Unity and opposites in Israel’s settler movement: 
Rabbi Tzvi Yisrael Tau & 
Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh 

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Abstract

The thesis is motivated by the central question: can deep engagement with the nuances of contemporary settler religious discourse guide a more effective approach to negotiations with and about this group, especially regarding the future of “Judea and Samaria,” or “the occupied territories”? To address this, I investigate two key religious thinkers. The first is Rabbi Tzvi Yisrael Tau, a major religious Zionist intellectual and head of the leading mamlakhti\(^1\) yeshiva Har Ha-Mor, known for his calls for restraint in the face of anti-settlement policies. The second is Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh of Od Yosef Chai, often accused of inciting racism and encouraging aggressive protest tactics, and whose students have been at the vanguard of anti-Arab vigilante violence and the “price tag” campaign of recent years.

This investigation reveals Tau’s predominantly monistic worldview, anchored in the “unity of opposites” paradigm at the heart of Avraham Kook’s teachings, and Ginsburgh’s relatively dualistic worldview, anchored in a dualistic interpretation of lurianic Kabbalah. These distinct symbolic worlds help explain the divergent political–historical interpretations, ethics, and political tactics among the rabbis’ adherents. Moreover, the analysis indicated which pro-negotiation arguments may be most persuasive among these different sectors—and which may be useless or disastrous.

I show how Tau argues that settlements are a mere detail in Gush Emunim’s project, identifies Jewish unity as a supreme value, and calls for educational outreach in lieu of protests. The thesis contextualizes this stance in Tau’s monistic theosophy, his narrative of geulah (redemption) as a slow, natural process with temporary setbacks (with dialectic roles), and his kabbalistic understanding of Israel as a unified collective entity. Tau’s negative teachings on Palestinians, however, struggle to avoid dualism. I also analyze Tau’s innovative identification of consciousness as the medium through which Jews must advance redemption, which underpins his call for education campaigns.

Ginsburgh is a point of contrast. I present a detailed history of public controversies around his Od Yosef Chai yeshiva, and then explore dimensions of his kabbalistic

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\(^1\) “Statist.” Loosely: committed ideologically to the State of Israel’s sacred value.
worldview, in which evil is understood as an active force of impurity, expressed on the earthly plane through the Gentile nations vs. Jewish embodiment of the divine. This leads to his profound devaluation of Gentile life. Moreover, he argues that the expulsion of Gentiles and establishment of theocratic government by a Sanhedrin are prerequisites for the arrival of the messiah. Ginsburgh also presents elaborate kabbalistic justifications of impulsive revenge attacks against Gentiles to “defend” Jewish life and honor. This most likely lowers the self-restraint of his Hilltop Youth followers.

This leads to the conclusion that Jewish security and unity are the most effective frames through which to encourage reluctant toleration of Israeli–Palestinian negotiations across these sectors. The value and authority of the democratic state may also be an effective frame within the mamlakhti sector, as might human rights discourse. By contrast, arguments focused on economic benefits, Israel’s acceptance in the international community, and the Palestinian right to self-determination lack traction.
Declaration

This is to certify that

i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,

ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

iii) the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed:

[Signature]
Preface


While no prior work is directly incorporated, the literature review in Chapter 1 was informed by research for undergraduate assignments completed at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2008–09.
Acknowledgments

Warm thanks to Dr Dvir Abramovich and Dr Ziva Shavitksky, my supervisors at the University of Melbourne, for their whole-hearted support over the course of my candidature—and especially for helping me navigate the system with so little pain. Also, this project would never have been started without the accidental inspiration of Rabbi Dr Eliezer Shore at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I thank Dr Shore for allowing me to write a lengthy political essay for a ‘short’ assignment on Jewish spirituality in his class, as it established my abiding interest in spirituality, theosophy, and politics in the settler movement. Dr Shore’s curiosity in my early work, incisive feedback, and reading recommendations have been immensely valuable. Thanks also go to Dr Alick Isaacs and Dr Avinoam Rosenak for fruitful discussions during my research visit to Israel in 2013–14, which helped inspire the final structure of the thesis focusing on the two intriguing thinkers chosen.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Genesis and goal of the research

This thesis grew from two roots. The first was frustration with existing analyses of the ideology of the Jewish settler movement; in particular, the preponderance of analyses either implicitly or explicitly utilizing the lens of religious fundamentalism and presenting settlers as rigidly irrational, prone to violence, and immune to reasoned negotiation because they were religious, not ‘logical’ or ‘reasonable.’ The second root was my encounter with the scholarly literature on negotiation. This included both mainstream Western scholarship, centered on the “Getting to YES” (Fisher, Ury, & Patton 1991) paradigm, i.e., aligning the parties’ interests to maximize total utility (a ‘rationalist’ or ‘utilitarian’ logic), and scholarship criticizing this approach, especially for negotiating cross-cultural conflicts. These critiques struck a chord with my reading on the Oslo process, most particularly the advocacy of land-for-peace deals in basically materialistic terms (e.g., peace will be good for the economy) and peace advocates’ frequent use of values frames that were interpreted by much of the religious public as appeasement of the Jews’ Gentile enemies (e.g., peace will lead to Israel’s acceptance in the community of nations).1

Bilateral negotiations, including Israeli–Palestinian negotiations, have long been understood as a “two-level game” (Putnam 1988). In his analysis of the Oslo process as a two-level game, Lieberfeld (2008) explained that the term denotes situations “in which bargaining at the international level is influenced by the domestic-level ‘win-set’ or set of possible agreements that can be ratified by relevant domestic institutions or constituencies” (ibid., 134). Israel’s settler community is one such bloc, and I formed the opinion that the symbolic frames around Israeli–Palestinian negotiations favored by most of the Israeli Left and by the American mediators, like the two example frames

1 See, e.g., Weissbrod (2002).
just mentioned, in fact had unintended resonances when projected or ‘translated’ into religious settler discourse. This opinion was vindicated in the findings of the present research, and the implication is that the argumentation favored by peace advocates in fact self-sabotages on the Israeli domestic front of the two-level game.

The above twin frustrations intersect in the central question of this thesis: can deep engagement with the nuances of contemporary settler religious discourse guide a more effective approach to negotiations with and about this group than we have seen thus far, especially regarding the future of “Judea and Samaria,” or “the occupied territories”?

To expand on the above introduction: I encountered these two domains of scholarship during undergraduate study of the abortive 2000 Israeli–Palestinian Camp David negotiations. The exhaustive post mortem analyses of these talks, and of the Oslo process in general, afforded many insights into the reasons for the disappointing outcomes. Insofar as the settler and religious-Zionist movements played a role in these analyses, the most common context was an effort to explain Rabin’s assassination by Yigal Amir, by reference to the rabbis whose public speculations as to whether Rabin was a rodef or moser contributed to Amir’s reasoning. Accordingly, when the Israeli–Palestinian negotiations of the 1990s are analyzed as a two-level game, the settlers are usually cast as “spoilers” eager to derail the negotiation process at any cost, violently if need be (see, e.g., Bar-Tal 2012)—not unlike Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Even before considering the particulars of the Israeli arena, there are problems with the spoiler concept. As argued by Nilsson and Kovacs (2011):

“One of the most serious, and potentially even counterproductive, limitations with the spoiler concept concerns its powerful normative underpinnings. It has

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3 These halakhic concepts denote a Jew who seeks to kill a fellow Jew (rodef) or to inform against him to a non-Jew, thus endangering the Jew’s life (moser). These are the only circumstances in which the Halakhah permits killing a Jew pre-emptively, to prevent the crime. On Amir’s halakhic reasoning leading to the assassination, see, e.g., Sprinzak (1999, 244–83) and Peri (2000).

4 Example analyses of the Oslo process using this frame include Lieberfeld (2008) and Sheafer and Dvir-Gvirsman (2010).


6 For example, Lieberfeld argued: “The ambiguity and reversibility built into the accord provided more possibilities for spoilers, including Hamas and Israel’s radical settlers, to sabotage it through violence” (Lieberfeld 2008, 144). The frame is often also implicit, e.g., Reiter (2010), Waxman (2006), and Yishai (1981).
even been suggested that the concept derives its definition, and gains its meaning, only in relation to the core assumptions of the so-called liberal peacebuilding paradigm. … Consequently, actors that behave according to the expectations of this normative framework will be considered to raise fair and legitimate demands, whereas those that disagree will per definition be viewed as spoilers, which in turn determines how the key peace custodians respond to various actors in the peace process” (Nilsson & Kovacs 2011, 609).

Elman (2012) identifies how this approach (conscious or unconscious) by the liberal peace camp in Israel and the U.S. may have limited their public campaign’s effectiveness. While she agrees that, in general, the dynamics of the Oslo process were “very consistent with the general findings in the spoiling literature” (Elman 2012, 15) she also notes:

“…lost in this discourse, though, is how the peace process might have turned potential spoilers into stakeholders. From the beginning, a secularized peace camp never made it a priority to reach out to the national religious settler community. The settlers were seen as a nuisance, a surmountable obstacle. Strategies to foster settler ‘buy in’ could have been put in place in the early 1990s. They never were. Once Oslo I was signed, there was still a window of opportunity to do so (perhaps up until Rabin’s death). But Rabin had no love lost for the messianic settlers. He was completely unable to understand the settlers’ view of Oslo as a disaster spelling the collapse of their dream for Greater Israel. Rabin remained aloof, cold, and dismissive” (Elman 2012, 15).

Moreover, settler opposition to the peace process was consistently framed as the inevitable consequence of a rigid, fundamentalist ideology, inherited in principle from the uncompromising territorial maximalism and messianic urgency of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook and exemplified by the arrogance of Amir—self-elected as judge, jury, and executioner of Oslo’s Jewish captain.8

This picture did not seem sufficiently nuanced. Study of the sub-stream of cross-cultural negotiation scholarship focusing on the effects of sacred values led to an idea with potential to balance this picture—and render it more hopeful. Perhaps the ‘positive’

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7 In support, they cite Heaven (2010), Newman and Richmond (2006), Dansie (2009), and Goodhand and Walton (2009).
8 The next section reviews this literature.
discourse of the peace camp comprised symbols, stories, metaphors, vocabulary, myths, and arguments that carried negative connotations in the symbolic landscape of the settler movement’s discourse,⁹ so that arguments intended to persuade instead provoked a backlash. In particular, conflict-resolution and negotiation scholarship premised on a rationalist/utilitarian, interests-based approach to mediation (broadly characteristic of the style of American mediators in the Arab–Israeli conflict)—coupled with public statements by Rabin and Peres promising economic growth and international acceptance through peace—struck me as immediately and obviously dissonant with the values landscape of the settler movement. That is, the discourses themselves were dissonant beyond the clash of the parties’ substantive interests. Economic growth translated as crass materialism, and a willingness to sell the sacred inheritance of the entire Jewish people (i.e., the full Eretz Yisrael¹⁰) in exchange for superior white-goods or better share dividends or the like. International acceptance translated as bowing to the goyim. However, unless settler discourse were truly monolithic and one-dimensional, one could reasonably expect to find alternative symbols and arguments through which to make a case for peace. We may speculate that if the domestic public campaign were conducted in terms that remained coherent and ‘reasonable’ once projected into settler religious discourse,¹¹ even if the substantive positions could not be reconciled, it would at least be less likely to provoke the sort of incendiary hostility seen in the mid-1990s. Given that Rabin and Peres “frequently dismissed [opponents to Oslo] as a bunch of extremists insanely intent on perpetuating the state of war between Israel and the Arabs… [and] Rabin, for instance, famously derided the Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza as ‘crazies’ and ‘propeller-heads’” (Waxman 2006, 209), this ambition is not unrealistic.

The remainder of the Introduction first reviews the academic literature on the settler movement, thereby introducing and explaining my use of the language of the “unity of opposites,” monism, and dualism for understanding contemporary settler discourse. It then discusses the stream of cross-cultural negotiation scholarship behind the applied focus of the present research; that is, the task of mining settler discourse to extract key

⁹ Obviously, my analysis approaches the issue from a hermeneutic and social-constructivist perspective (basically: social actors are understood to construct meaning and encode it symbolically). This theoretical framework is established more rigorously in the Methodology section of this chapter.

¹⁰ The Land of Israel.

¹¹ That is, drawing on arguments and metaphors that ‘make sense’ in this discourse, rather than ones that make sense only in the liberal or utilitarian discourse resonant with the public already willing to contemplate bargaining over the land’s future.
symbols, patterns, and logic systems that, used on their own terms, could represent “discursive resources” (as I shall term them\(^\text{12} \)) for articulating pro-peace arguments. The next section describes the research methodology and explains the choice of focus on Rabbi Tzvi Yisrael Tau of Yeshivat Har Hamor and Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh of Yeshivat Od Yosef Chai. This section includes a formal presentation of the research questions, which builds on the foregoing background and elaborates on the central question already mentioned, and a statement of the research’s significance. The last section is an overview of the thesis structure.

**Framing the *mitnachalim*\(^\text{13} \): Critical review of literature on the settlers**

Given the extensive literature on the settler movement, it was perhaps surprising that the sort of analysis I sought did not already exist. However, the available scholarship (particularly the English-language literature) either neglected contemporary developments in the settler movement, being focused on the history of Gush Emunim,\(^\text{14} \) or presented a *political* history of the settler movement without substantial engagement with settler religious thought. Those analyses that did focus on religion tended to analyze settlers through the paradigm of a radical, fundamentalist movement—probing the religious ideology to the extent necessary to explain settlers’ ‘deviance’ from modern, progressive norms, but not necessarily taking that religion seriously as a rich discourse, drawing on a variegated intellectual heritage and containing many nuances.

The possibility that such crucial nuances had been overlooked was supported by the largely peaceful evacuation of settler communities in Gaza during the *Hitnatkut*\(^\text{15} \) (see, e.g., Bick 2007, 322–4; Don-Yehiya 2014; Rosenak 2013; Roth 2014)—despite months of media panic anticipating that radical settlers might turn guns against the IDF to prevent Sharon interrupting their messianic fantasy, and fears of assassination attempts

\(^{12}\) See the Methodology section of this chapter.  
\(^{13}\) Settlers.  
\(^{14}\) The Bloc of the Faithful; the organizing body of the settler movement in the 1970s and 80s, whose leadership largely consisted of students of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook.  
\(^{15}\) The unilateral disengagement from Gaza and part of the northern West Bank/Samaria in 2005–06 under Ariel Sharon.
against Sharon (see, e.g., Waxman 2006, 214–5). Thus, Don-Yehiya noted: “Most religious Zionists were opposed to the government decisions in both cases, but the great majority of them rejected the use of force in the struggle against those decisions. The disputed question was mainly the right or duty to violate governmental orders or military instructions in the course of this struggle … [and even] most of the Rabbis who supported disobedience in the case of the disengagement did not call into question the legitimacy of the Israeli state or its democratic regime” (Don-Yehiya 2014, 253, 255; see too International Crisis Group 2013, 7–9).

Recent publications, particularly in Hebrew, have yielded a more complete picture, but I first review earlier works written in or translated to English.

The origins, early history, and founding theosophy of Gush Emunim are well covered in the English literature (e.g., Aran 1991, 1988; Aviad 1991; Don-Yehiya 1987, 1994; Lesch 1977; Lustick 1988, 1987; Newman 1985; O’Dea [=Aviad] 1976; Rubinstein 1984; Waxman 1987; Weissbrod 1982). However, such works do not discuss whether the ideology articulated by Gush Emunim leaders has evolved in response to events such as the Oslo process or Hitnatkut. General histories of the settler movement that do stretch to relatively contemporary events are largely journalistic rather than academic (e.g., Gorenberg 2006; Taub 2010). Though enlightening in charting the movement’s historical development through to recent years, they do not undertake a systematic investigation of its religious dimension. Zertal and Eldar (2007) do present an academic history, though again, the religious dimension is incidental to the historical narrative presented—and in this case, the tone is consistently polemical. The most substantial of these general histories, Gorenberg (2006) and Zertal and Eldar (2007), discuss religion only in limited terms, e.g., when characterizing firebrands like Rabbi Moshe Levinger or alluding to the special holiness of Judea and Samaria. Another relatively recent academic work on the

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16 To be fair, the latter concerns were historically justified by the Amir precedent, and some of the rabbinic rhetoric of the time drew criticism from Israel’s State Prosecutor (see Cohen-Almagor 2013).

17 I follow Scholem’s definition of theosophy: “a mystical doctrine, or school of thought, which purports to perceive and to describe the mysterious workings of the Divinity… [and] maintains that the mysteries of creation reflect the pulsation of this divine life” (Scholem 1961[1941], 206).

18 Works that do address these developments are mentioned below.

19 Or, in the case of Friedman (1992), presenting a titillating portrait of its quirky elements from a U.S. newsmen’s view, and in the case of Huberman (2008), a highly sympathetic insider’s history. (Huberman works for the religious, right-wing news outlet Arutz Sheva and the Orthodox newspaper Ha-Tzofeh.)

20 One of the founding members of Gush Emunim.
settler community, by sociologist Michael Feige (2009), sampled distinct subsets of the settler population, from residents of the ‘blue chip’, veteran Ofra settlement to the Hilltop Youth (young idealists disgruntled by the bourgeoisification of the settler mainstream and largely traumatized by the Hitnatikut). Again, however, religious discourse is not probed in any great detail.

In the English literature on settlers that does highlight religion, most such material focuses on extreme cases, e.g., Rabbi Meir Kahane and the Kach party (e.g., Mergui & Simonnot 1987; Sprinzak 1991b, 1985; Yishai 1981), the Jewish Underground terrorist cell of the 1980s (e.g., Sprinzak 1999, 1987, 1992), and the 1994 Hebron massacre (e.g., Paine 1995; Sprinzak 1995). The settler movement’s role in generating the culture of incitement that preceded Yigal Amir’s assassination of Rabin has likewise been analyzed extensively (see, e.g., Alianak 1998; Jones 1999; Karpin & Friedman 1998; Mirsky 1995; Peleg 2002; Sprinzak 1999, 1998a). Though often insightful works on their chosen foci, they do not fully contextualize their findings by also considering mainstream settlers’ religiosity, as opposed to that of violent fringe groups (other such works include Hanauer 1995; Pedahzur & Perliger 2003; to some degree, Ravitzky 1996; Sprinzak 1991a, 1989; Weisburd 1989, 1988).

The Hebrew literature on settler ideological history generally offers a wider focus and more serious engagement with religious discourse (e.g., Aran 2013, 2003a, 1987; Don-Yehiya 2003, 1998; Fischer 2009, 2007; Raanan 1981; Schwartz 2003a,b, 2001, 1997). Analyses of the intellectual forefathers of Gush Emunim—rabbis Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook—are a flourishing academic cottage industry (e.g., as a sample of the English-language literature alone: Goldwater 2009; Ish-Shalom 1995, 1993; Kaplan & Shatz 1995; Schwartz 2000; Yaron 1974). However, there is usually a gulf between such textually driven religious analyses and the political analyses—a gulf this thesis attempts to bridge.

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21 See Leon (2010).
22 Exceptions include Aran (2003b), Fischer (2011a), Hellinger (2008), and Schwartz (2009, 2002).
23 The party was disqualified from running for Knesset elections because of its racist, anti-democratic platform.
24 This group, which emerged from the ranks of Gush Emunim, plotted to blow up the Dome of the Rock and conducted terrorist operations targeting civilian Arab buses, political figures, and educational institutions. It was eventually thwarted by the Israeli intelligence services.
25 In 1994, the settler Dr Barukh Goldstein murdered 29 unarmed Muslims worshipping at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and wounded many others, before being beaten to death by the survivors.

This literature review is not intended to diminish the contributions of the above corpus, which I consider insightful and useful. However, most are of limited use for the specific application envisaged here because of an overt or implicit negative orientation toward settler religiosity. Put simply: most of the above analyses are extremely useful for elucidating how settler discourse can be politically dangerous (in the eyes of the liberal intelligentsia), and even contribute to physical violence; almost none consider the possibility that this discourse also contains political opportunities and an internal rationality that is rich and flexible enough to peacefully engage with competing positions. To my knowledge, no work explicitly and thoroughly explores how to utilize this richness to conduct the two-level game of peace negotiations more effectively, though a few point tentatively in that direction (as discussed in the next section).

A cogent critique applicable to much (though not all) of the above corpus was delivered by Shlomo Fischer in a 2007 essay (in Hebrew). The gist of Fischer’s argument is that scholars have often explained the Israeli settlers by uncritically adopting a fundamentalism paradigm imported from American scholarship on unconventional religious movements—e.g., millenarian Christian cults. He argues that this has given much of the scholarly literature a frame through which the settlers are conceived as standing in binary opposition to modernity, enlightenment, and rationality; a cultural ‘other’ that arouses the enlightened scholar’s disgust (Fischer 2007, 265).

As paraphrased more recently by Avinoam Rosenak: the radical settler stands on one side of a duality, demonized as the completely negative “other”, while the “rational”

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26 See too Fischer (2011a), and in similar vein (though less philosophical) the much earlier Aviad (1991).
27 See too the argument by Katz that Israeli intellectuals’ “polemical” stance against Jewish religiosity has “prevented the development of a serious discourse” (Katz 2008, 43), though this focuses on debates over Jewish identity rather than the settler movement. A critical review by Rosen-Tzvi similarly pointed to such an ideological tint in the research of Taub, Gorenberg, Edith and Zertal, and Roth (Rosen-Tzvi 2007).
person is defined as liberal, secular, enlightened, ethical, humanist, and democratic, and stands on the other side as completely positive and desirable (Rosenak 2013, 19–20).\textsuperscript{28} Further, Rosenak (2013, 21, 41–3) also critiques works that present a stark distinction between the “good” Avraham Kook—open, nuanced, and allegedly prioritizing the spiritual over the political—and the “bad,” politicized interpretation of his teachings by his son, Tzvi Yehuda, and by Gush Emunim; e.g., Belfer (2001), Don-Yehiya (2014).\textsuperscript{29} Another target is Uriel Tal’s division of religious Zionism into the “good” stream of political restraint and the “bad” stream of political messianism, with the latter having a parallel in totalitarian movements such as the Third Reich (Tal 1987, 114). Sagi (2003a) is in a similar vein, though focusing on Gush Emunim’s focus on settlement, allegedly as the over-riding value in their ethical system.\textsuperscript{30}

This was approximately the state of the field when I commenced research toward this PhD in 2011. The original intention was to survey contemporary rabbinic literature from across the settler movement, from the relatively liberal Yeshivat Har Etzion through the mainstream mamlakhiti (statist)\textsuperscript{31} yeshivot, the hardal (haredi le’umi; national-Haredi) sector,\textsuperscript{32} and finally the Kahanist fringe and rabbis associated with anti-state separatist movements. By engaging with this literature on its own terms, I hoped to identify those discursive resources with greatest resonance or traction for different strands of the religious settler community.

The publication in 2013 of Rosenak’s Sedakim (“Cracks”) largely obviated this task. This work is the most complete critique of past scholarship on the settler movement, and provides an overview of ideological patterns across leading rabbinical thinkers in the above sectors post-Hitnatkut. It also presents an alternative to the fundamentalism

\textsuperscript{28} As an example, he especially highlights Raanan (1981, 73, 94–95), who described Gush Emunim’s messianism as shallow, populist, and simplistic.

\textsuperscript{29} See too Ravitzky, who notes the “boldness of Zvi Yehudah Kook and his disciples in removing all... barriers between the theological and the political” (Ravitzky 1996, 124). In contrast, Rosenak points to the works of Achituv; see Rosenak (2013, 42, notes 2 and 3). For alternative views, see Schwartz (2000) and Garb (2006).

\textsuperscript{30} Rosenak (2013, 43) argues that it is difficult to determine whether the ‘political’ dimension was in fact a fabrication of Tzvi Yehuda or latent in the works of his father—particularly given that the latter’s works are still slowly being released over the decades and often present surprises (see, e.g., Rosenak 2007).

\textsuperscript{31} Mamlakhtiyut or “Statism” designates the stream of religious Zionist yeshivot that continue to identify the State of Israel as the fruit of divine will.

\textsuperscript{32} I am simplistically presenting these as separate categories, but as might be more realistically expected, in practice they overlap. For instance, Rabbi Tau, the pre-eminent mamlakhit thinker, advocates strict ultra-Orthodox practice, e.g., in the areas of female chastity and modesty, and has been described as practicing “national ultra-Orthodoxy” (effectively, hardal) by Hellinger (2008, 534), while Schwartz (2003a, 40–8) identifies Avraham Kook himself as hardal. For alternative typologies, see, e.g., Finkelman (2006), Roth (2014), Don-Yehiya (2003).
analytic frame (explained below). The work is also pertinent because of the insight Rosenak brings as a leading scholar of Rabbi Avraham Kook. A deep respect for the nuances of Kook’s corpus suffuses the analysis.

This is not the place to translate the full analysis into English, but I summarize key points for this thesis. Firstly, he significantly expands on the critiques by Fischer (2007) and Rosen-Tzvi (2007). Rosenak (2013, 29–40) challenges scholars who implicitly or explicitly adopt an analytic frame of “Catholicism vs. Protestantism.” This is obviously not to imply the settlers are Christian. Rather, the frame differentiates between total/political and limited/private religion. This can be applied to the vision of the rabbis Kook, which can be construed as “Catholic” in the sense of being totalistic and expressing a desire to transform society and the state, not just private life (e.g., Sagi 1998, 2003a,b; Luz 2003). Rosenak (2013, 43) criticizes the percolation of this “steamroller of the binary model” through much of the literature, which frames settlers as “Catholic” and fundamentalist. He notes the pervasive influence of analyses in this vein by leading scholars like Aran, Ravitzky, and Schwartz.

Rosenak argues that the ubiquitous “Catholic” frame does not fairly characterize the theosophy of Rabbi Avraham Kook (Rosenak 2013, 43–9, 58–9). Although this theosophy is radically monistic (i.e., it holds that surface-level opposites conceal the underlying unity of creation, as all phenomena and trends stem from Divinity), this was a monism predicated on the unity of opposites rather than their erasure in a domineering, fundamentalist Reich. According to Rosenak, Kook’s vision does not efface the individual and particular within a total and universal vision; rather, the latter includes—and in fact requires—the former. Particularism and separation are seen as necessary for unity—they are essential mechanisms in a dialectic unity rather than a static, homogeneous one. This thread through Kook’s teachings endows them with remarkable plasticity for tolerating irreligious lifestyles and political positions.

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33 This refers to the pervasive influence on subsequent scholarship of the 1950s essay by Akiva Ernst Simon, “Are We Still Jews?” and its frame of “Catholic” (total) vs. “Protestant” (limited, private) religion (see Rosenak 2013, 29–40; see too Sagi 1998).

34 Rosenak (2013, 39 note 82) provides a more extensive list of examples.

35 This is discussed at length in the chapters on Rabbi Tau.

36 See, e.g., Singer (1996, 10); Rosenak (2007, 131); see too the Introduction to Kaplan and Shatz (1995). The concept is particularly deeply embedded in Hasidic theosophy: “the interpenetration, interdependence, and unification of opposites” (Dein 2011, 31).
Rosenak further argues that all Avraham Kook’s writings are saturated by this monistic paradigm: the unity of opposites is the “genetic code” of the Kookian teachings (p. 63). Further, he holds that it endows the Kookian theosophical system with a remarkable spiritual “elasticity” (p. 64)—ability to incorporate within itself opposing voices, without the “fake” erasure or trivialization of real disagreement implicit in the “Protestant” and pluralist approaches (pp. 56–9).37 As I argue in later chapters, this is also a fair characterization of the teachings of Rabbi Tau.

