she said simply. To illustrate her point, she turned to the roads of Judea and Samaria. "When you see Arabs waiting in the hot son, with their little kids, you know something isn't right, something isn't normal". She went on to quote a Hassidic rabbi who said that redemption would not be complete when even a single worm is being tread underfoot. Here religious Zionist theology is confronted with the everyday experience of traveling on the roads. What results is a good deal of ambiguity regarding the theological process of redemption, and uncertainty surrounding its moral consequences.

9.8 - **Ritual and the Production of Ambiguity**

The anthropology of religion has long observed the ways in which uncertainty and chaos complement ritual behavior. For Malinowski, magic and ritual act as an emotional

catharsis when confronting chaotic phenomenon (1955: 90). In Turner's view, rituals channel and domesticate powerful emotions (1977). Geertz (1973) viewed religion as acting to elicit meaning and order out of chaos. These classic anthropological traditions have placed ritual in the role of mediating a disordered and chaotic world.

In some cases though, ritual may not be so much a reaction to uncertainty, as it is a symptom of it. Hitchhiking in the West Bank is one ritual that elicits complex and ambiguous responses among religious Zionist settlers. Through hitchhiking individuals negotiate between the theological, political, and moral contours of their world. By allowing for the possibility that rituals may not only confront ambiguity, but actively produce it, we allow for new and different kinds of experiences to be subsumed under the rubric of political and pietistic activities.

Adam Seligman in his text Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity (2008) analyzes the ambiguous quality and forms that rituals oftentimes take. Ritual for Seligman works to create shared subjunctive "as if" worlds. Participants act *as if* the world produced in ritual were in fact a real one (2008: 25). Ritual recognizes the possibilities of what 'could be', or of how the world ought to be. These are shared social worlds that recognize inherent ambiguities in life and relationships (2008:7). An understanding of ritual that is something subjunctive, shared, and that underscores ambiguity, can be contrasted with what Seligman terms 'sincerity'. "Sincere views…project an 'as is' vision of what often becomes a totalistic, unambiguous vision of reality "as it really is" (2008: 8).

The informal rituals surrounding the practice of hitchhiking offer a penetrating example of Seligman's 'subjunctive worlds'. While catching rides, diving into car doors, judging accents, confronting with fear, and flirting with girls, one can easily forget that there is such a thing as a Green Line. Indeed, it is an illusory world, where Religious Zionists are not bound by the political ramifications of the Middle East conflict. While hitchhiking, one shares in a world where the political boundaries of the West Bank may be overcome, where everything 'could be' or perhaps 'should be' Israel Proper. For hitchhikers (and their drivers) the imagined boundaries of Israel are ambiguous. And as Seligman understands ritual, these boundaries are neither reified, nor ignored.

Sacred and ideological travel has the potential to encompass much more than ritual process or even contested meanings. When we look at ritual, and religion (or culture and politics more broadly), we are just as likely to see ambiguity, tension, and everyday awkwardness, as we are to see certainty, and ideological zeal. As cultural anthropologists this insight ought to make us rethink certain fundamental relationships in our field. Relationships between the signified and the signifier, between cause and effect, between right and wrong are all immersed in worlds of ambiguity. Hitchhiking in Judea and Samaria reminds us that there are truly no angels, just imperfect people trying to get from point A to point B as perfectly as they possibly can.

Chapter 10 - Conclusion

This ethnography of contemporary religious Zionism in Israel argued that the ways in which religion is experienced reflect political practice and fidelity to the State. In doing so, it reevaluated the nature of messianism within the Israeli religious Zionist movement. I argued that religious Zionism has moved away from the classical collective and progressive approach advocated by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, his students and followers. Instead many are practicing religious Zionism in ways that are distinctly influenced by Hasidism. They commonly study Hasidic texts, and may have distinctive manners of dress (long side locks for example). Their practices are characterized by an individual experience of divinity that reflects an individual and critical relationship with state authority and power.

This shift is also reflective of a discourse of 'freedom' within contemporary Jewish nationalist thought. Differing conceptions of divinity are reflected in different approaches to political activity. The classical collective and messianic understanding of religious Zionism echoes Isaiah Berlin's notion of 'Positive Freedom'. Here individuals (or social groups) are free to realize their own potential. By reestablishing a Jewish national and collective presence in the Land of Israel, Jews are 'free to' fully realize their collective spiritual and political possibilities. The individual and Hasidic shift echoes the opposite approach of 'negative freedom'. This is related to a libertarian model where individuals are 'free from' outside constraint. This kind of freedom entails an individual experience of divinity along with a critique of State authority. Since this critique is based in individualism it allows social actors to moves beyond standard political divides. As a

result religious Zionists who are influenced by Hasidism span the spectrum from the political right wing to the left wing.

This dissertation also explored the daily dilemmas of everyday life for a wide spectrum of religious Zionists. It showed how concerns with religious and social boundaries were a major tension in the daily lives of religious Zionists (chapter 3). For my informants, this tension was oftentimes more compelling than issues of danger, fear, and physical security.