Most of the remainder of Rosenak’s book (pp. 61–204) analyzes the ideological fragmentation among rabbis affiliated with the settler movement in terms of the degree to which each has retained this monistic orientation of Rabbi Avraham Kook or shifted toward a dualistic38 orientation (albeit often garbed in the rhetoric of Kook’s unity of opposites; p. 64). Where it is still robust, rabbis’ philosophical commitment to the unity of opposites undermines the identification of apparently “evil” people and phenomena (e.g., materialistic leftists’ willingness to sell Eretz Yisrael to enemies, as territorial concessions are often viewed in this milieu) as essentially evil, since everything has its origin in God. This logic, deeply embedded in religious Zionist thought, has softened the historical clashes between religious settlers and secular Israelis (especially over the issue of Eretz Yisrael). For instance, Rosenak argues that the unity of opposites functioned to temper Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s commitment to the Land of Israel, and that it continues to function even among hardal rabbis increasingly leaning toward separatist tendencies, though to a lesser degree than among the mamlakhti rabbis. Monism’s quiet, pervasive, constructive influence can be seen in the negative, he argues, i.e., what happens when it is missing, through the unapologetically dualistic, good-vs.-evil rhetoric and sometimes violent political activism of rabbis attached to the settler movement but not to Kookian religious Zionism. He cites the example of the Kahanists who identify secular, left-wing Jews as erev rav39 and ascribe to them evil essential

37 Rosenak (2013, 55) relates this stance to Buber’s (1970[1923]) famous I–thou dyad, in which the “other” has value and affirms one’s self precisely through her or his otherness. On this connection, see too Isaacs (2011).
38 A satisfactory working definition of dualism is any “theory which admits in any given domain, two independent and mutually irreducible substances” (Runes 1960, 84; see also Docherty 2001, 85). Dualistic frames are characterized by categorizations of phenomena underpinned by binary classifications (e.g., expressive vs. instrumental motives, emotion vs. reason, abnormal vs. normal, good guys vs. bad guys, good vs. evil). The concept can be applied to both social actors’ worldviews and scholars’ analytic lenses.
39 Part of the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the Israelites and thus not authentically Jewish—an impure, dangerous element; see, e.g., Inbari (2001), Rosenak (2013, 175–204). The term is widely used among Kahanists to describe left-wing, secular Jews—a practice Tau staunchly opposes, see Inbari (2012, 147).
qualities (pp. 175–204). Rosenak thus mapped a spectrum on which the political “moderation” of a given religious-Zionist ideologue could be conceptualized more soundly based on his commitment to a Kookian monistic religiosity (rather than a dualistic one), with mamlakhtí rabbis at one end, hardalím in the middle, and Kahane’s disciples and the hotly controversial Od Yosef Chai yeshiva (see below) at the other end.

This book informed my choice to re-orient the thesis. Rosenak’s language of a monism–dualism spectrum resonated with my reading on mamlakhtí rabbis vs. Kahane’s disciples and Od Yosef Chai. Further, since the task of mapping the broad patterns in contemporary settler discourse had largely been addressed by Rosenak, a logical re-orientation of the thesis was to investigate one or two key thinkers more systematically. This would advance the original aim of identifying discursive resources. It would also respond to Rosenak’s repeated calls (passim through Sedakim) for focused analyses of specific thinkers to complement his own sweeping survey. Lastly, it would provide an opportunity to subject Rosenak’s monism–dualism explanatory framework to further scrutiny, though this has not been my primary focus. I explain my choice of Rabbis Tau and Ginsburgh for this analysis in the Methodology section.

A further vindication of this approach was implied by Anat Roth’s publication in 2014 of an account of the Hitnatkut based on fieldwork among the settler community (participant observation, interviews, etc., as well as media reports). This work also critiqued the fundamentalism paradigm, and argued that basic theological assumptions common to mainstream religious Zionism had led the settler leadership to impose strict ethical limits on protest tactics. However, in Roth’s case, the focus was a detailed historical account of the Hitnatkut. The religious dimension was primarily addressed by an analysis of the rabbis Kook, and the treatment of contemporary religious sources emphasized Shabbat pamphlets and political statements. My methodology differs.

Before discussing my methodology, however, I first turn to the second underpinning of this thesis in the research literature: the limitations of a utility-based rationality for negotiating about and with religious and/or values communities such as religious settlers. The scholarship addressing this must be reviewed here, because a further motivation (as noted above) was my intention to apply the analysis to identify discursive resources better suited to negotiations with or about the settlers in the context

40 Without the intervening lenses of “fundamentalism” or “Catholicism.”
of an Israeli–Palestinian two-level game. That game is presently dormant. Nonetheless, the enquiry contributes toward long-term development of a strategy for negotiations touching on the sacred—an approach grounded in intimate familiarity with the non-secular rationalities in play.

**Negotiating across cultures and realities**

**Interests-based and values conflicts**

The distinction discussed in this section loosely follows the realist vs. constructivist paradigms of international relations theory, or positivist vs. constructivist approaches in social science more generally, rather than dividing reasonable vs. unreasonable/irrational influences. One way of framing the distinction is outlined below.

“Since the decline of the instinctual mode of explaining such conflict phenomena as war, intergroup hostility, and human exploitation, two others have been dominant: the ‘psychological’ and the ‘socio-political-economic’. The psychological mode attempts to explain such phenomena in terms of... the perceptions, beliefs, values, ideology, motivations, and other psychological states and characteristics... The socio-political-economic mode, in contrast, seeks an explanation in terms of such social, economic, and political factors as levels of armaments, objective conflicts in economic and political interests, and the like” (Deutsch 2002, 308–9).

Utilitarian, interests-based frameworks work well for understanding and negotiating conflicts of material interests—or at least interests that the parties agree are “bargainable” according to some shared rationality. Traditional Western models of mediation are optimized for material disputes and are excellent at identifying and working creatively with substantive facts and positions. However, they have a history of

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41 The literature on intractable social conflicts, such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, tends to align more with the psychological perspective, e.g., Bar-Tal (1998), Kelman (2006, 1999, 1982), Ramsbotham et al. (1999), Rotheberg (2006), Rouhana and Bar-Tal (1998), and Stephan and Stephan (1996), among others.

42 The concept of “bargainability” is best illustrated by example. If I suggest that we should negotiate about how much money I should pay you in exchange for permission to kill your child, I am implying that your child’s life is a bargainable or tradable commodity over which it is reasonable to negotiate in cost–benefit terms. The point is that negotiations are difficult, if not impossible, when the parties don’t agree on what’s a tradable commodity and what’s inviolate.

43 On the importance of framing in conflicts and negotiations, see, e.g., Pinkley and Northcraft (1994).
ignoring “symbolic facts” (Cragan & Shields 1995, 18–19)—such as the “facts” embedded in a values system (Docherty 2001, 30–31).

Over the past several decades, the conflicts dominating the international agenda have been less tractable under such interest-based frames. A corresponding shift can be discerned in scholarship—even in traditionally hard-rationalist fields like international relations and security studies—toward analytic frames combining interest-based and psychological or constructivist approaches. Even game theory studies (wherein value must be pegged mathematically to make statistical analysis possible) have considered how players’ perceptions and thence psychological, social, and cultural factors affect the game, arguing that experimenters must reconceive rationality itself to make the models work (see, e.g., Hausken 1997; Brandenburger & Nalebuff 1996; Howard 1994).

The dynamics of two-level games are also often more challenging in such conflicts. In Putnam’s (1988) two-level game, as noted, national leaders negotiate both with each other and with their respective publics. Popular support for peace talks tends to be even more important in intractable social conflicts, often characterized by multiple substate actors, weak governments, nontraditional and nonstate modes of warfare (such as terrorism and guerrilla warfare), and a ‘total’ character involving civilians as well as armies (and thus tending to nurture mass cognitive biases, stereotypes, fears, and hatreds). “[B]etween ethnic rivals, the very act of negotiation itself is often viewed as an act of disloyalty or betrayal… [and] the domestic debate over negotiations and coexistence is thoroughly steeped in the language of culture and the manipulation by various sides of key cultural symbols,” making talks especially sensitive to the “outbidding of pro-peace political leaders by domestic extremists” (Wittes 2005, 143; see too Bernard 2009, 148–9). The present case is characterized as an intractable social conflict and is therefore subject to such challenges.

It is also both a nominally “rational” competition over scarce resources and a contest over religious values, in the context of both the bilateral dyad and the two-level game.

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44 A sample, hardly representative of the number of relevant papers and chapters in print: Bazerma et al. (2000); Bernard (2009); Carnevale and Pruitt (1992); Druckman (2006); Druckman and Olekalns (2008); Gardner (2000); Ginat and Altman (2007); Jervis et al. (1985); Kelman (2006, 1982); Smith (2000); Tetlock et al. (1991); Thayer (2007); Winslade et al. (1998); Snyder (1978); Spector (1977).

45 “Game theory is a bag of analytical tools … [whose] basic assumptions … are that decision-makers pursue well-defined exogenous objectives (they are rational) and … they reason strategically… The models of game theory are highly abstract representations” (Osborne & Rubinstein 1994, 1; see Gibbons 1992; Myerson 1997).

46 E.g., insufficient public support for compromise has constrained track I negotiators from making concessions (on Camp David II see, e.g., Kriesberg 2002; Pundak 2001).
Such values disputes can vastly complicate peacemaking. For example, Thompson and Gonzales (1997, 82) make a distinction between conflicts grounded in interests, e.g., scarce resource competition, and those arising from “different conceptualizations of the situation,” e.g., “because of divergent ideologies, values, or cognitive structures,” for which “[r]esolution requires an altered understanding of the situation by one or both [parties].” Such disputes include “worldview conflicts” (Clark 1989; Nudler 1993), “value conflicts” of different stripes (Augsburger 1992; Carpenter & Kennedy 1991; Clark 1989; Hunter 1989; Ozawa 1991), and “moral” conflicts (Pearce & Littlejohn 1997). The choice of label matters little; the important commonality shared by these conflicts is that they involve contested meaning, not just contested substantive positions, so utilitarian bargaining immediately hits obstacles.

As an example of such conflicts, Docherty (2001) presents a case study of U.S. federal police negotiations with an armed millenarian cult called the Branch Davidians led by David Koresh (the Waco siege in 1993), which resulted in the deaths of dozens of Branch Davidians, including women and children, when negotiations collapsed and the FBI stormed the property. Docherty thereby argues for the possibility of engaging constructively with the discourse of a group that does not share the same meaning system—and warns about what may happen if an inappropriate utilitarian bargaining frame is coercively imposed. I discuss Docherty’s work extensively here because her conceptual framework significantly shaped that of this thesis—and because of the relevance of her analysis of the disasters possible in a crisis, if the religious logic of key players is dismissed as merely crazy. This is not a particularly famous study in the cross-cultural negotiation field; however, its analytic orientation of serious and respectful engagement with non-secular logic systems makes it exceptionally useful.

Docherty made a cogent critique of mainstream conflict-resolution paradigms’ “theoretical focus on ‘rational analytical problem solving’... [which] seemed to miss the real substance of the... most profound conflicts that confronted us in the field” (Docherty 2001, 11). She suggests an alternative approach to negotiations based on the paradigm of “worldview conflict... [i.e.,] conflicts in which the parties appeared to be speaking different languages and occupying different realities... Worldviewing encompasses cognitive (psychological) processes such as categorization, boundary establishment, and the creation of scripts or schema... by which every group constructs,
maintains and transforms its own commonsense version of the world” (p. 50, 52—emphasis in original).  

**Limits to negotiating worldview conflicts in utilitarian terms**

This is the context behind a stream in the literature on negotiation that rejects a pure-rationalist bargaining approach (for an overview, see generally Menkel-Meadow 2009). Cross-cultural negotiation scholarship is a prime example.  

It became a discipline in its own right over the 1990s, when “dozens of studies... examined how the meaning and practice of negotiation varies across cultures” (Bazerman et al. 2000, 296), in response to mainstream scholarship’s marginalization of cultural and psychological considerations in favor of a “rational” approach that assumed: values-neutrality; the possibility of objectivity; the appropriateness of an interests-based, market-style bargaining framework; and the parties’ shared interest in utility maximization. Early cross-cultural negotiation scholars rightly critiqued this approach as culturally egocentric, springing “from the assumption that there is a single, universal paradigm of negotiation [which happened to be Western European/North American] and that cross-national differences are stylish and superficial” (Cohen 1997, 215). Docherty concurred: the mainstream, rationalist negotiation paradigm is “culturally biased and of limited use... [it] worked just fine [but only] if the parties in the conflict either were or were willing to act as if they were white, Eurocentric, middle class, and preferably male” (Docherty 2001, 11). She further notes the tendency in the mainstream negotiation literature to frame values, emotional, and other non-interests-based conflicts as “irrational” (p. 33; see, e.g., Northrup 1989, 56; Fisher & Brown 1988).  

Similarly, mediation scholars Winslade, Monk, and Cotter argue that the rationalist, “problem-solving approach” to mediation is premised on “a folklore of neutrality... [that] emphasizes the pleasure-seeking principle as a driving force in human decision making...”

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47 For example, as Docherty (2001, 21) points out: “To anyone working from a social constructivist perspective, the concept of a worldview conflict is obvious, yet within the field of conflict analysis and resolution, there has been very little exploration of this problem.”

48 For a sample: Adair et al. (2004); Avruch (2000); Avruch and Wang (2005); Brett et al. (1998); Cohen (1997); Faure (1998); Kahane (2003); Kopelman and Olekalns (1999); Lederach (1995); Macduff (2006); Rivers and Lytle (2007); Salacuse (1998); Sebenius (2002); Steinberg (2005); Thomas and Inkson (2004); Tinsley (2005).

49 E.g., Lederach (1995, 4) referred to culture as a “sexy new issue” in dispute resolution.

50 Cf. Cohen’s work on American bilateral negotiations, which found “cross-cultural discrepancies may strongly affect the conduct and outcome of such talks” (Cohen 1997, 215).
[and] directs us to focus on individual needs ahead of cultural, collective, or relational aspects of personhood” (Winslade et al. 1998, 22). They reject boxing human reason into opposed categories of ‘rational’ self-interest (e.g., material needs) versus ‘nonrational’ interests grounded in culture, emotion, or psychology: “what we need relates to what we believe we are entitled to, and our sense of entitlement is shaped by cultural and social specifications as much as by biology” (pp. 24–5; my emphasis). Similarly, Bernard’s (2009) critique of commercial negotiation criticized “standardized negotiation models... typically grounded in a theory of mind that holds reason to be ‘conscious, literal, unemotional, disembodied, universal,’ something that functions ‘to serve our interests’... These concepts date to the Enlightenment and stand at odds with contemporary knowledge about neurolinguistics” (p. 152). Rationalist models ignore “backstage dynamics of emotion, subjectivity, kinship, and cultural ties” (p. 159).51

Traditional conflict-resolution approaches find “value conflicts highly problematic because such conflicts do not lend themselves to problem-solving processes or to integrative bargaining” (Docherty 2001, 22–4). Docherty notes the preponderantly defeatist attitude in the traditional literature (pp. 24–5) regarding ideological/worldview conflicts—to the extent such conflicts are acknowledged at all. One of the problems with applying bargaining-based approaches is that the parties often do not share a “common sense” by which to attach relative values to their positions for the purposes of trading (Pearce & Littlejohn 1997, 51). Moreover, their worldviews are often “incommensurate,” i.e., impossible to map one to one—though still qualitatively comparable (p. 61). Parties in an interests-based conflict usually at least share a substantive frame defining the nature of the conflict (L. Putnam & Holmer 1992, 135); this is not guaranteed or even likely in a worldview conflict.

Other analyses, attacking from the other side of the equation, argue for the underutilized advantages of leveraging nonrational factors such as emotion (e.g., Druckman & Olekalns 2008) or cultural nuance (e.g., Avruch & Wang 2005) in negotiations. However, in most cases the engagement with non-interest-based dimensions, such as culture,52 is still relatively superficial. Various ‘shopping lists’ are

51 Such criticism often targets scholarly classics, e.g., “culture is rendered so thinly as to come out all but invisible… in Getting to YES’s first edition or The Art and Science of Negotiation” (Avruch 2000, 341–2, referring to Fisher et al. 1991 and Raiffa 1982).

52 Some definitions: beliefs, values, signs, and symbols (Ginat & Altman 2007, 15); “the socially transmitted behavior patterns, norms, beliefs and values of a given community” (Salacuse’s 1998, 222). Culture includes
available of culturally variable traits posited to influence negotiation. Reviewing the cultural psychology literature, Bazerman et al. (2000, 296) selected the following as most relevant: collectivism–individualism, power distance, communication context, and conception of time. Moving to more-specific negotiation preferences, Salacuse (1998, 223–4) identified 10 procedural factors in negotiation influenced by culture: whether a contract or a relationship is the main negotiating goal; win/win or win/lose attitudes to the process; formal or informal personal styles; direct or indirect communication; high or low time sensitivity; high or low emotionalism; preference for a specific or general agreement; building an agreement top-down (general principles form the basis) or bottom-up (details form the basis); consensual decision-making by the negotiating team or deference to a leader; high or low risk taking.

Avruch, a founder of the cross-cultural negotiation discipline, well captured the limitations of the above approach: what’s lost in such conceptions of “culture” are “[t]he sorts of symbolic, cognitive, and effective processing-package that Docherty calls worldview… Others have despairied of using the term [‘culture’] as well, substituting such notions as discourse, episteme, or habitus” (Avruch 2001, xii). Whatever term is chosen, the expanded concept of a worldview must reflect a meaning system or frame that is dynamic rather than static, and constantly emergent/contested/negotiated by the social actors who construct and apply it. That is, “worldview must not be seen as merely superficial, stylistic variation, a lightly tinged filter that mildly colors our perceptions of the world… So far as social actors are concerned, worldview (like culture) does not merely embellish social reality: it constitutes it,” not just in terms of norms and values, but “constitutive right down to the very foundations of alternative rationalities and … ultimate, sacred realities” (pp. xii–xiii).

**Realities, rationalities, and worldviews**

To deal constructively with cross-cultural and especially values/moral/worldview conflicts, the negotiator (and equally the hasbaranik,$^{53}$ in a two-level game) must understand the meaning systems at play and know the symbolic language through which they are communicated. This is an instance of the general principle that “the ability of

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53 Public relations expert.

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national narratives, “the tales each community tells itself and teaches its children about its history, current environment, and future (and threats to that future)” (Wittes 2005, 142).
two persons to behave with one another socially is defined, limited, and circumscribed by their comprehension of one another’s meaning system” (Duck 1994, 90).

This is not to say that the correct path for negotiation in such conflicts is the pursuit of a shared meaning system. The more modest goal is that “negotiators … share enough meaning that each can articulate the other’s “naming of the world” even if they continue to disagree over the nature of reality” (Docherty 2001, 135). We may expect such an exercise to fail spectacularly if one party’s values and worldview are devalued by the other or by the mediator as irrational, crazy, anachronistic, etc., for instance because it is a religious logic being judged against a secular logic.

What is required is some measure of reflection on one’s own worldview and the capacity for respectful literacy in the other’s worldview. For scholars, this can involve reconceiving the privileged secular, scientific frame as one of many possible religious rationalities (i.e., as secular religion rather than Truth), if only for instrumental purposes such as facilitating negotiation across a worldview divide. For example, in Docherty’s case study of the Waco disaster, “the media, the federal authorities, and society at large privileged the secular-scientific symbolic world” (p. 68) over that of the Branch Davidians. The “Gods” of the FBI, she wrote, were the “modern era” and its scientific epistemology, in which God was relegated to the private, spiritual sphere, compared with the Branch Davidians, “for whom God acts in history” (p. 69). Thus, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz noted that if the religious symbols of a discourse (including scientific/secular discourse) are uncritically embraced by scholars, groups whose own symbols are discordant are likely to be viewed “not so much evil as stupid, insensitive, unlearned, or … mad” (Geertz 1973, 129). This is the crux of Rosenak’s (2013) critique of most scholarship on the settler movement (in terms of the uncritical application of a Western “Catholicism”/fundamentalism paradigm)—and one of the reasons why most of this literature has limited use for the purpose of this thesis.

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54 The actual truth or objective importance of the ‘alternatively rational’ party’s values or ultimate, sacred concerns is inconsequential (Docherty 2001, 52). The point of interest is just “the impact of ultimate concerns on negotiation processes” (pp. 62–3). The scholar/practitioner need not convert to a new values system to become sufficiently literate in it to approach bargaining more effectively. Similarly, it matters less to this thesis whether Rosenak (2013) or the scholars criticized therein are “more correct” about the true character of settler religious thought and politics. The focus is simply whether it is possible to engage constructively with that religious thought to achieve a less spectacularly hostile outcome in a two-level game, compared with that observed during the Oslo process.
More useful is Docherty’s (2001, 167) language of “competing rationalities.” As her analysis significantly shaped the theoretical framework of this thesis, the rest of this subsection will address her arguments in detail, before returning to the Israeli context. Citing Hunter (1989), Docherty notes that “the source of intractability in public-policy conflicts is often not so much reason versus emotion as it is one system of reason versus another system of reason, with each system of reason grounded in a different set of ontological commitments” (Docherty 2001, 33–4).

It is technically possible to construct typologies of rationalities. For example, Weber (1964, 115) and Campbell (1981, 176–77) divide social action into the categories of goal-rational (think “Getting to YES”), value-rational, affactual, and traditionally oriented action. It is rare to find a pure type in practice (Weber 1964, 117); however, this typology provides a language to explain the dilemma of applying Western academic research frames (whether to a specific group, like the settlers, or to negotiation practice): dependence on a conception of rationality that does not always match that of the subjects. Goal-rationality is the only type of rationality considered “rational” in the instrumental worldview that dominates in many modern societies and mainstream negotiation literature. But other rationalities are also rational (i.e., derived from reasoning and logically explicable) “if we understand the internal logic of the worldviews within which they originate” (Docherty 2001, 169). However, when worldviews misalign, the mainstream literature typically frames the negotiator’s task as getting all parties to “be rational—i.e., to engage in a goal-rational process” (pp. 170–1).

This is not necessarily effective. When bargaining, value-rational actors will not necessarily be guided by realistic probabilities of success, and are unlikely to accept trade-offs that involve the sacrifice of a core value. This constrains their flexibility: “The means for achieving a value-rational goal are selected on the basis of moral coherence and must correspond to the underlying values that determine the actor’s objective… Actors whose means and ends must be morally coherent are less able to compromise and bargain than are goal-rational actors” (pp. 168–9). However, they can participate in goal-rational bargaining processes insofar as compromises to core values can be avoided.

This is highly relevant if negotiating with, for example, groups that adhere to a “higher law” (e.g., religious law), which may contravene state law. This was the
situation Docherty analyzed: a weeks-long stand-off between an armed apocalyptic cult and the FBI. Negotiations failed, and although the testimonies of FBI officers blamed the collapse of negotiations squarely on this ‘nutty’ cult willing to die for its members’ apocalyptic fantasies (pp. 10–11), Docherty’s own analysis of the negotiation transcripts suggested a more subtle picture:

“Barricaded unconventional communities may be willing to die for their belief in an alternate authority, but they do not necessarily want to die. Even deeply committed apocalyptic groups may demonstrate some flexibility when it comes to cooperating with state authorities. For example, the Branch Davidians were determined to follow God’s commands, but they saw room to maneuver and negotiate as long as the government did not act in ways that reinforced their fears that the United States was the evil empire predicted by the prophets and the Book of Revelation” (Docherty 2001, 397).

Docherty insists that the disastrous collapse of negotiations, after which dozens were killed in the raid, was not an inevitable consequence of the Branch Davidians’ theology; rather, it came about through process factors (p. 266). In sum: “actions that one side thinks will defuse the situation … are perceived by those on the other side as demonstrating the perfidy of the first and obligating them to respond by continuing or intensifying the conflict” (Pearce & Littlejohn 1997, 68). This escalatory cycle stemmed from the parties’ inability to understand one another’s worldviews, with the result that “each party finds the naming, framing, and blaming stories of the other party baffling or offensive” (Docherty 2001, 64–5).

Docherty therefore presents an extreme example of the dangers inherent in dismissing alternative rationalities in conflict situations. Although some FBI agents tried to understand and craft arguments that would make sense to the Branch Davidian worldview, this effort was sporadic, and none took seriously the Branch Davidians’ alternative framings of the situation. The result was a mutually frustrated dialogue of the deaf, until “the on-scene commander ordered the FBI negotiators to stop listening to Koresh’s ‘bible babble’ and to get the negotiations refocused on substantive issues amenable to bargaining” (p. 46), whereas the Branch Davidians saw the spiritual issues

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55 For example, “diplomatic negotiations” among equal authorities or the citizens’ rights frame (Docherty 2001, 189–224).
as more substantive than the “substantive” issues. This led to a new phase of attempted coercion by the FBI and obstinate resistance by the Branch Davidians. The most promising approach was abandoned: at one stage the FBI had sent Koresh a tape calling for calm recorded by two bible scholars who spoke the group’s symbolic language, i.e., eschatological analysis of biblical passages, and Koresh had asked to speak with them further. This was not permitted (pp. 46–7). Furthermore, the Branch Davidians’ meaning system was misunderstood, she argues, with values-motivated demands and arguments based on religious metaphors being interpreted by the FBI as tactical posturing. This shows the danger of ignoring “the meaning-creating function of symbolically laden language” like key metaphors (p. 34).

Another way of understanding the failure is through the attempt to render sacred values bargainable, i.e., fair game in a goal-rational negotiation process. The next section discusses the literature on this topic.

Sacred values

Atran and Axelrod define sacred values as “moral imperatives that seem to drive behavior independently of any concrete material goal. They often have their basis in religion, but such transcendent secular values as a belief in the importance of individual morality, fairness, reciprocity, and collective identity (i.e., ‘justice for my people’) can also be sacred values. These values will often trump economic thinking or considerations of realpolitik” (Atran & Axelrod 2008, 226). The 1990s and 2000s have seen considerable work on the concept of sacred values. The concept meshes neatly with the values-based and ethical dimensions of Docherty’s “worldviews.”

56 This was a classic illustration of how “Members of one community may dismiss metaphors of great significance in another community as babble or nonsensical language” (Docherty 2001, 75).
57 She found that every demand of the Branch Davidians was treated as instrumental, even the purely moral ones such as connection of a phone line to let outside family members know they were ok, or that the children released from the property not be fed junk food or shown commercial TV (Docherty 2001, 166–88). In turn, the FBI’s demands for hostage releases in exchange for the provision of basic necessities such as milk for the children were perceived as coercive, manipulative, and affronts to community-members’ faith choices. This confirmed the Branch Davidians’ fear that the FBI were agents of the demonic kingdom of “Babylon” in their eschatology.
58 E.g., Argo and Ginges (2015); Atran and Axelrod (2008); Atran, Axelrod, and Davis (2007); Atran and Ginges (2015); Baron and Spranca (1997); Ginges and Atran (2009, 2014); Sheikh, Ginges, and Atran (2013); Tetlock (2003); Thompson and Gonzales (1997); Tetlock (2003); and Tetlock, Peterson, and Lerner (1996). On debate over the concept’s validity, see, e.g., Atran and Axelrod (2010), Kamolnick (2010), and Tenbrunsel et al. (2009).
Sacred values can constrain the legitimate bargaining space of bilateral negotiations—particularly if a major domestic power bloc in the two-level game is a religious group. Research on the topic indicates that people tend to become outraged if asked to bargain over sacred values for material gain (e.g., Tetlock 2003; Baron & Spranca 1997): “For example, most people resist setting a price on human life or creating markets for human body parts... Taboo trade-offs lie outside the permissible bounds of the game and tend to elicit... moral outrage, avoidance, or outright denial” (Bazerman et al. 2000, 292–3). Therefore, well-meant attempts to break a negotiations deadlock by offering financial compensation may backfire. As Docherty observed in case of FBI–Branch Davidian negotiation, “actors who are intensely committed to value rationality or to an established set of traditions will be deeply offended if asked to treat their absolute values, ultimate concerns, or traditions as negotiable” (Docherty 2001, 171). In her conceptual language, “naming the world as amenable to bargaining,” i.e., naming “some features of the world as commodities,” is an ideological act ripe to provoke legitimacy conflicts, such as the deep offence caused “by attempting to commodify ‘sacred’ entities” (pp. 172–3). The trouble is that bargaining must be underpinned by this categorization, splitting the world into sacred and profane (see Zerubavel 1991, 21). But this categorization itself is likely to be disputed by differently rational participants because there are no external, objective criteria for sanctity/profanity.

In another context, analyzing environmental disputes, Thompson and Gonzales found that “attaching monetary value to human life, familial obligations, national honor, and the ecosystem seriously undermines one’s social identity or standing,” so “the familiar notion of trading, so important to... behavioral negotiation, is likely to be considered unacceptable and reprehensible” (Thompson & Gonzales 1997, 86). The reduction of Eretz Yisrael to tradable “territory” is an example of where key stakeholders disagree about the legitimacy of bargaining, although it is not the only sacred issue in the Israeli–Palestinian arena. Atran and Axelrod (2008) surveyed the Israeli and Palestinian publics on a number of “sacred issues” in Israeli–Palestinian negotiations, and the results warn against attempting to resolve such values conflicts using a rationalist bargaining model:
“The proposed compromises were exchanging land for peace (asked of settlers), sovereignty over Jerusalem (asked of [Palestinian] students), the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their former lands and homes inside Israel (asked of refugees), and recognition of the validity of the adversary’s own sacred values (asked of all three groups). We proposed material incentives, such as significant payments to individual families, credible offers to relocate or rebuild destroyed infrastructure, and so forth. We found that such material offers to promote the peaceful resolution of political and cultural conflicts backfire when adversaries consider contested issues to reflect sacred values. Material offers to make concessions that were seen as violations of sacred values were perceived as insults” (Atran & Axelrod 2008, 231).

Likewise, among Israeli and Palestinian leaders: “Our research findings and discussions with leaders indicate that violent opposition to compromise over issues that people consider sacred actually increases when material incentives to compromise are offered” (p. 224; my emphasis). In sum, applying a rationalist model that assumes sacred values can be bought off with money or goods is dysfunctional in practice. We need to understand better this sacred values game on its own terms, and to learn what are effective sources of leverage.

The story of sacred values has a silver lining: “understanding an opponent’s sacred values... offers surprising opportunities for breakthroughs” (p. 221). One promising approach is to reframe sacred values, as suggested by Atran and Axelrod (2008) and Thompson and Gonzales (1997): “mediators may facilitate trade-offs that maintain the illusion that values have been preserved. The key is to reframe values in terms of general principles, not as specific positions. This will provide sufficient ambiguity to allow parties to be flexible about the means of achieving their values, especially when accountability to a constituency is critical” (Thompson & Gonzales 1997, 98). Atran and Axelrod note too that values’ “application depends a good deal on how they are understood, and what they are taken to imply, and these interpretations and applications of sacred values are not always fixed and inflexible. Indeed, sacred values that seem incompatible within certain frames may actually become compatible when reframed” (Atran & Axelrod 2008, 235). If values incompatibility can be removed by reframeing, it may not matter that the parties’ values-based motivations still differ: “different decision
rules can be implemented simultaneously” (Bazerman et al. 2000, 292), as long as moral coherence is preserved in terms of what each decision means—to both parties.

The literature on negotiating sacred values in the top-level (i.e., binational) game already offers some proposals that could be adapted to the intra-Jewish arena. Atran and Axelrod’s (2008) surveys found that Israeli and Palestinian negotiators could gain leverage by making “symbolic concessions.” Interviewing Israeli, Fatah, and Hamas leaders, they found: “Support for violence decreases... when an adversary makes symbolic gestures that show recognition of the other’s core values” (Atran & Axelrod 2008, 224). Likewise, at Camp David II, Lustick (2006) found that Palestinian negotiators downplayed their insistence on Israeli recognition of “moral and legal responsibility for the forced displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian civilian population” when the Israelis offered a symbolic concession: acknowledging some responsibility for Palestinian suffering since Israel’s birth and permitting the return of a small number of 1948 refugees.59

Where a values compromise is truly inescapable, as it was, perhaps, in the case of the evacuation of Jewish settlers from Gaza, Atran and Axelrod advise that negotiation success is most likely if the compromise is framed as “privileging one sacred value for another” (Atran & Axelrod 2008, 226). On the Hitnatkut, they wrote:

“One senior member of the National Security Council responded recently to our latest briefing in this way: ‘This seems right. On the settlers, Sharon realized too late that he shouldn’t have berated them about wasting Israel’s money and endangering soldier’s lives. Sharon told me that he realized only afterwards that he should have made a symbolic concession and called them Zionist heroes making yet another sacrifice’” (Atran and Axelrod 2008, 231).

Similarly, Mnookin argued: “Monetary compensation is important but acknowledgement, empathy, and ideological compensation are also critical” (Mnookin 2005, 259).60 Furthermore:

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59 In a completely different arena, discussing past successes in cross-cultural US diplomacy on highly sensitive values, Cohen (1997, 223) noted that American rhetorical concessions of “certain points of inviolable dogma” often induced complete pragmatism from the partner regarding the practical details of a contract.

60 For analyses of identity and psychological dimensions of the settlements issue in the negotiation literature, see, e.g., Hackley et al. (2005) and Susskind et al. (2005).
“…for the central protagonists in this internal conflict, much more than money is at stake. For messianic Zionists, settling Eratz [sic] Yisrael represents the fulfillment of their deepest religious and political commitments — the settlement project is central to their identities. … What are the implications of this reality that the resolution of internal conflict over settlements threatens identity? It obviously means that Israeli leaders need to worry about more than monetary compensation; they should think about ideological and political compensation as well. I was reminded of this the first time I visited the West Bank settlements, when a settler told me, ‘If someone came up and offered me a million dollars to abandon my home, I’d spit on them. I didn’t come here for money. But, if I really felt that for the good of the Jewish people my country asked me to leave my home and become a pioneer again in some other part of Israel, I would do it for nothing.’ While I cannot suggest what form this ideological compensation should take, I am persuaded that it is of profound importance” (Mnookin 2005, 260).

This thesis investigates precisely that question: what form this ideological compensation should take. Various terms could be chosen to describe this goal, e.g., Mnookin’s “ideological compensation” or Atran and Axelrod’s “symbolic concessions.” The total set of such concessions and their role in a broader (both instrumental and symbolic) campaign could be termed a “rhetorical strategy.” However, I often choose to refer generically to “discursive resources,” which avoids implying a hierarchy of ideological interests (whereby liberal values are natural and correct, and any deviations therefrom must be reluctant concessions), or simple manipulation to achieve one’s own goal.

Limitations of the “worldview” and “sacred values” concepts

Symbolic concessions are not, in and of themselves, solutions to conflicts in which sacred and material interests intertwine. Atran and Axelrod stated: “Symbolic gestures do not always stand alone, unhinged from all material considerations. Rather, they often help to recast a moral frame that determines the scope and limits of possible material transactions and negotiations” (Atran & Axelrod 2008, 232–3).  

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61 See too the theoretical discussion of “rhetoric” in the Methodology section.
62 To some extent, such an instrumental frame does underlie the thesis, which is broadly interested in supporting a negotiated peace. However, there is value in striving to keep the language and analysis neutral, to the extent possible. Moreover, the conceptual framework and findings could be utilized in religious–secular cross-cultural communication generally, including in contexts where no instrumental or symbolic bargain needs to be made, such as dialogue groups.
The sacred values framework comes with further caveats, such as the possibility of actors using “sacred” values to mask raw self-interest (see, e.g., Tenbrunsel et al. 2009). Cultural influences can be manipulated in a calculated, rationalist manner: “Political leaders … invoke ‘sacred’ values as a least-cost method of discrediting adversaries” (Atran & Axelrod 2008, 227). Scholar use the term “pseudo-sacred” for issues positioned by actors as sacred but that are open to compromise in practice.

Another cause for caution is the danger of naïve and superficially researched attempts to utilize another group’s values-based language to enhance one’s own rhetoric. Without substantial knowledge and respect for the other’s worldview, this is likely to come across as a shallow attempt at manipulation, or ignorance. In the Waco case, an FBI agent used a crude (and biblically inaccurate) metaphor centered on Moses to try to persuade Koresh to follow the FBI’s notion of responsible leadership. In turn, Koresh tried to usurp the FBI negotiators’ references to commands from their “bosses” and “headquarters” by referring to God as his “boss” in His heavenly “headquarters” (Docherty 2001, 263). For Docherty, this is a good example of “[w]hy borrowed symbolic language does not always work”: for the FBI negotiators, “their lack of knowledge about apocalyptic theology and biblical interpretation sometimes made them look ignorant. … The second risk associated with using biblical language was that it led the Branch Davidians to assume the negotiators were really open to conversion,” leading to prolonged entanglement in theological discussions (pp. 264–5). The cult leader’s attempt to use the “boss” metaphor implied to the FBI agents that the sacred issues were bargainable, just as one might negotiate with an unreasonable employer.

In conclusion, the conflict-resolution and negotiation literature clearly indicates the value of culturally grounded, constructivist approaches that take seriously meaning systems outside the traditional Western conception of rationality. However, it is not obvious how to craft such an approach effectively, without careful consideration of the specific group discourses in play.

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63 Ethics too are not immune from rational self-interest: “Interests, motivations, and incentives influence the interpretation of ethical standards... [E.g.,] individuals’ perceptions of how ethics apply in a specific situation depend fundamentally on which rules favor themselves” (Bazerman et al. 2000, 292). Thompson and Gonzales state: “It... becomes obvious... that sacred issues may be a profitable strategy. That is, it is to one’s advantage in a negotiation situation to be viewed as uncompromising (perhaps even fanatical). By anointing certain issues as sacred, and removing them from bargaining consideration, a negotiator may increase the likelihood of an individually favorable settlement” (Thompson & Gonzales 1997, 86).
Methodology and significance

Theoretical and methodological orientation

In terms of both the motivating questions and the proposed methodology, this project straddles several disciplines, including contemporary social history, political science, negotiation theory, and Jewish Studies. As stated previously, the central question of the thesis is: can deep engagement with the nuances of contemporary settler religious discourse guide a more effective approach to negotiations with this group than we have seen thus far, especially regarding the future of Judea and Samaria/the occupied Palestinian territories? The desired end point of the analysis was thus at the applied edge of social-scientific enquiry. However, this applied orientation in fact directed me to the methodological toolkit of textual Jewish Studies (as explained in the next section) rather than anthropology, political science, or negotiation theory.

First, considering the task as a social scientist led to the choice of a primarily qualitative methodology, drawing heavily on subjects’ own articulation of their positions and motivations, which reflects my hermeneutic rather than positivist approach to analysis, with an affinity toward verstehen sociology and symbolic interactionism. Simply put, such an approach emphasizes the importance of historical actors’ subjective beliefs in explaining their conduct. The intention is loosely to probe relevant meaning systems through primary documents, in order to apply Karl Popper’s situational logic model (see, e.g., De Bruin 2006): to infer explanations for actors’

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64 I understand methodology to mean “the relationship between the aims of an enquiry and its data, concepts and forms of reasoning, and their justification” (Fairburn 1999, 3).

65 Note, however, that no formal hermeneutic textual analysis in the sense of Dilthey’s “hermeneutic circle” is planned (see, e.g., Green 2008, 22); I use the term here simply to designate the interpretivist (vs. naturalist or positivist) class of approaches in the human/social sciences.

66 Verstehen approaches were once pithily described by Geertz: “this maneuver, usually too casually referred to as ‘seeing things from the actor’s point of view,’ too bookishly as ‘the verstehen approach,’ or too technically as ‘emic analysis’... [is] to say that our formulations of other peoples’ symbols must be actor-oriented. What it means is that descriptions of Berber, Jewish, or French culture must be cast in terms of the constructions we imagine Berbers, Jews, or Frenchmen to place upon what they live through, the formulae they use to define what happens to them” (Geertz 1973, 14–5). For a more formal definition, see Schwandt (1997, 174–5). For instance, phenomenological sociology (Schutz 1972, 1970; Schwandt 1997, 114–5), ethnography (Berg 2001, 133–77), and ethnomet hodology (Schwandt 1997, 44–5) are all linked to the verstehen ‘family tree’. Symbolic interactionism, though in some ways distinct from verstehen (see Verhoeven 1991), also bears close family resemblance. The label encompasses several approaches (see Reynolds & Herman-Kinney 2003), but Berg identifies the “theme that unites the diverse elements of symbolic interactionism” as a “focus on subjective understandings and the perceptions of and about people, symbols, and objects” (Berg 2001, 7). Such an approach has also enjoyed a revival in social and cultural historical scholarship (see, e.g., Fairburn 1999, 208–31; Green 2008, 9–26, 56–60; and see, e.g., McDonald 1996, 110–3, for a summary of criticism).
external conduct by reference to “what a notional rational agent would have done in the same situation, given the particular actor’s desired aims and ... beliefs about how the world works” (Fairburn 1999, 82; original emphasis) and to use the findings to inform recommendations for negotiation practices.

Moreover, a limited case study analysis would further complement an ethos of “thick” description (Geertz 1967), being characterized by “[e]xtremely rich, detailed, and in-depth information” (Berg 2001, 225). Given broader theoretical and practical interests about negotiation with religious actors, the settler movement has utility as an “instrumental” case study, i.e., serving to elucidate or refine theoretical explanations (Stake 2005, 445–50; 1995, 3–4). It also merits analysis as an “intrinsic” case study, in its own right, as the “real business of case study is particularization, not generalization... the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself” (Stake 1995, 8). Such an approach is compatible with symbolic interactionist assumptions, which prioritize learning about phenomena in context (using the web of meanings spun by subjects themselves). Both participant (e.g., interviews) and unobtrusive (e.g., documents) observation methods could have been used;67 in this case, I opted for the latter (see below).

**Contemporary rabbinical texts as windows to worldviews**

As explained in the review of academic literature on the settlers, Rosenak’s analysis had already mapped the broad contours of contemporary rabbinical discourse. It remained to choose a narrower (or complementary) focus and source material.

My chosen focus on formal communications by rabbinical leaders, rather than unscripted conversations of laypeople,68 stems from my adoption of the “worldview” framework of Docherty (2001, 50–51), Nudler (1993, 4), and Palmer (1996, 114). For Nudler (1993), the anatomy of a worldview comprises an ontology (a theory about the nature of what exists in the universe), a theory of the world order (beliefs about how what exists interrelates), an axiology (“a value theory about which parts of the universe are more or less important than other parts”), and an epistemology (“beliefs about how

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68 This is not to say my approach is inherently superior. Anthropological and survey-based approaches, for instance, would complement the present work by elucidating how generalizable the present findings are to the settler population at large—which is a crucial question. The study by Roth (2011, 2014), for example, was largely based on participant observation and interviews. See too, e.g., Dalsheim (2011), Gross (2013).
and to what extent it is possible to know about what exists”); as paraphrased by Docherty (2001, 50–51). Accordingly, in order to map a worldview:

“…we need to know how the person or group under scrutiny answers the following questions.

- What is real or true? (Ontology)
- How is the ‘real’ organized? (Logic)
- What is valuable or important? (Axiology)
- How do we know about what is? (Epistemology)
- How should I or we act? (Ethic)”

(Docherty 2001, 51).

This can be achieved through analysis of a group’s narratives and rhetoric. Fisher (1987, 63) described humans as homo narrans, and Hayles (1995) noted that myths define social reality. Accordingly, Burke (1969, 43) defined rhetoric as “the use of symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols,” and as noted by Docherty, “Narrative is among the most powerful forms of rhetoric” (Docherty 2001, 60). O’Leary (1994, 25) claimed that “rhetoric and narrativity constitute an alternative way of knowing with different conceptions of rationality”—and it is a less rigid conception of rationality than the traditional frames discussed in the previous two sections, and thus more useful for the present purpose.

The above implies that a) understanding a group’s worldview and b) understanding how to engage with that worldview through discourse can be achieved through the analysis of its narratives and rhetoric, especially its symbolic language—“language that references such symbolic constructs as values, ontological claims, and epistemological assertions,” e.g. “[v]alue-laden terms such as justice, truth, fairness, responsibility, and morality” and references to authoritative texts or authority figures (Docherty 2001, 316). Docherty also suggests looking at groups’ foundational stories and “stories that guide their actions in the world. These stories separate good from evil, effective from ineffective, rational from irrational behaviors” (pp. 71–2). She also points to the importance of categorizations and taxonomies (e.g., sacred/profane, good/evil; pp. 72–3) and the group’s articulation of the relationship between such categories through metaphor (p. 4; see too Nudler 1993, 4).
At this point I depart from Docherty’s approach. She argues that worldviews are “best studied by looking at people’s unreflective actions and unconsciously chosen language, rather than at their deliberately crafted statements of values, opinions, and ideologies” (Docherty 2001, 51). While I broadly agree with this, I submit it would be impossible to interpret such unreflective, unconscious acts and language accurately without first encountering the relatively formal frameworks either underpinning or rationalizing the acts and language. In her case, this was shown by the FBI agents’ inability to correctly decode Branch Davidian appeals to their values frameworks to explain their refusal to end the stand-off, mistaking them as mere tactics in furtherance of instrumental goals (i.e., pseudosacred values). By contrast, the biblical scholars versed in the methods of eschatological analysis used by Koresh did grasp the logic system being enacted and seek to engage it constructively.69

As I note in the conclusion to this section, there are limitations to an approach focused on formal, public communications by the intellectual elite of a community. Such a study must be complemented by other social scientific toolkits such as surveys and ethnographic methods to determine how much, if any, of these formal meaning systems are used by the broader community. However, focusing on texts by the elite (in this case, rabbis) can contribute two advantages unlikely to derive from engagement with non-elites: a) a rich conceptual vocabulary for such wider social investigations; and b) insight into the intellectual system and heritage of worldviews so often problematized as irrational and immune to all reason, which may reveal discursive resources invisible in the combative surface-level debate. Rosenak’s (2013) analysis demonstrates this possibility, finding that even those hardal rabbis least enamored of the secular state, who delivered the most vitriolic polemics against it, subtly harked back to Kook’s unity of opposites framework and were politically restrained by it. The mud-slinging that often characterizes the discourse of the street in such a tense context is unlikely to reveal such discursive opportunities hidden in religious logic systems.

Therefore, I’ve adopted a primary methodology of qualitative research based on analyzing documents written by two key intellectuals in the settler movement and tracing their roots to antecedent sources and philosophies. The applied aim of the research informed a rather more selective approach to the choice of primary source

69 Of course, we will never know whether this would have worked, but it is difficult to imagine an outcome any worse than the massacre that resulted without their cultural mediation.
material than would be the case in a traditional corpus analysis, although the thesis does contribute to such an analysis for a subset of the chosen rabbis’ publications. My focus has been restricted to texts that engage with contemporary political events, and my usual approach has been to plumb these back to the theosophical systems underpinning them, with a view to tracing their deep logic and identifying discursive possibilities.

**Rabbis Tau and Ginsburgh**

I focus on Rabbi Tzvi Yisrael Tau, arguably the pre-eminent intellectual of the “moderate” *mamlakhti* stream, and Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, the pre-eminent intellectual on the far-right fringe of the settler movement (comprising Kahanists, Hilltop Youth, and Ginsburgh’s *Yeshivat Od Yosef Chai*). They represent a useful and fascinating choice for several reasons. Both explicitly trace an intellectual heritage to interpretations of Kabbalah, containing both monistic and dualistic elements (Tau through Kook, and Ginsburgh through Hasidism). Both engage with political questions through intricate theosophical frames, and these frames are often explicitly identified and elaborated upon. Yet they stand at opposite edges of the settler political spectrum. Tau is commonly identified as a voice of restraint and given some credit for the largely peaceful process of the *Hitnatkut*, and Ginsburgh is a notorious firebrand.

This divergence in fact makes them a peculiarly complementary choice. As noted, Tau is probably the pre-eminent scholar of monistic, *mamlakhti* religious Zionism; that is, the strand that continues to identify the State of Israel as an instrument of divine will. However, many settlers—particularly among younger generations—became disenchanted with this approach after the trauma of the *Hitnatkut* (see chapters 5–7), and turned to more radical ideologues such as the Kahanists and Ginsburgh’s *Od Yosef Chai*, characterized by Rosenak (2013) as extremely dualistic. In terms of the goal of the thesis to facilitate negotiation, Tau is thus useful because he already presents a theosophically grounded discourse of moderation and “positive” communication with the authorities and the secular community, with evidence that this has been effective. Don-Yehiya’s analysis of the relatively peaceful process of the *Hitnatkut* concluded:

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70 Jewish mysticism.
71 See Appendix 1.
There was indeed a grave public concern that the disengagement might lead to bloodshed and civil war. Fortunately, this did not happen. One of the reasons was that both the spiritual and political leaders of the religious Zionist community did their best to restrain and to calm the settlers and their ardent supporters. An especially significant role in this respect was played by influential Rabbis of the nationalist [mamlakhti/statist] Yeshivot” (Don-Yehiya 2014, 257).

Moreover, Anat Roth credits Tau’s interpretation of the territorial compromises of the 1970s–2000s (i.e., that they were the “result of a crisis of identity in Israeli society”; Roth 2015, 211) with defining much of the internal debate and discussion within the settler movement post-Hitnatkat. She submits that this led to a change in direction by settler political representatives, toward an emphasis on public education (as advocated by Tau): “Leading up to the 2009 elections, it was actualized in the political platform of the unified religious-Zionist party, stating that ‘Jewish education and the deepening of Jewish identity is our utmost national priority’. Simultaneously, growing numbers of religious Zionists began volunteering for projects aimed at influencing the core values of Israeli society and specifically strengthening the Jewish and Zionist identity of the state and society” (Roth 2015, 211). This is consistent with Roth’s argument that religious Zionist settlers are all aligned with the basic mamlakhti position in terms of their theology, with differences being restricted to details of practical implementation. Speculatively, if we accept her argument, it is further grounds for closer inspection of Tau’s mamlakhti worldview as a window to a wider world.

By contrast, Ginsburgh and Od Yosef Chai are useful precisely because they represent, in principle, the hard-line fringe for whom the mamlakhti approach has no traction. By probing his teachings, I therefore speculated that it would be possible to identify which dimensions of Tau’s monistic worldview are also resonant in this very far right-wing symbolic landscape, and which have been abandoned outright by radicalized youth. Moreover, Ginsburgh trained as a Hasidic rabbi of the Chabad school,

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72 For example, Tau’s student and colleague, Rabbi Aviner, was present at the Gaza settlement of Neve Dekalim when it was evacuated, and “played an important role in keeping the teenage demonstrators under control and preventing acts of violence against the soldiers and police” (Bick 2007, 318).

73 An interesting scholar, who once worked for the peace movement Shalom Achshav but recently ran on the Jewish Home list (affiliated with the settler movement) in the Israeli elections.

74 NB: this thesis does not seek to verify or refute it.
which espouses a highly monistic theosophy. There are significant overlaps between this Hasidic theosophy and that of Rabbi Avraham Kook—and thus the “moderate” Rabbi Tau. Therefore, there may be points of common leverage in Ginsburgh’s long-term intellectual heritage, even if his own approach is quite dramatically divergent.

These two case studies thus advance the aim of identifying discursive resources from the deep intellectual roots of key thinkers, complement Rosenak’s (2013) broad survey with two narrower, more systematic analyses, and allow closer scrutiny of his monism–dualism explanatory framework. In addition to achieving the aims mentioned above, the significance of the research herein lies in presenting the first substantial academic analysis of Rabbi Tau’s teachings in the English literature (and the first since the Hitnatkut), the first scholarly exploration of the link between Ginsburgh’s teachings and the tag mechir (price tag) phenomenon among the Hilltop Youth,75 and the first detailed analyses of several key sources by Tau and Ginsburgh.

Before turning to an overview of the thesis structure, some caveats are in order about the contribution of this thesis to scholarship on the broader settler movement, as opposed to its intellectual elite. Qualitative analysis is generally unable to address questions of degree or extent, e.g., for what proportion of the settler community are the documentary findings relevant? As noted by one constructive critic: “While often denying the need for quantification, qualitative researchers frequently make quantitative judgments about intensity of commitment or belief, about the distribution of perspectives across categories of actor, about the frequency of particular sorts of action or event, and so on” (Hammersley 2008, 36), and such judgments require quantitative measures.76 It is impossible for me to judge, for example, how broadly resonant the meaning systems of Tau or Ginsburgh are among the broader settler public, even where there appears to be a transparent link between the rabbi’s ideology and the followers’ political practice. A further challenge is maximizing the reliability of one’s findings. Qualitative case studies in particular have been criticized for “anecdotalism”—presenting excerpts from subjects’ anecdotes (oral or documentary) as compelling evidence for more general conclusions about a group without proving the quotes’

75 Published in Satherley (2013). See Chapter 6.
76 Many social sciences scholars advocate integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, e.g., Glaser and Strauss (1967, 15–8), Seale (1999, 119–39), Silverman (2005, 11–2); such methodological pluralism also has advocates among social historians, e.g., Fairburn (1999, 145–76).
representativeness (see Silverman 2005, 212–15, 377). This is equally a danger here, and the findings should not be generalized to the broader community without further investigation. Lastly, Docherty notes the need for “looking at what people do as well as what they say” and examining “multiple information sources” to check whether a story is idiosyncratic rather than legitimized by the group (Docherty 2001, 76), and that there are limits to our ability to fully grasp a worldview, as it comprises “lived answers rather than articulated principles or formulas” (p. 51). All these points should be borne in mind, and signal the need for caution and complementary research if extending this work to broad social domains.

**Guide to the thesis structure**

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows. The majority of the thesis focuses on Rabbi Tau. Chapter 2 introduces Tau through the context of religious Zionist discourse on Eretz Yisrael through time, and especially Tau’s apparent reversal of the emphasis on settlement that characterized Gush Emunim. The next chapters analyze Tau’s worldview. Chapter 3 describes the underlying nature and mechanisms of creation and history in his worldview (i.e., *ontology* and *logic*, in the language of Nudler 1993 and Docherty 2001). Chapter 4 explains the special nature and function of *Am Yisrael* in creation and history (with implications for *axiology* and *epistemology*). Chapter 5 presents his theosophical explanation of the errors of secular Israeli politics (e.g., the peace process) and his critique of ‘negative’ settler politics opposing it (linking *ontology*, *axiology*, *epistemology*, and *ethic*). It also presents his model of ‘positive’ politics, published in response to the violence of settler–police confrontations during the Amona evacuation (*axiology* and *ethic*).

As noted above, the discussion of limitations contextualizes the thesis’s second focus, Rabbi Ginsburgh, as a counterpoint. Ginsburgh is an influential ideologue among precisely those settler youth for whom *mamlakhtiyut* has become a dirty word. The next few chapters turn to Rabbi Ginsburgh and the *Od Yosef Chai* yeshiva as one of the ideological influences in the Hilltop Youth milieu, and as a counterpoint to Tau

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77 Tau characterizes his stance differently.

78 The Jewish people.

particularly on the question of violent activism. Chapter 6 introduces the Hilltop Youth—generally considered the most politically and practically radical group within the settler community—and the connection with *Yeshivat Od Yosef Chai* (Ginsburgh’s yeshiva). This includes a description of the price tag movement and accusations regarding the yeshiva’s involvement. Chapter 7 describes Ginsburgh’s theosophical worldview (grounded in his interpretation of Kabbalah) and illustrates how it informs his political stance. Chapter 8 presents a general discussion that integrates the work.

The thesis also includes two appendices. Appendix 1 explains the roots of concepts used in these discourses, such as kabbalistic metaphysics, Judah Halevi’s *Kuzari*, the doctrine of *shevirat ha-keilim*80 of Isaac Luria, and the debate between Maimonides and Nachmanides (the RaMBaM and RaMBaN) on the commandments to settle and conquer *Eretz Yisrael*. As this context is supplementary to the thesis’s core arguments, I have included only minimal explanations of such details in the main text’s footnotes.