The ethnographic data presented here opens up new questions for future research. Firstly, does the relationship between religious experience and fidelity to the state hold true within other ethnographic contexts. In the future it may be beneficial to examine this relationship within other communities in Israel. For example, can this relationship be seen among the descendants of Mizrachi immigrant communities? Their traditional (*masorti*) religious practices have been well documented (Bilu and Ben-Ari. 1992; Goldberg. 2013; Shokeid. 1984). It would be interesting to investigate how *masorti* religious practices relate to a community's ability to assimilate into the Israeli society.

Secondly, my dissertation touched upon the cultural construction of emotion in areas of ethnic and religious conflict. I showed how individuals negotiate different kinds of fears within different contexts. For example, in chapters 4 and 9, I examined fears of physical harm. In chapter 5, I explored a kind of fear that was related to social boundaries, and the proper relationships that religious Zionists ought to have with the secular Israeli society. I concluded that people use 'fear' to make a range of judgments regarding social, religious, and political identity. In the future it would be beneficial to

examine other kinds of emotions, such as ‘love’ or ‘happiness’, which are equally central to the human experience. How do these emotions manifest themselves within areas of conflict? What is the relationship between political affects that cause violence, and those that may serve a cause of peace?

Finally, my dissertation presents an historical question. The dissertation noted how within contemporary religious Zionism, perceptions of messianism have shifting in recent years. This leads to the historical question, how have perceptions of messianism and redemption been understood in past eras of Zionist and Israeli history? How have they been perceived differently by different people, and how have they influenced political decision making? Answers to these questions may be found within religious Zionist newspapers, as well as documented rabbinic sermons.

Some fascinating issues emerged from the ethnographic data that I was unable to properly assimilate into my research agenda. I was limited by fieldwork within a society that is strongly gender segregated. I was therefore unable to delve into certain details that are distinctly related to a female experience. For example, a great deal of anthropological work has been done on female head coverings in the Islamic world (Rasmussen. 1991; Delaney. 1994; Mahmoud 2005). Here anthropologists point out how the Islamic veil sometimes offers women a route to express individual agency. A fascinating comparison might be made of religious Zionist women, who seem to use head coverings in a similar fashion. This study would probably need to be performed by a female anthropologist.

Finally, my dissertation focused on phenomena that many religious Zionists see as being peripheral to their daily lives. The vast majority of religious Zionists live within

Israel's coastal center (Shokeid. 2003). These are middle to upper class Israelis who also fall within the center of the Israeli political and religious spectrum. They are the most economically stable sector of religious Zionists in Israel. For many of them, religious experiences and political practices are not as important as paying a mortgage and buying groceries. This group deserves more attention and further research.

At the same time, studying statistically peripheral issues can oftentimes shed light on more central topics and populations. More to the point though, my informants do not see themselves as peripheral. Rather their practices and perspectives are meant to serve as a guide for the rest of Israeli society. Their relationship to the more affluent and politically moderate communities in Israel's center may be a topic for future investigations.

My ethnographic fieldwork ended just as Rabbi Menachem Froman passed away after a long battle with stomach cancer. His funeral took place in the settlement of Tekoa on a Tuesday afternoon in March. It was a cool day, one where the heat of the midday sun seems to be tempered by a steady, strong, and chilling breeze. The funeral procession began with several speeches by friends and family in the community's Ashkenazi synagogue, and continued on to the settlement's cemetery which was a 15 minute walk away. I arrived that day fairly early, and waiting outside the synagogue building for people to arrive. I noticed two Palestinians, one of them an old man in a red keffiyah sitting under a tree talking to several Jewish visitors. I immediately recognized them as several of Rabbi Froman's friends who were peace activists.

At about 12:30 the crowds began to show up and everyone started to make their way into the community's modest synagogue. There was standing room only; women were standing on one side of the room, and men on the other. Individuals were pressed tightly together, everyone trying to get a few inches closer to the center of the room. As his students carried their rabbi's body into the synagogue wrapped in a *tallit* (Jewish Prayer Shawl), the crowd began to intone slow and melodic Hasidic *nigunim* (wordless tunes). Bodies swayed back and forth and wails could be heard as the immediate family entered the room.

His eldest son Yossi stood behind the synagogue's lectern surrounded by fellow mourners. Through his grief he tried to express what he felt to be the core of his father's thought:

> The freer a man is, the closer he is to God. A man and woman meet in freedom. Religion and heresy meet in freedom. My Father tried to connect us and our neighbors the Arabs, not around borders, boundaries, and political arguments, but in freedom!

Freedom for Rabbi Froman was indicative of an individual connection to God. This individual bond is just as much a political perspective as it is a religious experience. Freedom allowed Rabbi Froman to look beyond historical and theological boundaries. Throughout Israel more and more religious Zionists are searching for their own personal connection to *their* God as well as to *their* land. These people tend to question (though most do not completely disregard) the collective, statist, and messianic vision of religious Zionism that was extremely popular in the previous generation.

Ths ethnography explored the ways in which freedom, religious experience, and political passions influence the daily lives of people who are at the very center of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ideas about God, sanctity, the soul, and redemption are deeply implicated in the ways in which these individuals experience and express loyalty to state structures. By connecting a study of religious ideology, history and politics to socio-cultural practices this dissertation has made contributions to the inter-disciplinary study of political pietistic movements in Israel and the broader Middle East.

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