Appendix 2 contains fuller examples of Tau’s rhetoric than was possible within the confines of the main text, including key metaphors and a lengthier account of his response to the *Hitnatkut*. While these do not add substantial insight to his worldview, they furnish an opportunity to see a faithful reproduction of his rhetorical style. This appendix also explains the relationship between mundane and metaphysical repentance in the thought of Tau and Avraham Kook—an interesting nuance, and useful for clarifying their ontologies, but tangential to the main task of the thesis.

80 “The breaking of the vessels.”
Chapter 2

“Fundamental precept” or “a detail”? Settlement of the Greater Land of Israel in Tau’s worldview and the history of religious Zionism

Introduction

Rabbi Tau and mamlakhtiyut

Tzvi Yisrael Tau was born in Vienna as Hans Thau in 1937 to professional, moderately religious parents. The family fled to Holland after the 1938 annexation of Austria by Germany. After completing earlier secular education in Europe, Tau immigrated to Israel in 1956. He first studied in a yeshiva at Yeshivat Ha-Darom\(^1\) under Rabbi Yehuda Amital—a famed “moderate” interpreter of Avraham Kook. Here he encountered Kook’s writings, and progressed to study at the flagship religious Zionist yeshiva, Merkaz Ha-Rav, where he distinguished himself as a talmid chacham\(^2\) of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. After Kook’s death in 1982, Tau narrowly missed being appointed the new rosh yeshiva, declining to publically challenge rabbis Avraham Shapira and Sha’ul Yisraeli, despite allegedly enjoying majority support. The leadership tensions were not eliminated, and in 1997 Tau led most of the senior teaching staff of Merkaz Ha-Rav in a break-away movement to found Yeshivat Har Ha-Mor, \(^3\) nominally because of pedagogical arguments with Shapira.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Yeshiva of the South.

\(^2\) Wise student.

\(^3\) The “Mountain of Myrrh” yeshiva, a reference to Song of Songs 4:6.

\(^4\) In a nutshell, Tau opposed the teaching of any secular studies at the yeshiva (even in a nominally separate teaching college). This has been analyzed in terms of Tau’s metaphysics; see Rosen-Zvi (2003), Geiger (2013,
Har Ha-Mor remains one of the leading mamlakhti (statist) yeshivot⁵; that is, it gives ideological leadership to religious Zionists who maintain that the state of Israel is holy and represents the seed of the coming messianic era, despite what are considered gross policy errors, such as the Hitnatkut.⁶ Tau is the pre-eminent intellectual among a cluster of mamlakhti yeshivot known as Yeshivot Ha-Kav (yeshivot of the line)—an appellation referencing their common “ideological line,” defined in the teachings of Tau and his student–colleague Rabbi Shlomo Aviner (of Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim⁷).

I have found no quantitative estimates as to the influence of Yeshivot Ha-Kav among the broader settler and religious Zionist public compared with their opponents. However, they unambiguously represent a substantial bloc, and Tau’s voice seems to be accorded respect, if not agreement, because of his intellectual status. Don-Yehiya thus described him as “one of the most revered spiritual leaders of the Merkaz Harav School” (Don-Yehiya 2014, 252), and Hellinger as “the most outstanding theological and ideological figure in the Merkaz [Ha-Rav] world… [and] the most influential rabbinical figure among R. Zvi Yehuda’s students and followers today… Undoubtedly, as far as his influence is concerned, R. Tau is one of the most eminent thinkers and educators in Israel today” (Hellinger 2008, 534 and 543; original emphasis). Consistent with this esteem, the International Crisis Group (2013, 7–8) surmised that Tau’s opinions carried substantial weight in settler political discussions.⁸ However, as will be seen in this chapter, his opponents are numerous, and not limited to such prestigious figures as former chief rabbi Avraham Shapira.

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⁵ Note that in Roth’s (2014) typology, the ideological line I am denoting by this term is called hyper-mamlakhtiyut in that it does not accept a clean distinction between the sanctity of the state and that of the government of the time. Roth’s typology is discussed later in this chapter.

⁶ For a concise explanation of the locus of this stance in the spectrum of contemporary settler politics, see International Crisis Group (2013, 7–8), Roth (2014, 72–83).

⁷ The priests’ crown yeshiva.

⁸ However, this seems to be based on an interview with a single anonymous rabbi, who may well be a supporter of Tau. By contrast, Roth’s (2014) account of campaign planning by the settlers’ political leadership prior to the Hitnatkut suggests overall that Tau’s voice, usually mediated via Aviner, was present in a number of key discussions but not dominant. Moreover, the key principles chosen to define the boundaries of acceptable protest departed from Tau and Aviner’s stance, she argues, by differentiating between the sanctity of the state and the lack thereof of the Sharon government, although her assessment is that this was the only key ideological difference (see Roth 2014, 277–82).
Literature on Tau

Most literature addressing Tau does not progress beyond a brief mention, usually along with Aviner, as a “moderate” or the leading example of *mamlakhtiyyut* (e.g., Aran 1987, 309–11; Bick 2007; Dombrovski 2012, 250; Don-Yehiya 2003, 205–12, 25; Inbari 2007; Rosenak 2008; Schwartz 2012, 7). While accurate, these do not yield deep insight into his theosophy. Tau has also been frequently noted for his impassioned criticism of the Jewish Underground terrorist cell (e.g., Don-Yehiya 2014; Fischer 2009; Inbari 2012, 56; Ravitzky 1996; see too Segal 1988).10

Works that analyze Tau’s theosophical worldview, rather than merely mentioning his “moderate,” “political” positions11 are limited. Don-Yehiya (2003, 205–12, 25) addresses Tau’s response to the Oslo withdrawal, without presenting much theosophical context. He also utilizes the analytic frame criticized in Chapter 1: Tau and colleagues are “moderates,” their opponents are “extremists,” and both camps are examples of coping strategies by “fundamentalist” actors in crises of faith.12 Inbari’s (2012) analysis of religious Zionism’s confrontations with Israeli territorial compromise correctly identifies some key components of Tau’s worldview: namely, his dialectical view of history and conception of messianic redemption as a protracted process (pp. 67–8).13 However, the emphasis in Inbari’s analysis is on the more characteristically “fundamentalist”14 aspects of Tau’s thought—his strong criticism of the secular lifestyle and calls for deeper engagement with Torah and mystical learning through “the construction of enclaves” (p. 70) so characteristic of fundamentalist movements (Almond, Appleby, & Sivan 2003, 23–89).15 Inbari frames this as a coping strategy “in response to the fear of a failure of faith” (Inbari 2012, 70).

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9 Because of the pair’s public calls for cooperation with the authorities during the Sinai withdrawal, Oslo, or *Hitnatkut*.

10 As shown in later chapters, one can glean key insights into Tau’s monistic worldview through even these limited treatments; however, this requires creative reframing through a new analytic context.

11 Which I submit are more properly understood as religious positions—and also far from “moderate,” if judged on Tau’s own terms.


13 See Chapter 3 of this thesis.

14 A frame Inbari acknowledges on p. 69.

15 On isolation and openness in religious Zionism, see generally Schwartz (2002, 137–51); see too Sagi (2003b, 2000). On Tau’s call for enclaves devoted to pure Torah study, see too, e.g., Schwartz (2001, 136–8).
Limited discussions of Tau’s theosophy, without the problematic mediating frames mentioned above, can be found in Hellinger (2008), Schwartz (2001), Roth (2014), Rosenak (2013), Achituv (2006), and Fischer (2009).\textsuperscript{16}

Hellinger’s (2008, 543–6) review of religious Zionist intellectual history presents an accurate summary of key aspects of Tau’s thought on \textit{Am Yisrael} and the root of leftist government policies in the deficient spiritual consciousness in the nation.\textsuperscript{17} While these key dimensions are identified correctly, the treatment of these issues is extremely brief, and the underlying logical connections between them are not fully explained in the broader context of Tau’s teachings.

Schwartz (2001, 93–103) analyzes Tau’s response to the Oslo process as a reorientation from Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s focus on historical–political signs of redemption, toward a focus on redemption’s inner, “hidden” dimensions.\textsuperscript{18} He notes the importance of dialectic models in the logic of Tau’s worldview, his prioritization of Jewish unity over the retention of territory, his deterministic model of slow, gradual redemption, and his innovative emphasis on consciousness. Again, though accurate, the treatment is extremely concise and does not aspire to be systematic.

As for Roth (2014), as noted in Chapter 1, her focus is historical and ethnographic rather than textual, and anchored in specific details of the \textit{Hitnatkut}, rather than presenting an encompassing worldview analysis. However, she does offer a sound analysis of the key components of \textit{mamlakhti} theology (pp. 44–67), which she argues is common across the religious Zionist spectrum (with cleavages emerging only in the domain of practical implementation, or ethic). Roth also maps the translation of \textit{mamlakhti} theosophical values into operational principles that defined the boundaries of acceptable protest leading up to the \textit{Hitnatkut} (pp. 277–82). She divides the allegedly overarching \textit{mamlakhti} approach into three substreams. At the poles, she places “hyper-\textit{mamlakhtiyut}” (Tau and Aviner’s stream), which held that veneration of the state also demanded veneration of the government and thus cooperation (pp. 72–6)\textsuperscript{19}; and “crisis \textit{mamlakhtiyut},” which sought to push opposition to the government to the maximum extent ethically permissible (characterizing Tau and Aviner’s major opponents during

\textsuperscript{16} Loosely in order of utility for this thesis. There are also occasional references to Tau in Garb (2009) but no substantive discussion.

\textsuperscript{17} See Chapters 5 and Chapter 6 of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{18} Schwartz (2001, 94) sees this as a return to the approach of Avraham Kook.

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Don-Yehiya (2014, 259).
the Hitnatkut; pp. 76–81). The latter stream, for instance, advocated civil disobedience and encouraging soldiers to disobey orders to implement the Hitnatkut (pp. 305–17). In the middle was a “central stream” (pp. 81–3).20 Tau’s thought is not probed beyond the extent needed to justify the above categorization into substreams.

Rosenak’s (2013) descriptions of Tau’s thought are more thoroughly developed and critical, but scattered passim. Thus, for instance, he variously discusses Tau’s stance on the distinction between Am Yisrael and the nations (pp. 91–2), his criticism of the erev rav slur21 in religious right-wing politics (pp. 187–9), his conceptualization of Yeshivat Har Ha-Mor as the spiritual heart of the nation (pp. 100–102), and the role of national consciousness in messianic redemption (pp. 138–41, 202–3). He also analyzes two key metaphors used to express the gradual, dialectical pattern of redemption in Tau’s thought (pp. 147–54). However, Rosenak does not present a detailed or cohesive analysis of Tau’s worldview in its own right. On the other hand, the strengths of this work are its grounding in detailed knowledge of Rabbi Avraham Kook’s corpus, and Rosenak’s ability to engage with religious Zionist rabbis’ theopolitics on their own theosophical terms, but without the overly sympathetic tint of Roth’s (2014) work.22

The literature contains no stand-alone study of Tau in his own right except for Achituv (2006)—an excellent account of Tau’s original analysis on the Palestinians as a mechanism in the dialectic of Jewish history.23 Its scope is unfortunately limited to this one element of Tau’s thought; however, it is a useful analysis, and I draw on it in later chapters. Moreover, Achituv explicitly acknowledges the impossibility of understanding how Tau’s analysis reflects a form of “rational” reasoning without a grounding in his broader, coherent worldview, of which he includes a potted summary (p. 151). He identifies four pillars of Tau’s worldview: an immanent conception of divinity (close to that of Chabad Hasidism)24; the interpretation of all the events of the time as part of the process of messianic redemption; the epistemological assumption that historical events and their interpretation by great spiritual teachers are valid signs of redemption; the

20 Although this analysis is sound, for simplicity I have retained the basic appellation mamlakhti for what Roth calls hyper-mamlakhti, as the latter term will be unfamiliar for most readers.
21 See Chapter 1, note 39.
22 Roth became an observant religious Zionist and ran for election with the settler party, the Jewish Home, in the most recent Israeli elections.
23 See Chapter 4 of this thesis.
identification of the teachings of the Vilna Gaon\textsuperscript{25} and the rabbis Kook as primary textual authorities.

The other analysis closest to the current project is Fischer (2009), which analyzes the schisms within the religious Zionist camp in terms of two distinct religious cultures with allegedly different relationships not just to the state but to broader concepts such as religious authority, practice, and knowledge. The linkage between Fischer’s analytic frame and the worldview frame I utilize herein is straightforward, as Fischer explicitly focuses on epistemological and ethical questions faced by religious Zionism,\textsuperscript{26} and argues that the cultural division depends on the hierarchy between two core components of Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s theo-nationalist values system (i.e., axiology). These are: i) the central importance of “the general will” of the nation\textsuperscript{27} (with the true, inner content of this will being the desire to attain messianic redemption, according to religious Zionists)\textsuperscript{28}; and ii) the value of the State of Israel as a “divine state” or expression of the divine will.

Fischer’s theory is that the territorial concessions of the 1970s onward introduced a tension between these previously aligned values. The \textit{mamlakhti} camp’s axiology prioritized the value of the state as a divine creation, leading to an ethic opposed to interventions in divine providence that might threaten the state’s cohesion (e.g., the plan by the Underground to blow up the Dome of the Rock). The “revolutionary” camp, by contrast, prioritized the general will (as conceived by this camp’s adherents—that is, the desire for messianic redemption). This led to an ethic that prioritized action to realize that will, from the bottom up, rather than waiting for divine providence to act from the top down. Fischer argues that Tau’s thought (like that of the rabbis Kook) shows “expressivist” tendencies characteristic of 19th century European romanticism, by prioritizing God’s self-expression through history and thus the overriding value of the state of Israel as a divine creation, even if its government’s policies do not reflect the supposed “general will.” His analysis is useful, though brief (coverage of Tau spans only pp. 31–36). However, I question whether this is the most compelling frame within

\textsuperscript{25} Note that this emphasis is specific to Tau’s \textit{Nehalta Be-Azkha} on the Palestinians as neo-Philistines and is not a prominent feature across Tau’s corpus; therefore, I would argue that it is not as fundamental to Tau’s worldview as implied by Achituv.

\textsuperscript{26} How is it possible to know God’s will, and how to realize it?

\textsuperscript{27} E.g., \textit{ratzon ha’am} (the will of the nation) or \textit{ru’ach ha’am} (the spirit of the nation).

\textsuperscript{28} See Appendix 2.
which to understand religious Zionism. In particular, Fischer’s extended exercise in classifying religious Zionist rabbis’ thought into Western European philosophical typologies (e.g., using Weber and Nietzsche) feels rather forced.

**Overview of the chapter**

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. The next section introduces in basic terms the messianic theosophy of Rabbi Avraham Kook, focusing on the status of Eretz Yisrael in his thought. Next, the chapter describes the evolution of Kookian religious Zionist thinking in the hands of Tzvi Yehuda Kook and the settler movement, Gush Emunim. I go on to describe the challenges to the mamlakhti orientation over the decades since the 1970s, including Tau’s response to the Sinai withdrawal, the uncovering of the Jewish Underground terror cell, the Oslo process, and the Hitnatkut. The next section summarizes the limited importance of the settlement project in Tau’s axiology. The chapter concludes by extracting and organizing elements of Tau’s mamlakhti worldview with potential as “discursive resources.” This chapter also serves to contextualize Tau in religious Zionist history.  

**Avraham Kook**

**Brief historical introduction**

The teachings of Avraham Kook are the foundation stone of settler religious Zionism. He was a remarkably original and complex thinker. Drawing extensively upon the theosophies of Halevi and Nachmanides, and upon Kabbalah’s schema of Am and Eretz Yisrael’s metaphysical status and cosmic role in tikkun ha-olam, as discussed in Appendix 1, Avraham Kook developed an innovative theosophy that subsumed secular

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29 However, my purpose is not to write an authoritative history of the settler movement or present an original or critical analysis of the thought of the rabbis Kook.

30 The Kooks’ mystical school of thought came to prevail in the religious Zionism of the settler movement over the nationalist-rational school promoted by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines and the Mizrachi movement in the early days of religious Zionism (see, e.g., Goldwater 2009, 89–113).

31 In the assessment of Marvin Fox, for instance, Kook “was, by the most rigorous standards, one of the most interesting and creative Jewish thinkers of this century” (Fox 2003, 123).

32 The rectification of creation. See Appendix 1 on the kabbalistic origins of the concept—now much popularized—of tikkun (repair; see generally Hallamish 1999, 234–41; Idel 2002, 130–1; Rosenthal 2005, 214–40; Scholem 1961[1941], 233). Loosely, tikkun denotes the process by which earthly deeds serve to repair the cosmic imbalances or faults in creation at the root of sin. Appendix 1 also presents lurianic Kabbalah’s doctrine of shevirat ha-keilim or the breaking of the vessels (why tikkun is needed).
Zionism in a divine historical meta-narrative of messianic redemption. Ravitzky (1996, 86), for example, credits Kook with the first full articulation of the “redemptionist” Zionist position; that is, the view that modern Zionism and Jewish Aliyah to Israel both constituted and was a consequence of the mystical redemptive process leading to the imminent arrival of the Messiah, reading modern Jewish and Israeli history as a Halevian meta-narrative of God’s manifestation on earth. Kook’s thesis was that secular Zionism was an unwitting agent of the divine will to ingather the exiles to Eretz Yisrael in preparation for the messianic age.

A short but explosive collection of Kook’s writings was edited and published in 1920 by his son, Tzvi Yehuda, under the title Orot (“Lights”). This collection will often serve as a reference point when contextualizing Tau’s work. This tiny book created an uproar because of Kook’s assertion that the godless, heretical Zionists of Herzl’s ilk were a divinely inspired tool of messianic prophecy, and that the mundane work of nation-building was as sacred as prayer and Torah study—preposterous claims in the eyes of most Orthodox. The two most senior Jerusalem rabbis castigated Orot as “poison” (see Naor 1993, 14–5). By contrast, Tzvi Yehuda described it as the “holy of holies” among his father’s teachings (Naor 1993, 63–4). Despite this and many other controversies, in 1921 Kook was made chief Ashkenazi rabbi of the Jewish community in Mandate Palestine. He founded the yeshiva Merkaz Ha-Rav Kook (“the Rabbi Kook Centre”, usually called just Merkaz Ha-Rav) in

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33 Immigration; literally, “ascension.”
34 See too Ratzabi (2008).
35 On Halevi’s interpretation of Jewish history as an expression and proof of divine will on earth, see Appendix 1. Kook’s epistemology, based on Halevi, posits that one can see “the hand of the Lord God of Israel in all the changes of the times ... Whenever there are revealed incidents and events, concepts and thoughts, to raise the banner of hastening redemption and salvation, whether it be physical or spiritual, the intellect recognizes the light of the Living Lord manifest in them” (Orot Me’Ofel, Israel VeTehiyato XII).
36 Apart from the relevance of its content, a practical reason for this focus is that Orot was one of only three works published while Kook’s was still alive, and although his son’s ‘textual and editorial changes are extensive, ... R. Kook saw the published work, examined it, and, as far as is known, said nothing critical about the nature of the editing’ (Rosenak 2007, 146). With most other works, the implications of posthumous editing for the integrity of Kook’s writings are unknown and, as yet, unknowable.
37 Critics were quick to point out the challenge to Kook’s redemptive narrative posed by the Zionist movement’s own indifference or hostility to traditional Judaism and its vociferous rejection of any messianic claims made for it (Bokser 1978, 10; Ratzabi 2008, 117). The movement was at best agnostic or indifferent to religion, and at worst full of atheists and borderline apostates who had bought into European socialism and a scientific rejection of religion as primitive, dark superstition. Kook parried these challenges on a variety of fronts (see, e.g., Ross 1996, 77–110), including “stretching the halakhic possibilities of toleration for heretics to the maximum” (p. 79).
38 In his introduction to the 1950 edition of Orot.
39 Formally, the Central World Yeshiva.
Jerusalem in 1924. This yeshiva ‘taught the teachers’ of the majority of religious Zionist yeshivas subsequently founded, as well as the leading ideologues of Gush Emunim (see the later sections of this chapter). Kook died in Jerusalem in 1935, missing the tumult of the Second World War and the Sho’ah, and the founding of the state of Israel. Tzvi Yehuda took over as rosh yeshiva at Merkaz Ha-Rav in 1952.

**On Eretz Yisrael**

Kook saw the Land as a “heavenly supernal entity” (Afterman 2007, 120; see too p. 124) with an intrinsic divine character (Yaron 1991, 208–210). It was not merely “territory” or a means of achieving the secular Zionist vision of a national home. Moreover, for Kook, the holiness of the Jewish people and that of the land were inextricably linked: “Each individual of Israel has his nucleus in the Land of Israel, which is stored in the interior of his spirit with enormous longing and love” (Yisrael U-Techiyato XXX; see too Samson & Fishman 1995, 8–9). Thus, the land’s sanctity did not depend in any way on the performance of mitzvot by Jews within its borders (Yaron 1991, 212–3); the very earth was divine (Schwartz 2000, 180):

“The Land of Israel is an essential unit bound by the bond-of-life to the People, united by inner [holy/chosen] characteristics ['segulot’ in the Hebrew] to its existence. ... The view of the Land of Israel as only an external value ... even when it comes only ... to strengthen faith, fear (of God) and observance of mitzvot (commandments) ... bears no permanent fruit, for this foundation is shaky compared to the holy might of the Land of Israel” (Orot Eretz Yisrael I, 89–90).

Moreover, Kook’s framework supposed that the vitality of the people and even the Torah was rooted in the land (Goldwater 2009, 134). Accordingly, the People of Israel

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40 Yaron (1991, 3–4; and on Kook’s unrealized vision for the program of this yeshiva, see pp. 176–9).
41 The Holocaust.
42 Head of the yeshiva.
43 Commandments. Cf. the stance of Maimonides, as described in Appendix 1.
44 This followed the Kabbalah of Nachmanides and differed from the rationalist conception commonly attributed to Maimonides, for whom (on a superficial reading) the Land was important only because Jews needed to fulfill the mitzvot relating to land use, the Temple, and so on. See Appendix 1.
and their religion *need* the Land of Israel (*Ma’amarei ha-re’aiya: Yerushalayim*, 298). Without it, Judaism becomes impotent:

“Were it not for the nourishment it receives from the dew-of-life of the sanctity of the Land of Israel, Judaism in exile would really have no actual basis... only vision of the heart... Judaism in exile goes down drastically, and there is no hope for it other than planting it in the source of life, real life, of essential holiness, which may be found only in the Land of Israel. ... The real life of sanctity of Judaism cannot be revealed other than by the People’s return to its land, which is the way paved for its renascence” (*Orot Ha-Techiyah* VIII).

These notions also lead to a negation of the merits of Diaspora Judaism.\(^{46}\) Don-Yehiya examined Kook’s dismissal of *galut*\(^{47}\) as “a defective and alienated existence characterized by decline, narrowness, displacement, seclusion and weakness” (Don-Yehiya 1992, 130–1; see too Schwartz 2000, 180–1).\(^{48}\) For Kook, the Torah of the Diaspora deals with the temporary, material, fragmented, and individualistic; the superior Torah of the Land of Israel is eternal, sublime, focused, and concerned with the national collective, and it is *this* Torah that must be renewed to facilitate the flourishing of Jewish creative thought (*Ma’amarei: Torat Eretz Yisrael*, 78–9).\(^{49}\)

Furthermore, according to Kook, the Land’s spiritual climate is especially conducive to a Torah lifestyle, authentic Jewish reasoning and vision, and the emergence of prophecy: “It is impossible for a Jew to be faithful to his thoughts and visions outside the Land. ... Manifestations of holiness, of whatever level, tend to be pure in the Land, and outside the Land, mixed with dross” (Rosenak 2007, 138; see *Orot Eretz Yisrael* III–V).\(^{50}\) In Kook’s words, “The imagination of the Land of Israel is pure and clear and suited for the appearance of divine truth... ready for the explication of prophecy and its lights, for the shining of divine inspiration and its brightness. The imagination that is in

\(^{46}\) This stance was not taken only by Kook’s followers; see Schwartz (2000, 176–7) for a discussion of other religious Zionists’ articulation of this idea.

\(^{47}\) The Diaspora.

\(^{48}\) On the continuation of this pattern with Tzvi Yehuda Kook, see Schwartz (2001, 23–37).

\(^{49}\) Accordingly, it religious Zionist settlers commonly critique proponents of territorial concessions as confused by a misguided, Diasporic version of Judaism.

\(^{50}\) See too *Orot Eretz Yisrael* VII on the expansion of holy letters and their sefirotic counterparts when Jews are in *Eretz Yisrael*.  

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the Lands of the Nations is murky, mixed with darkness, with shadows of impurity and pollution” (Orot Eretz Yisrael V).  

Kook also sees the Jewish people’s kabbalistic purpose of effecting tikkun via the fulfillment of mitzvot as actualizable only within Eretz Yisrael. For example, Orot Eretz Yisrael VII uses kabbalistic concepts to articulate this mystical connection. In mutual conjunction, Am Yisrael’s fulfillment of the mitzvot of Torat Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael has theurgic effects: it enables a “thunderous power full of a holy flow” gushing between the lower and upper worlds. This enables tikkun through the permeation of the divine essence in the lower realms of creation, a flow of undefiled, godly creative thought from the supernal realms, spreading out from Israel to the rest of the world (Orot Eretz Yisrael III).

These ideas combine to support Kook’s view of renewed Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a process for completing worldly and metaphysical tikkun, the apex of which will be the arrival of the messianic age: “The world will be refined and lit up, will be elevated and illuminated. ... The thing will start with Knesset Yisrael (Ecclesia Israel), residing within the border of the inheritance of Israel” (Yisrael U-Techiyato XXV).

Because of the above mystical significance of Jewish habitation in the Holy Land, Kook followed Nachmanides in elevating the inherent importance of the mitzvah of settlement. Land purchases by the Jewish National Fund were seen by Kook as fulfilling the halakhic imperative of the conquest and settlement of Eretz Yisrael, “whose weight

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51 This is because of the unique Divine Providence that reigns over Eretz Yisrael. God rules all other nations, according to Kook’s followers, through angelic intermediaries, but only in the Land of Israel does God rule directly (Samson and Fishman 1995, 13). There are profound resonances here with the ideas articulated by Nachmanides and Halevi (see the Appendix).

52 See note 32.

53 On the basis for this in the thought of Nachmanides and Maimonides, see the Appendix.

54 The Torah of Israel.

55 I use theurgy to denote religious or ritual practice (rather than intellectual contemplation or a belief system), performed with the intent to effect some spiritual outcome in the divine sphere. Somewhat unconventionally, I use the term here to encompass not merely overtly mystical rituals but also relatively pragmatic acts undertaken in significant measure with intent to achieve some metaphysical purpose; this can include settlement in Judea and Samaria by the devout. This is an intentionally broad usage; cf., for example, the distinction drawn by Loewenthal (1990, 7–12, 20) between theurgic and pneumatic practice.

56 Loosely, from the divine plane to the material plane.

57 In the Land of Israel, Kook asserts, words of Torah receive direct nourishment from Keter (“Crown,” the highest sefirah or emanation in Kabbalah’s scheme of the divine structure) and so, when enacted, become a “cosmic eruption” from the highest sefirah, which represents the unified divine whole. See too Orot Eretz Yisrael VI and VIII. For an explanation of the sefirot and other key kabbalistic concepts, see Appendix 1.

58 On Kook’s adoption of Nachmanides’ halakhic stance vs. that of Maimonides, see Appendix 1.
equals that of all the biblical precepts” (Yaron 1991, 112–3). Kook therefore once bluntly informed Mizrachi leaders (after their failure to persuade the Jewish National Fund to institute Sabbath observance) “that land acquisition was a halachic imperative ‘whose weight equals that of all the other biblical precepts’” (Goldwater 2009, 123, 134); the virtue of settlement outweighed even the sin of Sabbath desecration.

The high value clearly attached to building up the land in Kook’s axiology and ethic arguably contained the seeds of the “politicization” of Tzvi Yehuda Kook and Gush Emunim, and the expansion of settlements as a central, active component of their ethic.

Tzvi Yehuda Kook and Gush Emunim

Brief historical introduction

Avraham Kook’s teachings did not rapidly win many adherents within the broader religious Zionist movement or the Jewish community (Ravitzky 1996, 122; Armstrong 1998, 7). It was the students of Kook’s son, Tzvi Yehuda, who translated these ideas into a concrete political program. The victories of the Six Day War were achieved mere weeks after Tzvi Yehuda gave an impassioned lament at Merkaz Ha-Rav for Israel’s loss of her biblical cities—a speech subsequently seen by his students as prophetic. The 1967 “miracle” triggered a national “messianic fervor,” with the students of Merkaz Ha-Rav at the vanguard (see below). According to the standard scholarly history of the

59 This was a religious Zionist movement in Mandate-era Palestine (and internationally) that pushed for the observance of kashrut and the Sabbath in Zionist institutions. It later became part of the National Religious Party, which in turn merged into today’s Jewish Home party (representing the settlers in Judea and Samaria or the West Bank).

60 See, e.g., Belfer (2001). See Rosenak (2013, 21, 41–3) on problems with this frame; also “Framing the mitnachalim: Critical review of literature on the settlers” in the Introduction of this thesis.

61 In this speech, he described his reaction to the United Nations partition resolution of 1947, accepted by the secular leaders of the yishuv (Jewish settlement): “‘They divided my land!’ he shouted. Then forcefully... he cried, ‘And where is our Hevron?! Do we forget this?! And where is our Schechem?! Do we forget about this?! And where is our Jericho?! Do we forget this too?! And where is our other-side of the Jordan?! Where is each block of earth?! Each part and parcel, and four cubits of Hashem’s [God’s] Land?! Is it in our hands to relinquish any millimeter of this?!... G-d forbid!... And so I couldn’t go out onto the street [to celebrate the partition decision]... when I was so utterly wounded, when I was so cut to pieces. They divided my land!... They divided the Land of Hashem!... Because of political considerations!” (quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 339–340). Schwartz (2001, 99) contrasts this sentiment with Tau’s celebration of the founding of the state (however imperfect) as a necessarily humble start to geulah’s physical manifestation through gradual, natural processes.

62 See, e.g., Auerbach (2009, 80–1).

63 This led to Jewish messianism (for the first time in centuries) having “direct and controversial political implications” (Waxman 1987, 184).
settler movement, 1967 was seen by Tzvi Yehuda as a clear sign that messianic fulfillment was imminent (see especially Aran 1988): Israel no longer stood in the “passageway to redemption” but in the “living room” of its fulfillment (Eisen 2010, 54). Moreover, the mitzvah of settling Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) was imperative to hasten the process.

Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s students at Merkaz Ha-Rav became the operational and ideological core of Gush Emunim; that is, the movement of religious settlement in the newly acquired (or reacquired) territories. As Kook’s students themselves boasted: “The leaders of the Gush Emunim movement... were almost all students of HaRav Tzvi Yehudah…. The people who brought Jewish settlement and Torah back to Judea and Samaria, to places like Bet-El, Shilo, Elon Moreh, Ofra, Gush Etzion, Kiriat Arba, and Hevron, to name just a few, were students of Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah” (Samson & Fishman 1991, xxii and 38).

On Eretz Yisrael

The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 generally portrays Tzvi Yehuda Kook and Gush Emunim as emphasizing the overriding importance of settlement as a means of hastening messianic redemption. This is not an unreasonable portrayal, given the thoroughness of at least some of the early analyses that yielded this interpretation. However, Tzvi Yehuda’s students do not utilize the messianism frame exclusively or simplistically. For example, a 1995 commentary on Orot Eretz Yisrael by rabbis Samson and Fishman, two of Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s students, describes both halakhic and mystical-messianic rationales for settlement, as follows.

In terms of the Halakhah, both rabbis Kook maintained that the “precept of conquering and settling the Land is, in itself, a mitzvah prescribed by the Torah”

64 A great many scholars repeat this narrative, which appears in most of the histories of the settler movement cited in Chapter 1, e.g., Inbari (2007, 698–9), Rosenak (2013, 135–6), Sandler (1996, 140), Schwartz (2003a, 131–2); cf. Don-Yehiya (2014), who argues that the “revolutionary” messianism was intrinsic to Avraham Kook’s work.
65 This speech is repeated in most histories of Gush Emunim. On messianic motives in Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s thought, see especially Schwartz (2001).
66 See especially Sagi (2003a), and for a more nuanced analysis, see Rosenak (2013, 112–8).
67 The Block of the Faithful.
69 Especially Sagi (2003a).
70 I am thinking most particularly of the participant observation study by Gideon Aran (1987) and his subsequent publications.
71 Students of Tzvi Yehuda Kook.
(Samson & Fishman 1991, 112–13). Both followed Nachmanides’ halakhic interpretation whereby the commandment to settle the land was an active commandment equivalent to all other the mitzvot combined, and Tzvi Yehuda reasoned, furthermore, that “one is required to use extreme measures including war and martyrdom to fulfill it” (Afterman 2007, 127). He thus explicitly tied the concept of a war of religious duty, Milchemet Mitzvah, to Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael and its defense: “The Ramban [Nachmanides] clearly determines that conquering the Land of Israel to ensure Jewish sovereignty is the Milchemet Mitzvah of the Torah. This is a precept of the Torah, and there is no way of getting around it… the concrete, living, here-and-now Israel is compelled to hold onto its Land. This precept continues in every generation” (Tzvi Yehuda Kook, quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 174).

This did not, however, render the connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel contingent on enforcement of the Halakhah; the innate people–land–Torah link, per Avraham Kook’s teachings, is asserted as an ontological fact. Tzvi Yehuda Kook asserted that “the soul of the people is the soul of the land and the sanctity of the people is identical with the sanctity of the land” (Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda, “Bereshit”, 135; trans. Hellinger 2008, 541). The metaphysical unity of Am and Eretz Yisrael is at the root of corresponding ethical responsibilities, expressed through halakhic and political requirements. Thus, Tzvi Yehuda Kook described the land and people as “a Divine perfect union... one vital whole” (quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 162), which implied that “the Nation of Israel’s right to the Land of Israel, a heavenly unification, cannot be severed... It is a concrete and real divine fact, a divine arrangement... However, while this is indeed a divine decree, an undisputed divine ruling, it should also be manifested in the earthly realm, through practical and legal arrangements” (Tzvi Yehuda Kook, quoted in Afterman 2007, 127). Kook elaborated further on the implications of this ontological assertion for the status of the territories acquired in 1967:

72 Even more explicitly, he stated: “Tzahal [the IDF]... is a precept of Torah!” needed to fulfill the mitzvah “Come and possess [the land]” (quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 168), and “What is the criterion of a compulsory war [Milchemet Mitzvah]? Its principle meaning is liberating the Land” (quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 169).
“We are inseparably attached to Judea and Samaria... through the eternal bond between the *Am Kadosh* and the *Eretz HaKodesh*\(^{73}\)... There is absolutely no room to entertain thoughts of relinquishing even a single square meter of Hashem’s\(^{74}\) inheritance to us. There is not to be any blemish in our borders, G-d forbid. We are to battle for this to the end, without any surrender at all. … Anyone who prevents a Jew from settling in the Land, he is the one committing the illegal act… These Lands belong to us from the days of Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov. They are the inheritance of our many millions of brothers around the world… [and] the Jews who will come after us as well… People elevated to be leaders of Israel have no legal right to tamper with these borders... In our time, weakheartedness is as forbidden as pork. We must forsake all proposals of withdrawal, autonomy, federations, and the like. We are all commanded to be valorous and bold… We have absolutely no right to relinquish control over any piece of *Eretz Yisrael*... And we are not allowed to make a tiny mini-state and call it *Eretz Yisrael*, G-d forbid” (quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 180–189 *passim*).

Statements by Kook’s students imply an additional meaning frame around his support for settlements, resonant with a Halevian conception of Jewish history as a revelation of God in the world.\(^{75}\) Rabbi Samson reported: “because of the attention it drew, the settlement of Judea and Samaria was a lecture delivered to the world, announcing that the Jewish people had come home to Israel… Each new settlement in Israel is a witness to the eternal choseness of Am Israel, to the truth of Torah, and to the word of Hashem and his prophets” (Samson & Fishman 1991, 352). He relates that at the founding of Shilo, “First of all, he [Kook] wanted to make clear that this gathering on a mountain in Samaria, and our coming to Shilo, was for the sake of Heaven, in the performance of a Torah commandment, and in the fulfillment of a prophecy. The settlement of the Land of Israel is not a capricious adventure, nor the arrogance of extremist settlers, but a completely holy act… a manifestation of Hashem in the world, a revelation of the return of the Divine Presence to Zion” (Samson & Fishman 1991, 360).

\(^{73}\) The Holy People and the Holy Land, respectively.

\(^{74}\) God’s.

\(^{75}\) See the previous section and Appendix 1.
Mamlakhtiyut and its erosion

The rabbis Kook

As noted, Avraham Kook’s reading of Jewish history as a manifestation of the divine will led him to read messianic import into the Zionist movement. For Kook, Zionism was “inherently sacred and exalted [because]… in everything that helps in the building of the land and strengthening the nation there is the hidden word of God for the rebirth of the sacred and of the Holy Land” (Ma’amarei, 257–9; trans. Goldwater 2009, 133).

Unlike his father, Tzvi Yehuda Kook lived to see the Zionist vision bear fruit in the birth of an actual state. Avraham Kook’s theosophical linkage between Zionism and the expectations of an authentic Judaism in Eretz Yisrael and messianic fulfillment,76 led to a conflation of Judaism and Israeli nationalism in the thought of his son. Thus, Rabbi Samson explained how “[a]t Rav Kook’s Yeshiva, we learned that the Torah is not just a Divine moral code and a system of ritual practices. Torah is a national constitution, a Divine cosmic and national law, embodied in a Divinely-chosen community, and fulfilled in a Divinely-chosen Land. A Divine community with a real government, a real army, a real economy, and all of the other down-to-earth aspects of normal, national life” (Samson & Fishman 1991, 104). As explained by Ravitzky:

“Here we have the image of the Jewish state as an integral theopolitical whole… we may say that in this concept religious faith sanctifies the sociopolitical structure, transferring it to the realm of the absolute and thereby bestowing upon in a transcendent validity. Inevitably, the concrete actions of the Jewish state too become hallowed… Israel’s wars, too, come to be seen not merely in terms of national survival… or reclaiming the land. They are portrayed in ethical and theological terms, as a mighty struggle to uproot evil and achieve universal rectification” (Ravitzky 1996, 83)

And indeed, the apparatus of the state—such as the Knesset and army—were conceived as religious sancta by Tzvi Yehuda Kook (Hellinger 2008, 542), and their strengthening and entering into force were moreover seen as having metaphysical value as part of the redemptive process (Achituv 2006, 147). He taught, for instance, that the prime minister

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76 On religious Zionism as “religious nationalism,” see generally Schwartz (2002, 156–92), and as mystical nationalism, see Garb (2009, 37–51).
was like an “angel” (see Tau’s Zekhero, 77). Merkaz Ha-Rav thus observed “secular” national festivals such as Israel’s Independence Day as religious festivals, and mandated daily prayers for the wellbeing of the state by students. Such ideas and practices form the basis for the appellation mamlakhti (statist) to describe religious Zionist yeshivot that continue to acknowledge the state as an essential component of the messianic process, thus meriting the veneration and service of the faithful. The literature contains abundant examples of Kook’s euphoric prose on the state, its divine power rooted in the special relationship between Jews and God (see Chapter 4), and the inevitability of its advance toward the prophesied glories of the messianic era. For example:

“The State of Israel is divine... Not only must there be no retreat from [a single] kilometre of the Land of Israel, God forbid, but on the contrary, we shall conquer and liberate more and more, as much in the spiritual [as in the physical] sense... We are stronger than America, stronger than Russia... our position in the world, the world of history, the cosmic world, is stronger and more secure in its timelessness than theirs. There are nations that know this, and there are nations of uncircumcised hearts that do not know it, but they shall gradually come to know it!” (quoted in Afterman 2007, 96).

Until the 1970s, Tzvi Yehuda Kook considered the state, though flawed in some details (such as its secularism), to be “intrinsicly holy and without blemish. It is a supernal, heavenly realisation of ‘He restores His presence in Zion.’ All the rest is details, trivia, minor problems and complications” (quoted in Afterman 2007, 97). But from the 1973 Yom Kippur War onward, Kook felt increasingly frustrated with the authorities’ inconsistent support for Gush Emunim settlements and the government’s conciliatory leanings toward Israel’s Arab neighbors. The planned withdrawal from Sinai under the 1978 Egypt–Israel Camp David Accords 77 severely challenged mamlakhtiyyut. 78 Kook declared that “[w]hen the government betrays the People, their Land and life, it is no wonder that the nation... does not sense any connection to this government,” and moreover he declared that every Jew had a duty to oppose any such “act of treason” even if it meant mesirat nefesh 79 (quoted in Afterman 2007, 128).

77 Kook himself died before the Sinai evacuation was implemented.
78 This is analyzed in many sources. As an example, see Bick (2007, 312–3).
79 Martyrdom.
Kook expressed such sentiments in the strongest possible language. He referred to “the stupidity and evil of the disgusting and confused act of betrayal and idiocy that is the abandonment of our Land of life and its transferral into the hands of gentiles” (quoted p. 129). However, if the prospective handover of Sinai was offensive to Kook, murmurings putting the future of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) in question, as well as the evacuation of settlements therein, provoked diatribes interpreted by many as threats of sedition. Kook “did not shy away from calling for an armed revolt against the government of Israel... [He said:] ‘There will be an internal war over Judea and Samaria. And when the entire nation rebels against this government, I will, of course, be on the People’s side, on the side of the word of God of Israel and His promise to His people, not that of the failed government’” (quoted p. 129). This would seem to amount to devaluation of the state; i.e., an axiology in which Eretz Yisrael is more important than the state of Israel. But even this apparently uncompromising declaration is amenable to qualification through the meaning frames utilized by Tau—without stepping outside the worldview or symbolic vocabulary of Kookian religious Zionism.

Kook’s statements in the 1970s indicate an unresolved tension between veneration of the state as an institution and fierce opposition to government policies. Despite his opposition to settlement evacuations, Kook allegedly “always ordered his students never to resist, either forcefully, or passively, a command from an Israeli soldier... our government and army are Kadosh. They are Hashem’s agents in bringing us back to our Land. It is forbidden to harm them, or resist them at all” (Samson & Fishman 1991, 353). He also made comments apparently differentiating between the government as an institution and specific abhorrent policies, and “emphasized that settlement is to be achieved with the support of the government, and not by adopting a course of action

\[80\] The 1974 speech at Merkaz Ha-Rav translated by Hellinger is even more explicit. ‘The obligation, ‘And you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell in it’ (Num. 33, 53) requires that the land be ... clearly and decisively kelal Yisraelet, entirely in Jewish hands, that to this land, with all of its borders, we are to be committed to the extent of self-sacrifice in case of coercion, whether on the part of the gentiles, or – God forbid – on the part of Jews, because of perverted politics and perverted views. We must all be killed rather than transgress! As far as Judea and Samaria and the Golan Heights are concerned – this shall not happen without a war! I was asked whether I am willing to engage in a ‘civil war’. I don’t want to get involved in terminology and I’m not going to name this thing, but it is a fact: this is not going to work, this is not going to happen without a war! Over our dead bodies! There’s no way that either the gentiles or political entanglements of our own can make it work!’ (EZ, p.25; emphasis in the original) (Hellinger 2008, 452; the citation is from Eretz Ha-Tzvi [ed. Melamed]).

\[81\] Holy.

\[82\] God’s.
against it... While it is proper to protest against details of government policy... it is forbidden to be opposed to the government of Israel itself” (p. 354).

On the other hand, separate statements can and have been read as implying that this endorsement was conditional upon the government’s role as an instrument to establish Jewish sovereignty over the whole Land of Israel. Kook declared that “[a]ny government policy in regard to the settlement of Eretz Israel which went against the Torah and Halacha were [sic] null and void” (p. 358), and that government policies could not override the mitzvah to settle. He insisted: “All types of ‘Agreements’ concerning sections of Israel, the Land of our Life, are null and void like the dust of the earth, and less substantive than this... it has no substance and does not exist... Any coercion to transgress this command [to settle]... whether on the part of the Israeli government, or on the part of a gentile government, obligates us to rise up against it with all our life and souls” (quoted ibid.).

Tzvi Yehuda Kook passed away in March 1982, when the evacuation of Jewish settlements from the Sinai Peninsula was imminent.

**Mamlakhti religious Zionism, from the Sinai withdrawal to the Hitnatkut**

A mere month after Kook’s passing, Yamit was forcefully evacuated as part of the handover of the Sinai to Egypt. Tau sought to curb appeals to Kook’s apparent ‘call to arms’, sketched above:

> “Rabbi Tau drew a marked line of distinction between the peace treaty with Egypt and previous governmental policies, which restricted Jewish settlement in the occupied territories and invoked the strong resentment of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda who urged his disciples to resist them even by resorting to illegal means. Tau argued that while the previous policies were not in line with the attitudes of most Israelis, the overwhelming majority of them supported the decision of Begin’s government to sign a peace treaty with Egypt that obliged Israel to withdraw from all the territories that were occupied by her in Sinai” (Don-Yehiya 2014, 253–4).

Thus, in the face of risks posed by application of an axiology in which the protection of Eretz Yisrael was the supreme value, Tau pivoted to another dimension of Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s worldview, namely the importance of wider public support as a litmus test for
appropriate behavior.\textsuperscript{83} There is considerable evidence for Kook’s preoccupation with checking whether “the nation is with us” and whether at least segments of the government supported Gush Emunim projects when assessing whether to give his spiritual endorsement (see, e.g., Don-Yehiya 2003, 206; Fischer 2009; Rosenak 2013, 83, 121–8). We could say, therefore, that Tau’s rhetorical strategy for resolving the threat to a core Gush Emunim value (settlement) was to reframe the values compromise as “privileging one sacred value for another” (Atran & Axelrod 2008, 226). However, as based on the following chapters, I argue that this stance is an authentic consequence of the logic of Tau’s theosophical worldview, in which national consciousness is in fact the key arena of the redemptive process, and political events are mere symptoms.\textsuperscript{84}

Despite dramatic scenes of protest, and threats by students of Meir Kahane to commit mass suicide, the evacuation proceeded without violence. However, the experience built on the tensions already plaguing the statist position. A further challenge soon arose from a different quarter. Shortly after the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978, a small group of religious Zionist settlers led by Yehuda Etzion\textsuperscript{85} coalesced into a terrorist cell: \textit{Ha-Makhteret Ha-Yehudi} (the Jewish Underground; see Segal 1988). It targeted Arab politicians and other civilians in the West Bank as a vigilante response to Palestinian terrorism. Etzion also tried to persuade his co-conspirators of his interpretation of the Camp David Accords as a disastrous set-back to the messianic process, demanding a spectacular deed by the faithful to repair the course of fate—an extreme, catalytic act intended to theurgically advance \textit{tikkun}. The messianic process was to be set aright by blowing up the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. When the security forces captured the group in 1984 (thwarting the bombing of a civilian Arab bus), and the youths were revealed as members of Gush Emunim, they were roundly condemned by religious Zionist rabbis. Tau was particularly at pains to dissociate from them, stating that their deeds showed “utter contempt” for \textit{Merkaz Ha-Rav} (quoted in Segal 1988, 216): \textsuperscript{86} “They have the blatantly idolatrous idea that by blowing up the mosques they will force the Master of the Universe to redeem Israel. This is the thinking of small-minded, superficial students of

\textsuperscript{83} See further Roth (2013, 302) and Rosenak (2008, 40).
\textsuperscript{84} See Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{85} On Etzion’s ideology, see, e.g., Fischer (2009, 27–31).
Kabbalah who, with all their limitations, are led by curiosity into the sacred precincts and cause great destruction” (quoted in Segal 1988, 216; trans. Ravitzky 1996).

Fischer (2009) sees this as evidence that Tau’s axiology prioritizes respect for divine providence over realizing the “general will”; i.e., an inner desire to realize messianic redemption attributed to the Jewish people. I submit that this is a false dichotomy, incompatible with Tau’s consistent concern for aligning religious Zionist activities to the spiritual state of the nation. This concern is expressed in terms of scaling back political protest tactics in the absence of broader public support, but also via a theosophical analysis of the redemptive process as mediated by the nation’s consciousness rather than material facts and deeds (see Chapter 5).

The Oslo process of the 1990s was another crisis moment for Gush Emunim and religious Zionism. The period saw polemical public debate over the territorial concessions implied by the Oslo Accords, culminating in the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin in 1995, and its justification by Yigal Amir through the halakhic arguments aired widely among religious Zionist rabbis. This led to a process of soul-searching within the movement. In 1996, Tau insisted: “Any confrontation with the government destroys [all of] us. It creates a situation of ‘pekuah nefesh’, mortal danger to all of Israel. [Therefore] we must be loyal and devoted to the state … [for] if there is no Government (memshala) there is no state. And if there is no government authority (shilton), then there will be anarchy” (quoted in Bick 2007, 317). While this could be construed as part of the broader soul-searching process (as implied by Schwartz 2003a, 135, who notes that Tau donned sackcloth and ashes on the night of the murder), the tone and content of Tau’s arguments had stabilized long before events came to such a violent head, and can be seen clearly in his publications of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The failure of the 2000 Israeli–Palestinian negotiations at Camp David under Ehud Barak neutralized the perceived threat to Jewish control of Greater Eretz Yisrael for the time being—although the settler community and Israel at large immediately faced the daily terrorist attacks of the Second Intifada. The election in 2001 of Likud’s Ariel Sharon, a hawk par excellence and long-time supporter of both Gush Emunim and the Greater Land of Israel ideology, took a surprise turn for the settler community when in 2004 he spearheaded the policy of unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip.

The 2005 Hitnatkut clarified the battlelines between the mamlakhti rabbis and their opponents\(^88\) (see, e.g., Bick 2007; Don-Yehiya 2014; Inbari 2007). Rabbi Avraham Shapira, former chief rabbi of Israel and head of Merkaz Ha-Rav, published a halakhic ruling that forbade soldiers to participate in the Hitnatkut.\(^90\) One-hundred and fifty rabbis signed a petition calling for soldiers to disobey the orders to implement the Hitnatkut,\(^90\) which was endorsed by the Committee of Yesha Rabbis.\(^91\) Tau, Aviner, and their mamlakhti colleagues opposed this stance. While strongly opposed to the Hitnatkut,\(^92\) they argued that the mode of opposition should be a public information campaign rather than civil disobedience, refusal to obey army orders, or violent protest.

Although Rabbi Tau maintained a relatively low profile,\(^93\) “Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, … perhaps in his stead, boldly took issue with Rabbi Shapira, ruling that soldiers must not disobey orders. Mass insubordination, he argued, would cause demoralization in the army and its disintegration. Anarchy might then ensue, endangering both the state and the nation” (Bick 2007, 317).\(^94\) Tau is also said to have stressed that the Hitnatkut policy had popular support in the mainstream Jewish public (see, e.g., Inbari 2012, 112–3). This stance provoked vicious criticism from the opponents mentioned above.\(^95\) Shapira

\(^88\) These have prominently included rabbis Avraham Shapira, Dov Lior, Eliezer Melamed, Zalman Melamed, and Elyakim Levanon (in addition to others further toward the fringes of settler discourse, e.g., Rabbi Israel Ariel). They often self-identified as presenting the “Torah position” (vs. the statist position). See, e.g., Bick (2007), Inbari (2007).

\(^89\) So did another former chief rabbi, Mordechai Eliyahu, though he retreated from this stark position as the actual date approached.

\(^90\) Most religious Zionist youths serve in the IDF, and they are overrepresented in elite units. However, the analysis by Cohen (2007) suggests that the tensions experienced by such soldiers are not solely or even primarily tied to issues involving commitment to Eretz Yisrael. See Levy (2007); also Rubin (2014).

\(^91\) Including rabbis Dov Lior, Eliezer Melamed, Zalman Melamed, and Elyakim Levanon.

\(^92\) Aviner, for example, prominently participated in protest marches leading up to the Hitnatkut, and during the event, he “rent his clothes in sorrow (an act of grieving in Jewish tradition) at the loss of a part of Eretz Yisrael, and led the protestors in prayer and supplication” (Bick 2007, 318).

\(^93\) However, Tau did publish a responsa on the Hitnatkut in 2005 and a book of spiritual guidance in 2006. The secondary literature is somewhat inconsistent in its appraisal of Tau’s role in actively encouraging restraint during the Hitnatkut, with Bick (2007, 317) describing him as “conspicuously silent” but Hellinger (2008, 535) asserting that “during the Disengagement process, he exerted great influence on the religious–Zionist camp in calling the settlers to exercise self-restraint and avoid violent resistance,” though he seems to base this on Tau’s post-Hitnatkut publication in 2006.

\(^94\) Rosenak (2008, 40) notes that Tau also opposed military insubordination during the Sinai withdrawal. Geiger (2013, 60) notes Aviner’s more accessible writing style.

\(^95\) Anat Roth explained the basic difference in approach thus in a March 2012 interview for the International Crisis Group (2013, 8):

> הרבניםملמד וליאור מבקרים את גישתו הזהירה מידי, לטענתם, של הרב טאו ובפרט את האחריות היתרה שהוא לוקח על שלמות העם והמדינה ואת התמקדות שלו במימדים החיוביים של החילונים. לשיטתם, גישה זו יצרה תחושה של 'השתלבות בכל מחיר' והובילה להיטמעות במקום להשתלבות. מצד אחד הם שותפים לתפיסת העולם הממלכתי היחידה של מדינת ישראל, אך מצד שני אינם חוששים להתעמת איתה כאשר זו פוגעת בערכים אחרים לائهم. הם רואים עצמם כאחראים לשלמות העם והמדינה ולכן מתנגדים לכל גילוי של אלימות, גם אם מדובר בתגובה לאלימות המופעלת כלפיהם. אולם לשיטתם האחריות לכך היא גם של המדינה.
urged the *mamlakhti* rabbis “to accept the rule of Torah and his status as the most senior Halachic guide. Shapira adopted the ultra-Orthodox concept of ‘the Torah opinion,’ demanding obedience to the rabbinical hierarchy” (Inbari 2007, 715).\(^96\)

As noted in the introduction, the evacuation of Gaza was completed without the violence or mass insubordination by soldiers that many had feared.\(^97\) But both the initial experience and the government’s subsequent bungling of the relocation process for the evacuated families left the religious Zionist community “severely traumatized” (Bick 2007, 324). There was considerable internal debate about whether the protests had been firm enough. Don-Yehiya noted that “many of those who took part in the struggle were dissatisfied with the way that it was conducted” (Don-Yehiya 2014, 258). Their view was that further attempts to evacuate Jews from their homes should meet much more militant resistance, as took place at the evacuation of Amona in Samaria/the northern West Bank (p. 259).\(^98\) These clashes particularly involved settler youth, many of whom nurtured “feelings of anger and alienation toward State leaders and institutions that were held responsible for what they considered as a betrayal to the Land of Israel” (*ibid.*).\(^99\)

The schism between the camps deepened, accelerating the growth among opponents of *mamlakhtiyut* of an “approach that advocates replacing the current regime with a theocracy” (Inbari 2007, 716). Rabbi Melamed and others began to suggest “that religious Zionists should gradually disengage from the state and its institutions, and move in the direction of the ultra-orthodox” (Bick 2007, 326), and the *hardal* (*haredi le’umi*) identification became more widespread. As explained in Chapter 6, the *Hitnatkut* also contributed to the growth of the “Hilltop Youth” (*no’ar ha-geva’ot*), among whom Tau’s message has little traction. However, this message must first be sketched before investigating ideologies that have filled the void (see chapters 6 and 7).

\(^96\) The ‘debate’ also included challenges to one of Aviner’s halakhic rulings, thus undermining his credibility as a *posek* (halakhic interpreter/arbiter), and an anonymous personal smear campaign. Tau led the rebuttal. See Inbari (2007; 2012, 117) for details.

\(^97\) Roth (2014, e.g., 439) presents the settlers’ own understanding that this peaceful outcome was the result of their internal decision to act responsibly and with great restraint, and was not solely or mainly thanks to operational professionalism on the part of the security forces who implemented the *Hitnatkut*.

\(^98\) Roth (2014, e.g., 439) disagrees with this implied attribution of responsibility for the violence of Amona to the settlers, arguing that violence was mainly directed toward them by the security forces.

\(^99\) Tau’s close colleague, Aviner, was a particular target in the subsequent rounds of “recrimination and accusation… because of his alleged ’collaboration’ with the army during the evacuation. He had negotiated with the army command in order to prevent escalation of the conflict and had been seen shaking hands and even exchanging hugs with the commanders” (Bick 2007, 324–5).
Settlement in Rabbi Tau’s axiology: A “detail”

Tau consistently explains the defective policies of Israeli governments as symptoms of a broader social malaise tied to secular Jews’ disconnection from Torah and from Eretz Yisrael. Though he staunchly opposes territorial concessions and supports settlement, he advocates resolving the problem through a long-term campaign of public education grounded in love for the general public and the government. Moreover, he does not see setbacks like the Camp David and Oslo Accords or the Hitnatkut as evidence that the messianic process has been derailed, since that process is extremely gradual and may include what appear to be temporary reversals.\(^{100}\)

This is often grasped not as a religious stance embedded in a coherent worldview, but rather as a political compromise. Hellinger (2008, 545), for instance, forgives Tau this “paternalistic attitude toward the other denominations of contemporary Judaism, and especially toward the secular public,” because he “has consistently avoided violent struggle and even non-violent acts of civil disobedience against the government and Knesset decisions that are in favour of evacuating Jewish settlements” (ibid.). He frames Tau’s stance as tactical rather than religious: “Not playing by the rules and using violence against soldiers and policemen, even as they remove Jewish settlers from their homes, are simply counter-productive,” as there are legal means to overthrow the government in a democracy (ibid.). Tau promotes education, Hellinger implies, because aggressive modes of protest failed to achieve useful results, and inflamed hot-heads in the settler movement: “R. Tau has shifted the emphasis from the political struggle to the … educational struggle. This move has been motivated by the failure of the struggle over Yamit in the early 1980s and the … uncovering of the Jewish underground” (ibid.).

Inbari’s (2007) analysis of Tau’s response to the Hitnatkut, especially his opposition to military insubordination, is in a similar vein:

“… a discussion between Rabbi Zvi Tau and his students was published, in which he argued forcefully against the refusal to obey army orders and against civil disobedience. The principle behind his position was that, in order to prevent the Disengagement plan, it was necessary to act to secure spiritual renewal and to undertake a profound campaign of ‘settling the hearts.’ Tau

\(^{100}\) This could be viewed as a coping strategy for prophecy failure, following Zygmunt (1972).
argued that the Disengagement and the strong support for the plan among the public were a manifestation of the spirit of the people, which was still not ready for the spiritual message of redemption. The reason ... was the failure of the settlement movement to include dimensions of spiritual renewal in its mundane actions: ‘We engaged successfully in settlement, but we did not manage to advance a significant public spiritual transition in Israel. The People of Israel were left far behind us, and even deteriorated in spiritual and value based terms, to the point that we find ourselves in the present conflict. This is a situation that we must change’” (Inbari 2007, 710; quoting Tau’s 2005 responsa).

This analysis, substantially repeated in Inbari (2012, 112–3), is accurate as far as it goes. But there is no serious investigation of the religious logic underpinning the above stance, beyond a brief allusion to the spirit of the people. Here, Tau chiefly serves the academic narrative as a counterpoint to the more inflammatory statements by his many opponents. Inbari also reported Tau’s rejection of the use of force and his acknowledgment that the Hitnatkut enjoyed popular support, but again this is not contextualized in Tau’s worldview. At times, this analysis shows a quite remarkable ability to avoid engaging with Tau’s religious system of values even where it would appear to be the most obvious explanatory framework for the “moderate” material under analysis. For example, political “tactics” was the meaning frame attached to the following quotation (from the same responsa quoted above): “Creating an atmosphere of rift and hatred among the people, or, God forbid, even considering the idea that someone would raise a hand against his brother; referring to sections of the people as ‘rabble’ [erev rav]; or expressing absolute despair with the State of Israel—all of these are a terrible affront to the most important values in the name of saving the Land of Israel” (quoted in Inbari 2007, 710–11). This quotation was presented as evidence that Tau merely ruled out the use of violence in the struggle against the Hitnatkut. In summarizing the responses of the mamlakhti rabbis and their opponents to the Hitnatkut, Inbari asserted: “The responses of both schools suggest that they aspire to the creation of a Torah state, and differ mainly over ... tactical approach” (p. 711).

Though this is a technically accurate conclusion regarding the long-term political vision of religious Zionism, I submit that this misunderstands the religious logic at play by framing the mamlakhti ethical position as just a tactical compromise to their “fundamentalist” worldview. Rather, their ethical position is a direct and coherent
consequence of that broader worldview, which is more nuanced than either label implies. Tau’s stance in fact has deep roots and profound religious meaning, and even theurgic and mystical importance, in the context of his Kookian worldview. It is an authentic religious stance rather than a merely political or tactical one.

Don-Yehiya’s (1994, 2014) descriptions (passim) of Tau’s responses to events such as settlement curtailment in the 1970s, the Jewish Underground, and the Sinai withdrawal are more probing. He also stresses the importance of public support as decisive to Tau’s evaluation of whether illegal tactics should be considered, as noted above. However, he goes beyond this political picture to acknowledge the theosophical underpinnings of Tau’s stance:

“Tau condemned in harsh words the attempts of radical elements in the religious Zionist camp to halt the withdrawal from Sinai and hasten the coming of redemption by the use of violent and illegal means. In his view, ‘There is no mandate for five thousand people [in Yamit] to coerce the Jewish people, to revolt against the spirit of the nation and to erase which was done publicly—this is a revolt against the Kingship of God’ [quoted in Segal 1988, 216–7]. The concept, ‘spirit of the nation,’ was borrowed not from democratic theory, but rather from the literature of romantic nationalism, and it assumed a religious significance in Rav Kook’s thought. It is not determined by formal voting, but inscribed in the soul of the people and revealed through their behavior. The term ‘spirit of the nation’, as it is used by Rabbi Tau, has a definite mystical connotation. It especially refers to the Nation of Israel and related to the unique spiritual qualities accorded to this nation in the theory of Rav Kook. This does not mean that individual members of the nation cannot behave in an unfit way, but as a collective they do have a unique sacred potential, which could be revealed not by force and coercion, but rather through education and spiritual direction” (Don-Yehiya 2014, 257).

This is a more promising direction (developed in chapters 4 and 5), though the above analysis is obviously not comprehensive. Nor does it fully represent Tau’s consistent efforts to frame (or reframe) Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s teachings as prooftexts for an axiology in which Jewish sovereignty over the Greater Land of Israel and settlement expansion are values of secondary or even marginal importance.

101 On this theme, see further Fischer (2011a).
The remaining pages of this chapter present an initial survey of Tau’s writings that seem to define settlement as a mere detail in religious Zionist axiology. This leads to a systematic analysis of the worldview underpinning such writings and a chance to note initial patterns in the symbolic language of Tau’s rhetoric.

Several of Tau’s writings limit the overriding importance of the *mitzvah* of settlement, in significant contrast to most scholars’ perspectives on the religious Zionist movement. As discussed in the previous section, Gush Emunim, under the tutelage of Tzvi Yehuda Kook, embraced Nachmanides’ evaluation of the commandment to settle *Eretz Yisrael* as a positive commandment (*מצות עשה*), one that was equal to all others and ever-binding. Tau, however, has consistently attempted to dilute the operative force of that evaluation, without explicitly rejecting it. He eludes the shackles of halakhic rules that seem to leave no room for compromise, but he does not use anti-halakhic rhetoric to do so; on the contrary, he largely argues using the vocabulary, authority figures, and reasoning style of halakhic analysis.

For example, in "פרקים בהלכות ציבור" (*Perakim*), Tau discusses the nature of positive commandments (*מצוות עשה*) and notes that no less a scholar than the Vilna Gaon has stated: if you think performing a positive *mitzvah* will lead to anger, you are not obliged to fulfil it (*Perakim*, 18). On another tack, he argues that the *mitzvah* of settlement has both individual/private and collective/public dimensions. Individual Jews are indeed commanded to settle somewhere in *Eretz Yisrael*, but extending Jewish rule over the entire Greater Land of Israel is a public *mitzvah* laid on the national collective as a whole. The obligation that we, the faithful, are required to fulfill, says Tau, is the private *mitzvah* to settle, not the collective one to conquer (*Zekhero*, 105). In "זכרו ראשונות" (*Zekhero*), while acknowledging that the reconquest of *Eretz Yisrael* is a commandment binding for all time, he argues that it is not clear who is commanded to do it. A national feeling must exist, he says, before there exists any ‘legal’ character (* דין*) who can be commanded to conquer the land: there must be some collective entity. While the State

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103 Indeed, this would be practically impossible for a strictly Orthodox rabbi.

104 Via Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s *Hatorah ha-go elet*.

105 This is also one of the arguments used by Bleich (1979) to soften Nachmanides’ ruling. See Appendix 1.

106 Rabbi Aviner applied a similar logic when arguing against Rabbi Shapira’s call for soldiers to disobey orders during the *Hitnakhut*: “Rabbi Aviner ruled that even soldiers who sincerely believed the order to evacuate Jews from the Land of Israel violated the Torah must not disobey. The biblical commandment ‘to settle the land and
of Israel’s existence arguably activates the public component of the *mitzvot* of settlement and conquest, he argues that the nation has still not attained full national consciousness, as discussed at length in Chapter 5. This dilutes the force of the legal logic that there is some unified entity bound by this *mitzvah*. Thus, Halakhah as an ethical system (epistemologically underpinned by the Torah as an authoritative source of knowledge) is used to argue against the full force of a halakhic precept seen by many as the heart of the settlement project. The mention of consciousness, however, points to a deeper thread through Tau’s thought.

Similarly, Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s famous declarations that Jews should be ready to *limsor nefesh* (devote oneself, to the point of martyrdom) to prevent withdrawals from Judea and Samaria is dramatically circumscribed by Tau, particularly in his publications shortly after the assassination of Rabin. This call to *limsor nefesh* was a national message, Tau says, not an individual one. Tzvi Yehuda was not instructing individual Jews to lay down their lives in a violent clash with the security forces to forestall evacuations; he was trying to awaken the silent majority and arouse a stronger attachment to *Eretz Yisrael* in the collective Jewish consciousness (*Zekhero*, יג). Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s main aim, says Tau, was to strengthen the national consciousness.

Elsewhere, when asked by an audience member at one of his presentations about settlers’ duty to fight for *Eretz Yisrael* in the context of evacuations, Tau asserted that the settlers were already *moserim nefesh* simply by living in Judea and Samaria, vulnerable to Arab attack: they have nothing to prove by risking harm in clashes with the Israeli security forces (*Be-chokhma*, 9). He also stresses that no such violence took place after Tzvi Yehuda’s declaration. If Kook had really wanted people to die in a fight with the forces sent to evacuate them, Tau asked rhetorically (*Zekhero*, יג), why was there not a single blow among Tzvi Yehuda’s disciples at the time? Tau recalls that time, hold on to it,” he explained, applies only to the entire nation, not to the individual” (Bick 2007, 317).

107 For instance, Avraham Kook’s writings imply that democratic decisions by the (as yet future) State of Israel have the same status as those of biblical monarchs: “[Kook] states that: ‘since the laws of kings extend to the general affairs of the nation, it would seem that in the absence of a king, the prerogatives of these laws revert to the nation as a whole’ (MK, §144: 13, p.337). This democratic concept of Rav Kook also emerges from this ruling: ‘For whoever is entrusted by the public to deal with any matter whatsoever, even though this individual may not belong to the leadership of the community, his handling of this matter falls under the category of leadership and presidency of the community’ (*OM*, “*Hoshen Mishpat*, §2, p.226)” (Hellinger 2008, 538; the citations are from *Ma’amrei* and *Oreach mishpat*).

108 Taken up in the next chapter.

109 Generally used by scholars as the example par excellence of Gush Emunim’s overriding commitment to the Greater Land of Israel and the settlement project, above and beyond all other values.
and says that the conversations within Gush Emunim and its requests for rabbinic guidance from Tzvi Yehuda centered not on questions of civil war or violence but on whether one should be “passive like a sack of flour” or “wriggle like a fish” when being evacuated—and that’s as far as it went (p. 110).

In the same statement, Tzvi Yehuda had said “there will be a war” over the withdrawal, but this, says Tau, was intended to reveal the absurdity of the situation (the trigger was the Israeli prime minister’s announcement that he’d be happy to visit Gush Etzion with a Jordanian visa; p. 110), and this war was always intended to be one of hearts and minds (p. 110)—a war over national consciousness in the face of external pressures (p. 110). Tau asserts that the scenario of an evacuation would never come about in the case of Naharia, because of the public mentality that it’s a part of Israel; this consciousness must be similarly aroused for Gush Etzion, and all of Eretz Yisrael, and this was Tzvi Yehuda’s aim, Tau insists (p. 110).

Moreover, he emphasizes, the context at the time of that famous statement was not really one of opposition to the state or to the majority: the general public supported Gush Emunim, Tau claims, and they were merely leading the camp (p. 110). The context was specifically that of a minority government that was implementing the policy against a background of popular resentment (p. 110). Tau reasons that under a more “pro-Eretz Yisrael” government, Tzvi Yehuda’s comments ceased, even when more territory was in question (i.e., Begin’s agreement to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt). Tau says that Tzvi Yehuda was silent on the question of the Begin–Sadat peace process and the Camp David Accord, and infers from this that his comments were restricted to situations of government coercion of the people in their entirety, and the desire of the people not to be so coerced. At the time of Camp David, this was clearly not the case, and Tau points to a change in Tzvi Yehuda’s style, refocusing on simple teachings such as unity and identification with the nation (pp. 112).

110 This is reminiscent of Roth’s (2014) account of discussions by the settler rabbinical and political leadership about appropriate protest tactics against the Hitnaskat. With the exception of fringe figures (e.g., Rabbi Dudkowitz, attached to Od Yosef Chai and Ginsburgh’s predominantly dualistic theosophy), none proposed going beyond passive civil disobedience.

111 Tau rejects the possibility of a total disjunction between the people and the parliament in a democracy, though the context of a governing coalition dependent on Arab parties for the balance of power could potentially challenge that stance.

112 See further, e.g., Don-Yehiya (2003, 207),
Lastly, Tau repeatedly revisits a letter in which Tzvi Yehuda asserts that “settlement is a detail” (e.g., Zekhero, י; Shlach, כא)—a means of raising the spiritual state of the nation, not an end in itself (Zekhero, י). This gels at least in part with Rabbi Samson’s description of Kook’s engagement with the Gush Emunim settlers: “Leaving the Yeshiva to drive out to the mountains of the Shomron [Samaria] to be with his students as they erected the first tents of a new community in Israel was a teaching as integral to Torah as a class in Gemara or Halacha. It was a national teaching, intended to educate the whole nation of Israel” (Samson & Fishman 1991, 352).113 Tau’s take is that, for Kook, the nation’s consciousness was the decisive factor, and religious settlers’ energies should be focused accordingly (Zekhero, י).

Moreover, this values structure informs an ethic whereby acts meant to raise the nation’s spirit must be suited to the public temperament of the time, and the strategy should therefore not be set in stone (ibid.). If settlements do not raise the nation’s spirit, other approaches can and must be tried. Accordingly, Tau has stated that although the settlement project is a mitzvah and is part of the project to build the nation’s consciousness, it is insufficient in and of itself. He therefore called on the settler community to reach out to all the schools—all the people of the nation—in order to raise the nation’s spirit (Be-chokhma, 18).

This also makes sense in light of Tau’s theosophical understanding of the importance of the nation’s spirit, ignoring which had caused wrong-headed policies such as territorial concessions in the first place and the elevation of which is a necessary mechanism of the redemptive process. This is addressed in the following chapters.

**Conclusion**

The foregoing analysis offers insights on both i) effective rhetorical strategies for negotiating sacred issues such as Eretz Yisrael and ii) Tau’s worldview.

The previous section illustrated how Tau utilizes the vocabulary and reasoning style of halakhic debate and cites Tzvi Yehuda Kook as a spiritual authority to dilute the operative force of Nachmanides’ absolute mitzvat a’aseh to conquer and settle Eretz Yisrael. Nachmanides’ halakhic stance has been repeated in Gush Emunim publications

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113 On the importance of respect for the spirit of the nation for Tzvi Yehuda Kook, see, e.g., Don-Yehiya (2003, 206–7), Fischer (2009, 23–26).
since the latter’s inception. It is a basic component of the religious Zionist ethic, and is coherent with the widespread belief that Jewish settlement of *Eretz Yisrael* advances *tikkun* and redemption. However, Tau is able to relegate settlement to “a detail” by: arguing *halakhically*; drawing on Tzvi Yehuda’s own record and statements prioritizing the national spirit over settlements as authoritative texts; and reframing Tzvi Yehuda’s calls for war against the government and *mesirat nefesh* as references to a cultural battle and/or limited cases of total popular opposition to the government, nominally on the authority of the Kookian worldview according to Tau, in which consciousness now plays the decisive role. The following chapters will also show how frames his own innovative emphasis on consciousness as having been *predicted* in the original texts of Avraham Kook. The cornerstone of all these elements in Tau’s rhetoric is thus scrupulous consistency with the Kookian religious Zionist worldview.

Both the arguments and style of argumentation used in Tau’s rhetoric of political “moderation” are therefore anchored in precisely the same “messianist,” “fundamentalist” religious discourse most scholars identify as the root cause of settlers’ “extremism.” And maybe it is the root cause. Even so, if religious Zionist discourse is best understood as fundamentalist and likely to lead to “extremism,” Tau’s rhetoric shows a more effective way to negotiate with its adherents—namely, utilizing religious rather than secular discursive resources. Given the arguments by scholars cited in Chapter 1 and here that Tau’s stance has had a moderating influence during periods of crisis, when political developments have threatened settlers’ sacred values, we can deduce that at least *some* of this rhetoric proved resonant. The above summary therefore serves as a starting point to guide the development of a strategy for public discourse when Israeli–Palestinian negotiations are seen to threaten settlers’ sacred values. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by considering both *how* these (and the more limited set of resources gleaned from Ginsburgh’s texts) could be utilized by predominantly secular, and even non-Jewish, political actors.

However, I will first argue in the following chapters that, for Tau, the above is not just a contrived rhetorical strategy intended to discourage the likes of Yehuda Etzion or

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114 Thus reframing a values compromise as a values trade-off, in the language of Chapter 1.
115 Aviner has made similar arguments; see, e.g., Rosenak (2013, 118–9).
116 In a flip side to the unity of opposites, he crafts his opposition *through* theosophical unity.
117 As explained in Chapter 1, I do not think it is, but I have not made it my project to argue against this theoretical frame; that argument is already made convincingly by Rosenak (2013) and Roth (2014).
Yigal Amir, but rather a natural consequence of his systematically expounded worldview. Although the present chapter does not yet systematically investigate Tau’s worldview, the above account hints at many of its basic components. These include the central narrative of redemption; the ontological assertion that a higher metaphysical plane parallels the earthly one; the kabbalistic logic of theurgy and tikkun, whereby these two planes affect one another; the Halevian logic whereby the divine will manifests through Jewish history; the value of Eretz Yisrael, the Zionist nation-building project, and the State of Israel in Kookian axiology, and the potential tensions between the values of Am, Eretz, and Torat Yisrael; and the privileged epistemological status of Jewish history and the Torah as ways of knowing the divine will. We also see that Tau limits the overriding importance of settlement in terms of both ethic (by diluting the operative force of the relevant Halakhah) and logic (by asserting that national consciousness, not physical facts such as settlements, is the key mediator of the redemptive process). There are also indirect hints of the monistic ontology and complementary dialectic logic that Rosenak (2013) submits are so central to Avraham Kook’s thought and pervasive across the religious Zionist spectrum: that is, even apparently “negative” people or events have their root in God, and can fulfil a positive dialectic function in God’s design. The following chapter addresses these dimensions of Tau’s Kookian worldview.

Chapter 3
How reality unfolds: Creation and history in Tau’s thought

Introduction: From Kook to Tau

Tau’s conception of the “divine mechanics”¹ behind creation, from the world’s genesis to the unfolding of contemporary events, is rooted in the teachings of Rabbi Avraham Kook—most particularly his monistic paradigm, or “the unity of opposites.” I argue that this conception of reality does not function just as a rhetorical resource,² but rather is the authentic, religious root of Tau’s ethics and his understanding of contemporary politics.³

This chapter commences a more systematic exploration of Tau’s worldview, focusing on its monistic ontology, whereby evil is an illusion as all things ultimately stem from God, and on its dialectic logic, whereby apparent evil in fact serves the divine plan. Tau explicitly anchors his teachings on these matters in the corpus of Rabbi Avraham Kook. Therefore, this chapter first presents a review of Kook’s monistic historiosophy, and distinctions in the approach of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. This builds the sketch outlined in Chapter 2 into a more rigorous analysis. However, this is not intended as a comprehensive or original investigation of Kook’s entire corpus; rather, I largely rely on Orot and on the secondary literature to identify the major patterns necessary to understand Tau’s own approach. Next, the chapter examines Tau’s adaptation of this monistic paradigm, focusing on:

i) the constructive roles played by the phenomena of opposition (نزירות) and void (תוהם) as divine catalysts, i.e., the dialectic logic of the unity of opposites;

¹ Tau often uses phrases with this connotation: e.g., ה_technika ha_elahiti.
² Although it has the potential to be useful as such, as argued at the conclusion of the previous chapter.
³ This contrasts with the case of Ginsburgh, I later argue, who often draws on kabbalistic metaphors to justify a political framework that seems to owe more to Kahanism than to his classic mystical prooftexts.
ii) the slow, natural, protracted nature of *geulah* (redemption), i.e., Tau’s gradualist version of the redemptive narrative; and distinctions between Tau’s generation and Kook’s generation in terms of their stage in the redemptive process (this is Tau’s narrative device to justify his own emphasis on consciousness; see below);

iii) the crucial importance of correct perception and consciousness by a spiritual elite to advance redemption, i.e., the central role of consciousness in the logic of Tau’s worldview, and its primacy in his axiology and epistemology.

As shown in chapters 5 and 6, these elements of Tau’s worldview dictate his interpretation of ‘wrong-headed’ government policies as symptoms of deficient spiritual consciousness in the nation, as well as his ethic of “positive politics” emphasizing education and *hasbarah*[^4] rather than the “negativity” of protests. Thus, in contrast to the analyses of Tau critically reviewed in Chapter 2, I seek in Chapters 3–5 to illustrate the deeper religious logic behind Tau’s “moderate” rhetoric, and thus challenge interpretations of *mamlakhti* “moderation” as merely a pragmatic political or tactical compromise[^5], rather than a stance informed by religious logic.

In addition to this elucidation of Tau’s worldview, this chapter yields discursive resources in the form of key metaphors through which Tau articulates his gradualist narrative of redemption, and their source in teachings of Rabbi Avraham Kook as a spiritual authority. More broadly, it shows how this gradualist narrative, coupled with the logic of the “unity of opposites” (as Tau’s preferred lens for the interpretation of political events[^6]), can be used to encourage patience, if not acceptance, during events that seem to threaten core religious Zionist values.

[^4]: Public relations/communications; literally, “explanation.”
[^5]: Or, per Roth (2014), as rooted in a straightforward identification between the temporary government of Israel and the (sacred) State of Israel—which is the distinction she posits between what she calls the hyper-*mamlakhtiyut* of Tau and Aviner and the “centrist” or “crisis” *mamlakhtiyut* of the rest of the religious Zionist settler mainstream.
[^6]: That is, its role in his epistemology.
Kook’s historiosophy & its underlying monistic principle

Avraham Kook’s worldview assumed an active divine principle at work behind all earthly events, even apparently negative ones: “All of nature, as it is revealed in all its capacities, in world and man, in the soul of the individual and in the soul of peoples, in the daily worries of life and in the boundaries of nations and kingdoms, in their ascents and descents, in the plottings of politics, in the insanity of the crazed, … [etc.] … in all, only the hand of the supernal light” (Yisrael U-Techiyato XIII; see too XII).

This translated into a monistic historiosophy, according to which both modern history’s causes and its telos were supernal, and so all political developments were laden with messianic and metaphysical causes and ramifications, and braided into a messianic teleological design (Ratzabi 2008, 117). Kook read contemporary Jewish history as a divine meta-narrative, seeing “the hand of the Lord God of Israel in all the changes of the times” (Yisrael U-Techiyato XII). Indeed, for Kook, Israel’s particular destiny was to make palpable the latent holiness hidden in the material plane of reality7 by revealing God’s intervention in the world through its own history, thus making Jewish history itself a form of revelation (Yaron 1991, 71–2).

Kook conceived of history as following a Hegelian dialectic toward progress, but the historical spiral’s destination was the messianic era: “the pinnacle of all historical processes … [is] the redemption of the nation of Israel on its land, a process that necessarily entails the moral redemption of the nations” (Rosenak 2007, 136–7). In this worldview, even the “wicked” Zionists of Herzl’s time—atheistic and assimilated as they were—could perform a positive teleological function (Yaron 1991, 86–7). Kook framed modern Zionism as a mechanism in this Hegelian dialectic: “A thesis (religion) clashes with an antithesis (secular Zionism) and together they produce a holy synthesis (the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel)” (Korn 1994, 278).

This dialectic was not just worldly but metaphysical.8 This whole historical process was just a worldly manifestation of the metaphysical, kabbalistic work of tikkun. As both the source and arena of the dialectic were divine (that is, history and supernal

7 I.e., following an immanent conception of divinity.
8 On the “divine technique” of progressing creation through dialectics for both Kook and Tau, see too Achituv (2006, 143–4) and the sources therein.
tikkun were interrelated processes, and the main locus of causality was on the divine plane), Kook viewed the political events of Zionism not as “the fruit of rational historical conditions, but a reflection of the internal divine work, of which historical reality is only a reflection. … Redemption, as a cosmic event, is constructed within divinity, which embraces and includes the entire universe” (Ratzabi 2008, 116). The secular Zionists were a cog in the vast metaphysical machinery beyond human will or apprehension: “the divine eschatological action had swept them up into its forward momentum, even though they were unaware of its occurrence” (Marcus 1996, 23).

Kook also reasoned that the movement toward redemption could go through periods of regression and destruction as part of the overall divine dialectic (Eisen 2011, 148): the flux of history may be uneven but ultimately ascends, and the wrinkles of setbacks will be smoothed out in the overall progression toward the good (Yaron 1991, 81–3). Kook saw secular Zionism as an example of such inconsistent progress. It was heretical, but it was building up the Land of Israel for the messianic period. Kook held that redemption needed to proceed first from the material and only then the spiritual (see, e.g., Orot Ha-Techiyah XIX, XXVI). Further, he held that God’s historical–metaphysical symphony of redemption could use antinomian chords: “history proceeds under divine providence, and the instrumentalities activated by providence are not necessarily halakhic” (Rosenak 2007, 130–1); i.e., the end goal of redemption could be effected through temporary violations of Jewish law.

This monistic historiosophy implied an unprecedented conjunction of politics and theurgy. Zionism was, for Kook, both a driver and a symptom of supernal tikkun, in the metaphysical, kabbalistic sense. Kabbalah teaches that tikkun is needed to repair a disharmony introduced into creation by a cataclysmic event called shevirat ha-keilim, “the breaking of the vessels.” This is a Kabbalistic narrative of cosmogeny and eschatology in which the existence of evil in the world is explained by a rupture in the

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9 And, as explained in Appendix 1, bound up with the kabbalistic notion of sefirotic alignments transpiring within God’s self and following His over-arching plan.

10 This is consistent with the traditional distinction in Jewish messianic prophecies between the moshiach ben Yosef (the messiah who is the son of Joseph), who implements the material dimension of redemption, and the moshiach ben David (the messiah who is the son of David), who rarefies the material reality to complete redemption’s spiritual dimension. Indeed, in his eulogy for Herzl, Kook described him as a moshiach ben Yosef.

11 The question of first causes is a subtle one (i.e., does this start with humans’ repentance or with a simple decision by God?), and is taken up by Fischer (2009). I am glossing over it in the main text of the thesis as it is tangential to my central arguments. See, however, Appendix 2 on Kook and Tau’s understanding of the complex relationship between supernal and earthly teshuvah (repentance) as the root cause of geulah.
original metaphysical order of creation, and in which ultimate messianic redemption will arise from the repair (tikkun) of this rupture, as follows.

Zoharic\textsuperscript{12} and lurianic\textsuperscript{13} Kabbalah understands creation as unfolding through ten progressive divine emanations and differentiations (sefirot) of the original, boundless source of pure divinity—a process that takes place, metaphysically, \textit{within} God. But before the dawn of time, the light of the emanations shattered the immature vessels (keilim) that had been prepared to give them material form. The lost sparks (the Shekhinah, associated with the divine feminine, and which Kabbalah identifies with Knesset Yisrael, i.e., Ecclesia Israel, the metaphysical counterpart of the Jewish people\textsuperscript{14}) became trapped within the impure shards or “shells” (kelipot) of the broken vessels. The kelipot are associated with the sitra achra, “the other side,” a realm of ten impure, demonic potencies of the ‘left’ side that are counterparts of the ten divine sefirot of the ‘right’ side\textsuperscript{15} (Katz 1971, 24; Wolfson 2006, 27; see Zohar I:28b, 79b; II:25b, 86a, 120a, 275b; III:125a, 219a, 238b). Repair or tikkun is understood as liberating the hidden sparks, to allow them to return to their root in the divine. The tikkun Kook envisaged was not restricted to correcting earthly circumstances (e.g., repairing galut) but entailed participation in the repair of this cosmic breach by elevating the sparks of the Shekhinah, as described by the Zohar and Luria:

“Knesset Yisrael (Ecclesia Israel) aspires to the correction (tikkun) of the world in all its fullness… the removal of death from its very foundation, by uplifting the world from the depth of its sin … from the fall of the cosmic theory in the foundation of its existence, from the lowering of the world ideal in reality, which prepared the way for human sin and all the troubles that come from it. All, all must be fixed; all must be purified. The aspiration of building up the nation, for return to the Land, is an aspiration of the depth of good that penetrates to the root of all existence. Not the ‘upraising of a brick’ of some structure but rather a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Referring to the teachings of \textit{Sefer Ha-Zohar} (the Book of Splendor), or more commonly just “the Zohar”—the \textit{de facto} canonical text of Kabbalah. See Appendix 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} I.e., referring to the teachings of the charismatic 16th-century kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria, “the Ari.” See Appendix 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Also identified with the lowest or coarsest sefirah, Malkhut (Kingdom). See Appendix 1. On this repeated identification in Kook’s thought, see too Achituv (2006, 145).
  \item \textsuperscript{15} In Kabbalah, the ‘right’ side is associated with the male; the ‘left’, with the female. This reflects the two-column arrangement of most charts of sefirot. The right side was associated with the pure/good, and the left with the impure and defective/evil. (Gender equality was an alien concept to the medieval kabbalists.)
\end{itemize}
whole, in-depth turning to the foundation of the entire structure to establish it correctly” (Yisrael U-Techiyato X).

Kook’s unification of history with metaphysics, and of historiosophy with theosophy, thus leads to the radical new idea that mundane political acts have supernal consequences. Kook embraced lurianic Kabbalah’s doctrine of *shevirat hakelim* and the need to raise the holy sparks back to their original source, thus rectifying the world (Yaron 1991, 73). However, in a departure from all previous kabbalistic theurgies, Kook identified the physical and political activities of nation-building in *Eretz Yisrael* as the means to effect this cosmic *tikkun*: “the Rav rejects the autonomy of sublime spiritual ideals, divorced from the practical and corporeal. … The mundane is hallowed, not only by the saintly recluse, but by the entire community’s ‘integration of the earthly into the life eternal’” (trans. p. 52). Thus, Jews’ physical labor in the Land of Israel becomes a religious obligation, required to effect *tikkun* and thence messianic redemption (p. 107). This put the irreligious “new Jew” of secular, socialist Zionism on equal footing with the most pious Torah student: “the pioneers working towards building *Eretz-Israel* equal the most Orthodox Jews” (Ratzabi 2008, 119).

Kook was thus fusing Halevi’s conception of Jewish history as miraculous revelation with the abstractions of Kabbalah—the interlocking of supernal spheres and earthly events to form an engine that inexorably turned history’s wheel toward redemption—and its notions of the possibility of participating in the heavens through earthly acts. However, Halevi had primarily discussed *biblical* history, and even the most acutely messianist theurgic practices of lurianic Kabbalah had still been anchored in *religious piety* and spirituality. Kook’s innovation was to apply these ideas to mundane politics, industry, and agriculture in Palestine—orchestrated, at least superficially, by lapsed Jews whose very movement was based on a rejection of traditional messianic and even Jewish ideas. Kook’s total unification of the nationalist

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16 On the question of original causes, however, see note 11.
17 See Appendix 1.
18 The call to establish a Jewish state in the Holy Land prior to the coming of the messiah appeared to transgress one of the “three oaths” (see Eisen 2011, 147). According to this talmudic tradition (see *Bavli Ketubot* 110b–111a), the exile was a divine punishment. God wanted Jews to repent for their sins rather than rebel against it. One of the oaths laid upon them was therefore not to attempt to return to the Promised Land in force (not to “scale the walls” of Jerusalem) until the priest-king figure of the messiah appeared to lead them. This was normally interpreted to mean that a physical messiah was a precondition for mass return to the Holy Land. As a highly assimilated secularist, Herzl did not fill the job description in the eyes of most Orthodox (see,
“realistic–historical” messianic tradition of the Bible and early rabbinical texts with the “metaphysical–spiritual” tradition of Kabbalah, and their application to the immediate present, were unprecedented in the history of Jewish thought. The wholly material and wholly spiritual were not opposites, for Kook, but rather mutually constitutive and operating in concert *in the present day* to bring redemption (Belfer 1995).

Mainstream conceptions of the messianic process almost universally predicted events to unfold in the opposite order. The Jewish people would repent (i.e., *teshuvah*), and/or effect cosmic *tikkun* through meditation, prayer, and Torah study. God would then decide to end their exile and send a human messiah, and/or the perfection of the *sefirotic* alignment through *tikkun* would allow the *Shekhinah* to birth him to the world. Then, the messiah would start the earthly eschatological process by *leading* the Jewish people back to their land, and the Jewish commonwealth would flourish anew. It would transmit a rectified monotheism to the nations of the world, ushering in global harmony under the priest-kingship of the messiah. For Kook, by contrast, “the eschatological process will give birth to the Messiah, not the other way around” (Marcus 1996, 20). As Kook understood this eschatological process as a tight braid of the historical and the metaphysical, he considered the manifestation of mundane *tikkun* through the reestablishment of a Jewish state in *Eretz Yisrael* as a prior criterion for the physical arrival of the messiah, not its *outcome*.

As noted previously, this historiosophical view is intellectually underpinned by Kook’s radical “principle of unity” or “monistic principle” generally; that is, his perception of the underlying unity of opposites in all domains of human experience (Yaron 1991, 83–6) and of the intertwining of all differentiated, contradictory worldly phenomena with the undifferentiated, unified divine source. The apparent evil of the heretical Zionists contained a secret heart of goodness. Evil existed, for Kook, only because the cosmic good that it ultimately served was latent within it.

e.g., Kavon 2009, 22).

19 See, e.g., Singer (1996, 10), Rosenak (2007, 131); see too the Introduction to Kaplan and Shatz (1995).

20 Indeed, a radical monism saturated not just Kook’s mystical ideas but also his entire epistemology: he was frustrated that even the human act of cognition entailed a reduction of the undifferentiated whole to the specific, and believed that true apprehension of reality somehow needed to transcend this error (see Lamm 1991, 27–8). An unrelenting, all-embracing monism therefore pervades Kook’s works, as though he felt a personal drive to unite every apparent pair of opposites in his own intellectual *tikkun*. This has clear resonances with the psychological Kabbalah of Chabad Hasidism; see Appendix 1.
This is to say that Kook’s ontology was predominantly monistic rather than dualistic, seeming to assert that evil had no independent existence in reality (all is divine, light, and good), and conceptualized divinity as immanent rather than transcendent (God’s presence extends through all creation). This is consistent with analyses of Kook’s teachings as belonging on the same spectrum as pantheism and acosmism—a tendency he shared with Chabad Hasidism (see, e.g., Loewenthal 1990, 49–50; Rosenak 2008, 36–8; Schwartz 2002, 46–80; Wolfson 2009, 49–58, 87–103; and Appendix 1). Hellinger, for instance, stated: “According to Rav Kook’s Kabbalistic–Hassidic theology, God’s presence is everywhere” (Hellinger 2008, 535).

For both Kook and Chabad, the deep roots of this paradigm can be traced to monistic interpretations of Kabbalah. Kabbalah contains various narratives regarding the nature and origin of the sitra achra, bound up with the dilemma of the origin of evil in a world created by a God who is entirely good (see Green 2004, 118–20). One representation of the sitra achra was as a series of four interlocking shells, kelipot, surrounding the realm of divinity. In other interpretations, the “evil” of the kelipot is bound up with the “good” of the sefirotic lights in a dialectic cosmogeny that sees creation unfolding as layer upon layer of peel/shell and fruit/light, with the coarse kelipot protecting and containing the refined sefirotic lights. Kabbalah came to hold two views of the nature of the sitra achra’s operation: a dualistic view whereby the evil shells and their creatures had independent power whenever human sin caused imbalance in the sefirot; and a monistic view whereby the peel/shell encloses the fruit and serves a divine purpose in facilitating the gradual ripening of the good in the world, in a sort of mystical–historical dialectic reaching toward the perfection of the messianic age.

Kook adopted a monistic interpretation that viewed the “evil” shells as servants of the good (Yisrael U-Techiyato IX), and a necessary stage in a divinely engineered dialectic. “Rav Kook affirms the reality of evil as an organic constituent and catalyst of positive action in the Divine scheme. … As part of Creation evil necessarily pursues a positive purpose and is ‘preeminently good at its inner core’. It functions as a ‘dynamic

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21 See Appendix 1 on different interpretations of the nature of the sitra achra, “the other side” (the dark, coarse, or evil counterpart to the light, sublime, and good sefirot).

22 In the Zohar and lurianic Kabbalah, the shells symbolize active demonic forces; see Appendix 1.

23 Thus enabling the “rape” of the Shekhinah (variously understood as the feminine aspect of God, the lowest sefirah, Malkhut, and the heavenly counterpart of the Jewish people, Knesset Yisrael), who would subsequently birth impure souls into the world; see Appendix 1 and Chapter 7.
agent of the teleological scheme”” (Yaron 1991, 77). All opposition and disharmony are illusory and temporary. In this stance, Kook echoed the monism of the early kabbalists (e.g., the Gerona school), who saw “evil” as part of a process toward the perfection of creation:

“We know that the good inclination and evil inclination are one creation from the hands of Eternal God. So too this world and the next, the social world, the governmental, the spiritual, the theoretical, the ethical, the ideal, the real—all is one unit, and it ascends the rungs of holiness and is subject to a higher authority. … The divine power in the world meets nothing outside its invention… The arising of contradictions broadens the scope of existence. Good accentuates Evil and Evil deepens Good, delineating and strengthening it” (Yisrael U-Techiyato VIII; see too XII, XIII).

As shown in the next section, Tau also embraces this monistic interpretation—and does so in explicitly kabbalistic language.

For Kook, even atheism had an honored, to aid in cleansing religion of “the foulness that has attached itself” to it during galut (Bokser 1978, 9–10). In addition, the earthy coarseness of the secular Zionists enabled them to serve as a strong material vessel for the divine light that would pour down as the messianic era unfolded (Orot Ha-Techiyah XXXIX; see too XLV). The Zionists of his time were destined to take shape as a kelipah—an “outer shell” or “vessel”—that would contain and protect the divine inner content as it ripened (Bokser 1977, 19; see too Afterman 2007, 102).

Compared with his father, Tzvi Yehuda Kook is generally considered to have emphasized the deterministic aspects of the above (see generally Hellinger 2008, 540), i.e., stressing the inevitability of messianic redemption. He wrote: “The fate of the national rebirth… has been sealed on high” (quoted in Ravitzky 1996, 124; my emphasis), and that setbacks could now merely delay the irrevocable, unstoppable process of redemption toward

“…its well-established destination and its perfect, immutable realisation… and cosmic determination that come about through the grace of the divine covenant with the Eternal One of Israel, that shall never fail… it is this higher, inner life

24 The quotations are from Orot Ha-Kodesh III; see too Lamm (1991, 31).
command that constitutes and clarifies the absolute certainty of the process of our return and recovery here, the building up of our people and our land, our culture and Torah, our military power and sovereignty… Here, at the site of our vitality, there appears this absolute imperative in all its forms, and without wavering or vacillation it establishes and marks off the blazes and illuminates the one clear and certain path… of revival and redemption” (quoted in Afterman 2007, 93–94; my emphasis).

Tzvi Yehuda Kook implied that the process would unfurl in the short term, and this conditioned the fervor and uncompromising stance of Gush Emunim in the 1970s and 1980s. As shall be clear from the discussion of Tau’s own thought, Tau implicitly seek to qualify and circumscribe the messianic urgency often attributed to Tzvi Yehuda Kook. The catalyst for this approach may have been the need to defuse the often critical intra-Jewish tensions that have marked the settlement project, particularly since the Oslo process of the 1990s.25 Thus, when Israeli public discourse was rife with vitriolic secular–religious mud-slinging, blackmail, and dire warnings of civil war over the evacuation of settlements and delivery of territory to Arabs, Tau published essays attempting to reframe the situation at a higher level of meta-historical abstraction, and so defuse the sense of crisis it posed to many in Gush Emunim who saw Jewish settlement of Eretz Yisrael as both a barometer and driver of the messianic process. Tau approaches this not by criticizing his teacher, but rather by re-emphasizing those of Avraham Kook’s teachings that imply the prolonged nature of the messianic process, and the possibility—and even the creative necessity—of apparent setbacks.26

However, even if Tau’s motives for this choice of focus are essentially reactive, the intellectual framework is cohesive and coherent. Tau sees himself as the true inheritor of Kook’s divine task, which requires “correct”/“true” perception of the divine purpose hidden behind apparent disasters. Of all the intellectual commitments that guide Tau’s reactions to historical/political events, the most fundamental is his adherence to Kook’s monistic historiosophy, which is emphasized across all his politically relevant writings. The chapter now turns to this.

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25 As argued by Fischer (2009).
26 He also extracts and gives overwhelming emphasis to statements by Tzvi Yehuda suggesting that the settlement project is a secondary aspect of a much larger task, as shown in Chapter 2.
Dialectic techniques of creation and history in Tau’s thought: Opposition and void as divine catalysts

Tau, like Kook, embraces an immanent conception of divinity as all-pervasive through the cosmos and earthly life, strongly reminiscent of Chabad Hasidism. He also adopts and reinforces Rabbi Kook’s dialectic paradigm of historical progress. However, Tau’s emphasis is more firmly on contextualizing apparently evil developments as a valuable element of the divine mechanics of creation, and he shows less of his intellectual forebears’ effusive prose celebrating the inevitable fulfilment of the messianic dream, calling instead for patience and calm.

Both nature and history, Tau writes, follow a divine order, which must be read “through Torah”; that is, the wise student should study the world and human history through a divine speculum. This includes perceiving the true purpose of apparently negative events. The “God of nature and of nations,” he writes, works through destruction and building together, chaos and tikkun (Ha-yashar, 2). Reality develops in the pattern of a fruit and its shell (kelipah): the hard, bitter shell precedes and protects the fruit that eventually emerges (Nehalta, 19). All historical development or progress is catalyzed by needs and pressures and strengthened by nigud (opposition); a void always precedes new experience or growth (Dor ve-dor, 4; Perakim, 60).

The same holds for redemption, he argues: all geulah comes from sorrow, just as a void precedes all new being (Perakim, 19). In Tau’s theosophy, the role of the “shell” is performed by existential needs and traumas (Nehalta, 19–21): the catalysts for growth are disguised as all sorts of sorrows and pressures, but behind them is the divine plan (Nehalta, 23; Hokhiach, 7). Existential problems are intended by God to catalyze change. For example, Judges describes the anarchy of the early Israelite community in Eretz Yisrael, which in turn created a desperate need for order, and thus led to order itself and the Davidic monarchy. Painful situations are designed by God in order to “return Israel to itself,” he writes, and this holds for inner and outer pressures alike.

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27 This is the first of four pillars of Tau’s worldview summarized by Achituv (2006, 151). See his note 42 on the close relationship with Chabad Hasidic theosophy; see too Appendix 1.
28 On the role of setbacks, non- and even anti-halakhic agents, and the wicked ones in Avraham Kook’s historical dialectics, see, e.g., Eisen (2011, 148–9), Rosenak (2007, 130–1), and Yaron (1991, 81–3).
30 Likewise, the Maharal teaches in Netzach Yisrael that order of geulah proceeds from an initial lack or void, like the void in which the world was created.
Moreover, this is the natural order of political evolution for all of humanity, not just Israel: for instance, urgent pressures led to the emergence of kingdoms from tribes, as higher political structures—an evolutionary leap in human civilization.

This mechanism of divine creation and the unfolding of reality, Tau argues, is true not just in politics or human culture but in nature itself; he presents this dialectic as a theosophy of biological evolution (Nehalta, 22). The needs and pressures to which organisms are subjected are precisely designed and calibrated to the new quality or dimension that must be built to advance the blueprint of creation—plants, animals, people, and nations all emerge in response to carefully devised pressures, by design.

However, humans have a special responsibility as beings of free choice. The dialectical process is still divine, but it must be driven more by our choice and less by nature. The growth that is achieved through automatic behavior among lower life forms must be replaced by conscious struggle among humans (Nehalta, 22). This imposes a special responsibility on humans to work with God as partners in the redemptive process. All the things that “God” will do in the prophecies of geulah (e.g., the prophecy of Isaiah), “we” must do, says Tau (p. 23). Yet there is a paradox: even those who are consciously partnered with God may be subjected to harsh forces in order to mold their consciousness into a shape fitted to the new messianic reality. All the processes of redemption involve completing or refining the Jewish form or “making us whole,” writes Tau, especially in terms of correct consciousness: reality is creating a “pearl” through conditions that force correct forms of thought to develop (Perakim, 26).

The above ontology and logic have tremendous plasticity when it comes to incorporating contradictory historical and political developments into the grand narrative of geulah. Tau emphasizes those of Kook’s writings that deal with the reveal–hide–reveal pattern of geulah, and points to Kook’s responses to crises as part of a divine creative process. By teaching this monistic understanding of the engine of creation, Kook used such crisis for their divinely intended purpose (according to Tau) of raising the community’s consciousness. The same is true, writes Tau, for apparent

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31 See above on the “divine technique” of dialectics. See too Achituv (2006, 143–4).
32 On this paradox, see too Rosenak (2013, 63).
33 See, for example, Achituv (2006, 239–40) on his metaphysical interpretation of the Yom Kippur War.
34 For example, Kook’s Ma’amarei, p. 360.
pauses in the redemptive process: these are needed to enable the nation to assimilate the slow, progressive revelation of God’s design.36

Tau also points to the phenomenon of parabolic trajectories in the unfolding of the divine plan. The first stage of progress is limited but necessary; a vessel for the higher content. Crises in the first stage are designed to catalyze changes that will ensure the second stage emerges under the right thinking or consciousness. If everything is in crisis, Tau says, everything can be reborn—in rectified form (Dor ve-dor, 27).37 This can apply to tensions within the Jewish community, not just the pressures exerted by external enemies. Avraham Kook interpreted the atheism of the secular Zionist movement as part of a transitional period from galut to geulah, whereby those attributes added to Judaism in galut, which did not match the level of consciousness required for the national-religious rebirth in Eretz Yisrael, had to be cleansed. Hence, the community experienced a sad but necessary loss of Jewish values, so they could be reborn in unpolluted form (pp. 4–5; Kook’s Ma’amarei, 29).

The wicked ones of Kook’s generation were serving the premise that the world was created for the sake of the knowledge of God, and that Israel’s role was to show and spread this knowledge (Ha-yashar, ṭ-Ṭ). For Kook this purpose depended on Jews’ return to Eretz Yisrael, because of its unique ability to inspire prophetic thought. In galut, Kook taught, even great students of Torah become preoccupied with trivia (e.g., halakhic minutiae38) and miss “the main thing,” so human consciousness of the relationship of the divine to the world is retarded by Israel’s exile.39 But in the messianic era, all human thoughts and ways of life must be suffused with knowledge of God. The “impudent ones” and “wicked ones” (secular Zionists) of Herzl’s generation served the purpose of forcing a clarification of the learned ones’ beliefs and consciousness. They forced a correction of the state of belief among the wise and their manner of religious study, a teshuvah40 of the devout that entailed a return to the “inner truths” of Torah rather than halakhic minutiae. It is this divine purpose that gives their

36 See generally Tau’s “Le-mahuto shel chodesh Iyar.”
38 On this and other indications of antinomianism in Avraham Kook’s corpus, especially newly released writings, see especially Rosenak (2007).
39 As per his critique of diaspora Judaism, outlined in Chapter 2.
40 Repentance.
impudence strength—and one can perceive this through studying the events of the time, keeping one eye on Torah and one on reality (Dor ve-dor, 5–6).

We must inspect the events of our generation from the same viewpoint as Kook, Tau writes. Tau’s public teachings during the Oslo process repeated Kook’s commentary on the Book of Daniel (2"v") (Ha-yashar, 3–8), which served to introduce Kook’s ideas on the constructive dialectical role served by the loss of religious values. The passage quoted describes stages of separation and refinement during the process of redemption, in which the whole nation—even evil ones—are involved, albeit unconsciously. Regardless of people’s current preferences and objections, troubling times will recede only when their purpose has been fulfilled.41

This framework contains a tension between embracing the possibility that God’s tools include negative or “wicked” elements within the community and the internal stresses they create, and embracing the duty to serve as God’s partner in creation in ways that may lead to confrontation with those elements. On the one hand, Tau embraces the insistence by both rabbis Kook that Am Yisrael must be an active participant in the messianic process, and that the religious Zionist community must be at the vanguard of embodying the messianic vision, inspiring the whole nation to teshuvah. On the other hand, part of the religious content of this teshuvah is a devotion to Eretz Yisrael—an attribute Tau and most religious Zionist thinkers see as lacking among secular Israelis, many of whom are indifferent or actively opposed to Gush Emunim’s settlement project. Can secular leftists’ commitment to the land-for-peace formula, for instance, be seen as fulfilling some redemptive purpose?

Tau’s framework strives to unite its own seemingly opposite conclusions, of i) struggling against the inappropriate consciousness of the nation in terms of its weak connection to Eretz Yisrael, and ii) accepting the possibility that these struggles are part of a divine dialectic. We need to distinguish between what we can and must repair, Tau writes, and what’s beyond us, in God’s hands; even those who think they contradict the process of geulah (e.g., pacifist leftists who want to concede holy land) actually build it. “Screenplays” of politicians, cultural figures, intellectuals, etc., aren’t real in Tau’s

41 This framework is appropriated by Tau when addressing the politics of his own generation, as we shall see in chapters 5 and 6: Tau argues that the culture war between spiritual and secular Jews is to be won by addressing the divine purpose that empowers the impudence of atheist leftists; that is, by addressing the inner deficiencies of anashet emunah (people of belief). Then, the chutzpah will simply disappear, having fulfilled its divine purpose. See Ha-yashar, p. 7 and especially Le-eminat etanu (7), pp. 227–237.
metaphysical ontology, and don’t logically determine the course of the redemptive process; God does (Perakim, 19). However, the ethical conclusion is not capitulation to seculars or the blurring of differences. Rather, Tau advocates a battle of consciousness within the Jewish nation—but one embedded in a wider perspective of love, unity, and respect for the divine light and purpose that is hidden even within sinners.

Zionism through the generations and geulah

Redemption as a slow, natural process

Ha-ketz ha-meguleh, “the revealed end” of redemption, is an ordered, natural process, writes Tau, unfolding gradually over a long time (קמעא קמעא). Talmudic tradition teaches that redemption can come slowly, by natural means, or all at once, by miraculous means, and Tau reasons that God has clearly chosen the latter path (Dor ve-dor, 16–18). He points to hints in Isaiah that the process will be slow, natural, political, and historical (Perakim, 53–4). The precedent for estimating the time frame of the redemptive process, Tau writes, is the period described in Judges: hundreds of years of “anarchy” before the flourishing of the first Jewish commonwealth. Tau challenges his readers to compare the fortitude and patience shown by the faithful throughout that long struggle with the impatient desire for full and immediate redemption on the part of some people in our time. He asks, rhetorically, whether it would not have been permissible during the horrible period of Avimelech (for example) to despair. Of course, the answer is ‘no,’ because this period led to the rule of King David and Solomon, and the building of the Temple (p. 14). Setbacks to settlements should be understood in the same light. We have to exit the narrow perspective of the present, he writes, and see the slow process of redemption (צמיחת הישועה קמעא קמעא) in the confusion of the times (p. 15, 18).

Tau utilizes two principle metaphors for the gradual process of geulah and in particular the relationship of traumas and apparent reversals to the overall positive process: the maturation from childhood to adulthood via a phase of “unruly youth”; and the biology of butterfly growth, presented as a commentary on the phrase “the worm of Jacob” in Isaiah. Neither one detracts from the responsibility of the faithful to

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42 See further Roth (2013, 277–85). Tau shares this approach with Aviner (see, e.g., Roth 2013, 302).
43 Tau’s source: the Vilna Gaon, as recorded in Evan Shilo, parts 27, 2. Tau also cites the Maharal’s well-known teaching that the future world and this world will become one.
participate in tikkun, e.g., correcting the wrongful thinking spread by the “leftist intellectuals” promoting territorial concessions. However, it does have ethical implications for how that “cultural war” is conducted, and the effect is to constrain the range of acceptable tactics to “positive” ones, with public education, tolerance, and compassion for seculars at the center of the cultural campaign (pp. 63–4).

The human developmental metaphor is laid out most fully in Tau’s essay דר ודר אומתו (Dor ve-dor, 28–38) and centers on the metaphor of a prodigal child who turns into a moody and sullen teenager—Tau’s metaphor for the state of Israeli society at the start of the 1990s. It is based on Avraham Kook’s presentation of the same general metaphor in Orot Ha-Kodesh (ג, רלד). The teenager of the original metaphor and Tau’s generation are both in a liminal phase: the child is no longer in control, but neither is the adult. To external appearances, the sweet and happy child has disappeared. However, the promise seen in the child’s virtuous early years (the pioneering Zionists of Avraham Kook’s time) still represents his inner essence, though it is temporarily masked. The teen (the present generation), is in a process of maturation (Dor ve-dor, 28–9). A key aspect of the maturation process is moral development (p. 36) as the child’s initially limited free will expands. Growth involves a shift from domination of the organism by bodily instincts and urges to a domination by the mind (p. 37). Thus, Tau asserts that Kook’s generation represented the “childhood” of the redeemed Jewish nation, for whom the process of development into a community shaped for the messianic age was instinctive (i.e., the divine process spurred on the unknowing secular Zionists to create the state of Israel, oblivious to the true messianic function of their deeds). Now, says Tau, the inner forces within the nation corresponding to the mature form are ready to operate, like the adult urges of the developing teen. Like the teen, Am Yisrael needs to search for a new, real “I”; an inner, conscious adult authority to direct its choices. For Tau, the settler movement must serve the nation as an example of this advanced spiritual consciousness (p. 38).

Another extended metaphor (Perakim, 53–79) is built on a biological rather than psychological analogy as commentary on the phrase “worm of Jacob” in Isaiah 2 (בּרֶשֶׁד וּבְהַעֲרָבָא). Use of this metaphor is noted briefly by Schwartz (2001, 100).

See Rosenak (2013, 138).

See too Rosenak (2013, 141).
Here, says Tau, the prophet is discussing the redemptive process itself, and the order of the *pasukim*. The worm represents Israel’s form after centuries of *galut*. Lacking any physical power, the Jews can only pray. However, it is not an ordinary worm but a silk worm—the larva of a butterfly. Tau narrates the entire trajectory of Zionism, from its beginnings in the diaspora to the upheavals of his generation, through the many steps in butterfly growth. First, as noted, comes *galut*. In this state, some pray for miraculous redemption—they pray for the messianic process to happen all at once (*בבת אחת*)—hoping to skip straight to the butterfly stage. Instead, they find an egg. This corresponds to early religious *aliyah* (*קמעא קמאה* (p. 55)). The next stage is a voracious caterpillar, whose whole life is fixated on consumption and survival; that is, economics and security (in national terms). However, this gluttony and self-centered fear is a necessary phase: the physical size of the caterpillar will determine the size of the butterfly, so the greater its gluttony at this early stage, the grander the final form (p. 56). But the outer appearance is one of abhorrent self-absorption (pp. 56–7). In the course of its development into a butterfly, it also spends short periods in cocoons to shed its skin. From the outside, this hibernation looks like paralysis or even death, but it serves the purpose of growth. Tau stresses that we cannot know what stage we’re in at any given time, but must learn about the overall process and its paradoxes so as not to succumb to despair or to damage the natural process through ignorance (p. 62).

The caterpillar’s final emergence as a butterfly is the hardest stage of all, Tau writes, and the troubles of the current time relate to this stage (p. 60). The caterpillar imprisons itself in a cocoon, and appears externally to regress to the form of an egg (p. 57).
internal destruction occurring in parallel is even greater (p. 58; see too Kook’s Orot ו”ו). Much of the caterpillar’s body is dissolved, in order to produce material that will eventually be converted into wings (Perakim, 61). In national life, this corresponds to ideological abandonment of Eretz Yisrael and settlement, and even of commitment to secure borders. The intermediate destruction looks, and is, drastic, but the heart, lungs, and sexual organs survive, and it is actually a carefully controlled process. The caterpillar’s brain guides the process, just as the process of geulah is determined by the blueprint of the final form to which God aspires (p. 58; based on Orot ו”ו).50

**Kook’s generation vs. Tau’s generation in the progression of geulah**

Avraham Kook’s stance on the nature of the mainstream Zionist movement in his time forms the basis for Tau’s analysis of the place of his own generation in the process of geulah. As Tau summarizes (Perakim, 70–6), Kook taught (e.g., Ma’amarei, 414) that mainstream Zionism was conceived in limited terms: providing a safe haven. Ideologically, it represented a limited, negative idea destined to be replaced with an ideology that resonated with the real, positive origin of the movement, which was divine. The new state should not be a mere shelter, but part of a grand process—the tikkun of all history (Perakim, 50).51 Without an explicit link to religion, Kook wrote, Zionism can’t truly take root among the Jewish people, because it is in opposition to the people’s spiritual essence (which is intertwined with the Torah). General Zionism pretends to represent the whole nation but cannot, because it doesn’t capture the intergenerational spirit that unites all Jews (p. 41). Moreover, as Israel’s purpose in the global scheme is to be exemplars of a holy life, its national way of life must fit this spiritual character and purpose—even its economic and civil structures must be distinctly Jewish, in a religious sense. Likewise, while the secular arts are important aspects or branches of the divine good, they can only achieve their potential if they’re connected to Judaism (Ha-yashar, 22–82). Zionism can’t fulfill its highest purpose and teach humanity, Kook wrote, if it is disconnected from religion—if it sees itself as merely a cultural pupil of Europe (Perakim, 50).

50 See Appendix 2 on the inner kedushah (holiness) and teshuvah of the supernal Knesset Yisrael and its role as the root cause of geulah.

51 On the development of this strand of thought by Tzvi Yehuda, see Hellinger (2008, 539–40).
The divine mission of the religious Zionist movement Mizrachi (and Kook’s Degel Yerushalayim initiative) was to repair this “defect driven into national life” (Igrot (2) Kook). Mizrachi, Kook taught, would attract a universal following by aligning with the true (divine) power that was driving Zionism (Perakim, 50). However, he argued that it must continue to support the main Zionist movement even as it continued the war to annul “the lie” of its denial of any link to religion, because abstaining from the general national movement would operate against the dialectic mechanics of divine providence (p. 72). Rather than bowing out of the main flow of Zionist politics or aggressively combatting the seculars, Mizrachi’s work was to achieve peace in all branches of the nation: there was a supreme need for unity rather than disengagement (p. 51).

As summarized by Tau (pp. 40–51), Kook also called on Mizrachi to “breathe soul” (לזרוק נשמה) into the movement, and to be its spirit and breath. Mizrachi was to work to make Zionism worthy of its claim to represent the nation, to be a national revival of all Am Yisrael. We must partner with God, Kook wrote, to reveal the truth of the source of the movement (i.e., the spiritual source) and support its development into its completed form in the divine scheme. Moreover, Tau emphasizes, Mizrachi had to pursue all this with consciousness of the overall redemptive process and the true spiritual nature of the nation (pp. 41–2). This leads to Tau’s response to a recurrent challenge faced by religious Zionist rabbis during times of apparent crisis; namely, to reconcile the apparently regressive patterns in mainstream Israeli society with Kook’s teachings on the innate holiness of Am Yisrael and claims that the generations of the past hundred or so years are participants in the start of geulah.

In addition to the dialectical paradigm and key metaphors discussed earlier, Tau uses two narrative frameworks to explain the role of his own generation in the redemptive process, and so explains the apparent setbacks in terms of an overall positive trend. These frameworks also support Tau’s strong emphasis on the decisive role of consciousness in the redemptive process; moreover, they enable him to present this innovation as implicit in Kook’s earlier teachings.

One frame is the adaptation of Kook’s argument, based on talmudic midrashim, that a generation of such apparent wickedness and materialism as his own could nonetheless precede the coming of the messiah (in Oreach mishpat; see too Orot Flag of Jerusalem).

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52 Flag of Jerusalem.
53 Exegeses of Torah texts, and homilies.
These midsrashim speak of the need for three generations before the messianic era, which Kook characterized as follows: one generation preoccupied with the material but lacking in any belief or ideals; another generation of ideals that still lack spiritual truth; and finally, the unification of the material and holy. Tau explains that the current generation represents the middle one, in which a large portion of the Jewish population today feels calm and satisfied with what Zionism has achieved (the fulfillment of the material ideal of a safe haven), mistakenly believing that the whole purpose of the national revival has been accomplished (Perakim, 76–8).

Another framework is the parallel between the process of geulah and the creation of ha-adam ha-rishon (the first man, Adam) in Genesis. Geulah, like creation, writes Tau, is a gradual process. The ultimate purpose of creation (in the analogy, Adam) is realized only at the end of all its stages, after the creation of the raw material from which to sculpt the intended masterpiece. Similarly, the spiritual goal of geulah will be realized only after the building of the requisite physical material. Tau quotes the words of the Maharal: "החומר קודם לצורה" or matter/material precedes form (p. 42).

Tau first presents a talmudic reading of Genesis (e.g., Bavli Sanhedrin לח) in which the sixth day of creation—on which Adam was made as the final masterpiece—corresponds to the sixth millennium in the Jewish calendar (the 5000s, our time). He describes how the creation of Adam, in this midrash, took place over several hours, and each stage can be identified with a particular stage in geulah. In the first stage, God took the dirt/dust as the raw material. In the second, a golem was made. In the third, God created Adam’s organs. In the fourth, He breathed life into him (זריקת נשמה, where the giving of breath implies the giving of spirit or soul). In the fifth, he stood Adam on his feet. Finally, in the sixth hour, Adam called God’s name (קריאת השם). This describes the natural, organic order of both creation and of redemption, says Tau.55

Tau interprets Kook’s injunction to Mizrachi to “breathe spirit” (לזרוק נשמה) into the Zionist movement as indicating the corresponding stage in the creation/redemptive process—i.e., the fourth hour (see Kook’s Igrot תמ“א). Rabbi Kook made aliya in order to serve this phase of the process, by sensing the movement and tempo of the times and shepherding the historical/political/national processes in the correct direction,

54 On this metaphor, see too Fischer (2009, 35).
55 He also refers to the prophecy of Ezekiel (37:4); specifically, the vision of the dry bones. Only after the stage of the dry bones (inanimate material) does the vision progress to the breath (spirit and life force).
based on a true understanding of their spiritual root and trend (Igrot (איגרות) ו"ז). Without the “breath” imparted by such true “see-ers,” Zionism (as the Adamic “body” of the messianic age) can’t “stand on its feet.” True see-ers, Kook believed, were needed to help fulfil the redemptive potential of the age, and affect the quality of what unfolds over the whole process (Perakim, 43).  

For Tau, Adam “standing on his feet” is identified with the successful creation of the State of Israel. However, the divine process continues; the consciousness of the nation as a whole is still under development. Like the caterpillar or the child, or the mute Adam, a sense of mind and self that is separate from and dominates physical instincts is yet to emerge. For all that actors like the secular Zionists are major participants, building the earthly body to house the messianic spirit, they do so unwittingly. The transition to the next stage, where Tau argues that consciousness becomes critical, occurs when the Jews re-encounter the holy city of Jerusalem, the physical and metaphysical center of Eretz Yisrael (pp. 43–4).  

Once we reunite with Jerusalem, writes Tau, and Jewish rule is restored over the full inheritance of Eretz Yisrael, the phase of kriyat ha-shem or the calling of God’s name commences. This represents a period of clarified consciousness on the part of the nation regarding its true spiritual nature, its intimate relationship to God, and how it must act to fulfil its divine mission (p. 44). This transition commenced with the 1967 Six-Day War and capture of Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai, and the Golan Heights, but Tau asserts that the generation has not yet attained the stage of kriyat ha-shem (p. 46). Ha-shem signifies essence or truth, i.e., the sacredness of the nation and the redemptive nature of the present historical events, he writes, but this truth is not yet vocalized in the nation at large—though it is perceptible by people of faith, like the religious settlers.  

The present troubles, says Tau, stem from this position at the transition between the stages of “standing on our feet” and kriyat ha-shem. The initial national revival was instinctive. The return to Jerusalem, Tau insists, was also not from free choice. It was driven “from above,” and “from the depths,” from the inner essence of Knesset

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56 See Kook’s Igrot (איגרות); Ein eyah (Shavuot מ"ש; Orot Ha-Techiyyah מ"ש; and the basis in the Bavli (Brachot 30b).  
57 In the language of the “inner urge” and teshuvah of Knesset Yisrael explained in Appendix 2, the entire process so far has been driven by ha-chefetz ha-timir (“the hidden urge”), directly from the supernal Knesset Yisrael, rather than earthly consciousness or free choice.
He asserts that, like the creation of the first Adam from dust, it was an entirely divine process (pp. 47–8). \(^{59}\) Now, however, the people seek reasons—they grope after a rational framework to understand their experiences and to guide their acts. Tau sees this as a symptom of the struggle to attain a phase of geulah in which Am Yisrael must become a conscious participant, with a “mature” sense of its spiritual self and a clear intellectual perception of its role. But kriyat ha-shem represents the attainment of a type of intelligence that is not “rational”, a prophetic intelligence. Tau sees the process as having started, but Israel still does not know herself or understand, and thus, in the absence of clear perception and education by those who can see the truth, foreign ideas and ideologies instead take root among the people, such as materialism and secularism—and the peace process. \(^{60}\)

This sets the scene for what is arguably Tau’s greatest innovation within the religious Zionist fold \(^{61}\): a theosophy and “political” program in which national consciousness and the “true seeing” of a small community of believers become the crucial drivers of the developments of geulah.

### Conclusion

The main contribution of this chapter to the project of the thesis and to scholarship has been to elucidate Tau’s monistic worldview and trace the roots of its conceptual language to Avraham Kook and Kabbalah. The focus here (and in Chapter 4) is on its ontology, logic, and epistemology. To summarize:

- Ontology: earthly reality is constituted by the divine and is embedded in the intricate metaphysical reality described by Kabbalah, in which the Jewish people (Am/Klal Yisrael) have a supernal counterpart (Knesset Yisrael, the Shekhinah). Moreover, this reality

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\(^{58}\) See Appendix 2.

\(^{59}\) He bases this on Bavli Baba Batra (112a), which states that three things are named after/for God, tzadikim (Israel), Moshiach, and Jerusalem.

\(^{60}\) A closely related frame Tau uses is the shift from outwardly reluctant teshuvah (but driven by the inner teshuvah of Knesser Yisrael) to willing, conscious teshuvah; stages closely tight up with the progression of redemption; see Appendix 2. This frame also relates to Fischer’s (2009) argument about the importance of the hidden “general will” of the nation in religious Zionist thought.

\(^{61}\) See, e.g., Schwartz (2001, 98–9). For a discussion of Tau’s innovative emphasis on consciousness through the lens of continental European philosophy, see the thesis of Bluman (2012).
requires rectification (*tikkun*) from an ancient cosmic schism. However, “evil” is not exactly real, but rather an instrument of the divine technique of creation: in the Kabbalah’s language, “evil” *kelipot/shells protect the ripening “good” light/fruit (i.e., a monistic rather than dualistic theory of good and evil).

- Logic: firstly, creation unfolds according to a divine plan, through creative and destructive modalities working in concert (i.e., the unity of opposites). This underpins the kabbalistic logic of Tau’s metaphysics (the dialectic of the fruit and the *kelipah*), the logic of his historiosophy (God’s use of apparently “evil” instruments for positive ends), and the logic of nature (physical/psychological evolution through external pressures and trials). Secondly, God’s messianic design is being implemented through slow, natural means (*קמעא קמעא*). Thirdly, earthly acts have theurgic effects and can advance *tikkun* and redemption; however, the original driver of this process seems to have been divine, rather than human. 62 Inasmuch as humans (and specifically Jews) affect the process, this is now primarily through enhanced consciousness.

- Epistemology: metaphysical reality (the realm of the *sefirot*) is beyond human apprehension; however, the divine will can be perceived through history. This is only possible if history is read through a Torah lens; a “divine speculum,” as Tau puts it. However, it seems that this lens requires a rigid assumption that events are part of the redemptive process; i.e., Tau accepts as accurate the conclusion from Kook’s historical observations that redemption is underway, and this conclusion determines the “correct” reading of history’s meaning. 63 Lastly, we see hints that the function of “true see-ers” is

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62 Thus, although redemption requires prior *teshuvah*, Tau submits that this requirement has already been fulfilled on the divine plane. Earthly redemption starts through a coerced *teshuvah*, created by God through the imposition of painful trials, before becoming conscious and voluntary only in later stages.

63 Schwartz (2001, 100) noted this determinism, and Ravitzky criticized this epistemological stance among religious Zionists (for it is not unique to Tau). Avraham Kook, he wrote, tried to see contemporary political and historical processes from the perspective of God, as it were, or as the conductor of an orchestra (Ravitzky 1996,
not just epistemological; they also play an active role in tikkun and redemption by enabling the growth of national consciousness.

The following chapter will extend the above worldview exploration to Tau’s understanding of Am Yisrael and the nations.

117). However, Kook and his followers were players in the dialectic and not mere philosophical onlookers. Though, as historiosophy, Kook’s doctrine was putatively above the historical dialectic, he and his disciples were in fact deeply involved in the processes they were describing. Ideology called for action: “Kook’s disciples… are religious, even political, protagonists… So they are in danger of mistaking their own part for the whole, their subjective reality for the objective one, their own thesis for the synthesis… imagining smugly that they alone represent the true integration” (p. 118). Ravitzky also critiques the historical determinism implicit in this epistemology: rather than studying history to perceive the true will of God, religious Zionism has come (so he claims) to believe it alone knows the true will of God, i.e., messianic redemption, and so the correct interpretation of new historical events will be determined by its consistency with this prior belief—rather than the belief arising as a deduction from historical observations. In this light, Tau’s “divine speculum” already assumes the conclusion that must be reached by the historical observation. See too Ravitzky (1996, 128–129) and Rosenak (2013, 144).
Chapter 4

Am Yisrael and the nations in Tau’s thought: Universalism, particularism, and the uneasy unity of opposites

Introduction

The previous chapters have outlined Tau’s famed “moderation” vis-à-vis anti-settlement policies, and its intellectual underpinning in his monistic worldview: the dialectical logic of metaphysics and of history, whereby good and “evil,” apparent opposites, work in unity to advance the divine agenda. This chapter investigates another Kookian underpinning, the kabbalistic understanding that Am Yisrael is a single metaphysical organism, effectively sharing one collective divine counterpart in Knesset Yisrael. Moreover, for Tau, Israel is the heart of the nations, and the source that will transmit a ‘correct’ consciousness to all human culture as part of the unfolding messianic age.

This has implications, firstly, for the status of Am Yisrael and the nations in Kookian axiology, which has struggled to reconcile the values of universalism and Jewish particularism in its ideal of Jewish religious-nationalism. Secondly, it has ethical implications for the correct mode of relationship with the non-Jewish nations and for appropriate models of government, through a devaluation of the individualism that characterizes the West, a call for cultural insulation, and ambivalence about liberal democracy. Thirdly, it is one of the underpinnings of Tau’s theosophical analysis of the

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1 I refer to this concept in short-hand as ‘interclusion.’

2 Recall that this collective soul is also identified in Kabbalah with the sefirah of Malkhut—the lowest of the ten divine emanations (and the channel between the upper structure and the material plane) but nonetheless part of divinity. See Appendix 1.

3 I.e., its hierarchy of value. See Chapter 1.

4 Interestingly, this is also framed implicitly in terms of a Halevian epistemology: as Jewish life and history is a form of divine revelation, the purity of that life and its national, cultural development must be protected from the corrupting influences of other cultures, to ensure the transmission of correct knowledge of the divine to Israel’s gentile witnesses. See Appendix 1.
Palestinian national movement as an essentially “empty” fiction (compared with the divine essence and purpose of Jewish nationalism). This in turn informs the dismissal of Palestinian national rights and advocacy of unflinching military resolve in his ethics. Thus there are limits to the ability of the “unity of opposites” paradigm to yield ethical positions acceptable to liberal humanists.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section describes Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s teachings on the (ontological and axiological) distinctions and the relationship between Am Yisrael and the non-Jewish nations, especially the former’s organic interclusion and the implications of this for ideal Jewish nationalism and national life. It also addresses the ambivalence between universalism and particularism in their teachings on Israel’s role among the nations. The next section addresses Tau’s development of this thought system, commencing with his teachings on the uniqueness and essential divinity of Am Yisrael, and the ethical implications for relating to “wicked,” secular Jews. It also explains through this new lens the value of mundane aspects of Jewish national life. The last section describes Tau’s stance vis-à-vis the non-Jewish nations and their cultures: firstly, his advocacy and practice of isolation from Western, liberal culture and thought; and secondly, his understanding of the Palestinians as neo-Philistines, who, he argues, lack any essential value in the world order and exist only to catalyze, dialectically, the strengthening of the Jewish State. The conclusion summarizes these insights into Tau’s worldview, and discusses the implied limitations of even a monistic framework in an inter-religious and inter-national peace discourse, as opposed to an intra-Jewish one.

**Am Yisrael and the nations for the rabbis Kook**

**The interclusion of Am Yisrael: Ontological unity**

Kook’s teachings, in the interpretation of most scholars, present an ontological hierarchy of Jews and Gentiles, as described by zoharic and lurianic Kabbalah as well as Halevi’s Kuzari⁵ and, in later years, Chabad Hasidism (Afterman 2007, 103; Rosenak 2013, 74–5; see too Wolfson 2006, 23n35 and 121–8). Kook accepted the idea that a divine spark makes the Jewish soul essentially different from the souls of other nations

⁵ See Appendix 1.
He describes Israel’s saturation with divine goodness: “Israel is full of the light of the supernal strength and beauty; their consciousness is full of the life of the wisdom of worlds, the life of grace and love of all creatures, the life of holy beauty. Israel reflects this life in its spirit, in the life of each individual soul and in the life of the entire nation, in its structure, its generations, in its aspiration to establish its kingdom, in its holy temple, in its fiery youth” (Yisrael U-Techiyato I; see too III, VIII; Orot Ha-Techiyah V).⁶

Even Jews whose connection to Judaism were outwardly weak “have in them a holy ray of light… the Light of Messiah with its great power heartens them” (Yisrael U-Techiyato XX). Even secular Zionism, which outwardly rejected God and Judaism, seeking to emulate Gentile nationalism and become a ‘normal’ nation, could not escape its internal Jewish godliness (Orot Ha-Techiyah IX). Kook maintained that the “Zionist sinners” were in fact being led back to the Holy Land by organic stirrings of the messiah in their inherent divine essence as Jews, no matter how deeply hidden that essence: “what they want, they do not themselves know” (Orot Ha-Techiyah IX). Like a cosmic compass, the holy spark deep within the Jewish soul guided them to fulfill the Jews’ divine-historical destiny: “The treasure-of-life of the holy is stored in every heart of Israel. In the nation as a whole, this is the power that controls all its ways and essence. The nation’s longing for its origin, its renascence, its land exists only in the quality of holiness that is peculiar to its character” (Orot Eretz Yisrael V).

Kook thus embraced—and even expanded—the Halevian notion that Jews are endowed with a ‘religious faculty’ for the direct knowledge and experience of God that other peoples entirely lack (Yaron 1991, 30–31 and 204–213; see too Orot Ha-Techiyah X, XI; Yisrael U-Techiyato I, IV, VI). Only Jews are capable of apprehending pure monotheism, whereas “the gentile blockage ... cannot contain in its uncircumcised heart the sublime divine world-outlook in all its splendor” (Yisrael U-Techiyato V; see too Orot Ha-Techiyah LIV). This does not stem from Israel’s higher level of spiritual education through following the Torah; it is an essential characteristic (Ha-Milchamah X; see too Yisrael U-Techiyato XXI).

Also like Halevi, Kook held that Jews’ historical experience was imbued with the divine. Am Yisrael has a unique, inherited capacity to embody and to extol the God’s

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⁶ On the uniqueness of Am Yisrael in religious Zionist thought generally, see Schwartz (2003b).
⁷ See too Appendix 2.
greatness to the world through every detail of its history: “The strength of the God of the world, the God of Israel, Master of all Worlds, is increased and manifested by the uplifting of Israel, in the foundation of the nation it shines, in the desire for its redemption it lives and is wakened. ... This glory of God, the royal crown of the living God, rests with Israel. There is no (other) nation in the world that can capture with its spirit this earth-sweeping truth” (Yisrael U-Techiyato I, IV, VI; Orot Ha-Techiyah II; see too LIII.)

Moreover, Kook stressed the essential collectivist character of the Jewish people, totally subsuming the individual within the corporate—Klal Yisrael, the earthly community of Israel—by identifying the collective “soul of the nation” as a single, divine essence (Rosenak 2007, 130; Yaron 1991, 205), the supernal Knesset Yisrael. Thus, for Kook, the “nation of Israel is first and foremost a divine metaphysical entity” (Afterman 2007, 100), and Knesset Yisrael, synonymous with the Shekhinah and the sefirah of Malkhut, is the true essence of all earthly Jews (Orot Ha-Techiyah LXXI). This sefirotic identification frames the Jews as an integral part of the divine.

Moreover, the divine distinction of Jews as the Chosen People is tied up with this particularism–collectivism: uniquely among the nations, the Jewish People are a “collective organism; God’s universal sympathy penetrates this nation not only individually but precisely collectively” (Orot Ha-Techiyah I and II). The Gentile nations, by contrast, are a mere collection of individuals—differentiated and fractured (Yisrael U-Techiyato V).9

These metaphysical ideas endow Halevi’s epistemological notion of Jewish history (i.e., the Jews are the means through which other nations can apprehend God10) with kabbalistic dimensions. Like the sefirah of Malkhut, earthly Jews are a gateway for the flow of divine creativity to the world. Divine blessing and wisdom, for Kook, must be channeled through the intermediary of the Jewish people, and not some universal humanist set of ethics without a religious basis; Kook sees the latter as an “impure

8 See too the discussion and quotations in (Gershuni 1972, 27–8). Hellinger argued that it was only after Kook made aliyah that such “particularist–collectivist connotations suggesting the quasi-biological uniqueness of the Jewish people as an organic body became increasingly prominent” (Hellinger 2008, 535).

9 For a discussion of talmudic and other rabbinical antecedents to Kook’s conception of Am Yisrael as a unified organism, such as the concept of arevut (mutual obligation or responsibility), see Gershuni (1972).

10 E.g., Tzvi Yehuda described the Jews’ “task of leading the world to a knowledge of Hashem… Gentile nations temporarily rose in our stead, bringing material rule to the world… while Israel’s great spiritual message was dimmed. … However, our glory was sure to return. If not for our sake, then for the glory of our Creator” (quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 142–143).
flow” (Orot Eretz Yisrael III; Yisrael U-Techiyato IV). Gentiles can be redeemed only “through their constant connection and relation to Israel” (Orot Ha-Techiyah XII), and in the end of days, this truth will be realized by all the world: “all will recognize the Jewish People as seed blessed by God” (Ha-Milchamah IV). The world order will disintegrate to be replaced by “the light of the world, the light of the true God, the light of the God of Israel, revealed by His people, a wondrous people” (Ha-Milchamah IX). This referred to more than the dissemination of Jewish religious teachings. Following Halevi’s ideas, “Klal Yisrael (the entire people of Israel)... by its very nature (and not only by virtue of the Torah) ... fulfils the universality of being ‘a light to the nations’ precisely through its existence as an organic collective” (Hellinger 2008, 536).

Moreover, Kook associated the kabbalistic concept of Knesset Yisrael with the collective, national Jewish psyche (Zeitlin 1979, 235–7). Although “Jewish mysticism always understood... [that ‘t]he People of Israel’ [Am Yisrael] and ‘the Congregation of Israel’ [Knesset Yisrael] are anchored in a higher, metaphysical realm of being... Redemptionist Zionism... drew amply on this notion and added to it the modern, European element of the ‘national spirit’” (Ravitzky 1996, 84–5). This made Jewish nationalism (i.e., Zionism) qualitatively different from ordinary nationalism. Kook viewed the latter as “schizoid” and oppressive (Yisrael U-Techiyato XVI; see too Yaron 1991, 173–4), whereas “the Jewish national dynamic was saturated with the Divine” (Yaron 1991, 199). This amounts to a total interfusion of Jews’ national-cultural and religious–divine identities, rejecting “any hard and fast distinction between the religious realm and the secular” (Singer 1996, 10):

“There is a great error on the part of those who do not feel the mystical unity of Israel and desire in their delusion to compare this God-thing, which is specific to the Israelite makeup, to the content of any nation of the families of the earth – and from this comes the wish to separate nationality and religion into two

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11 The threads of continuity with the Zohar and Halevi’s Kuzari are readily evident, as described in Appendix 1, and have arguably enabled the increasingly dualistic world-view that has come to clarify many of Kook’s latter-day disciples (see below).
12 See Garb (2009, 37–51) on Kookian religious Zionism as mystical nationalism.
13 This differentiation between Jewish nationalism and the various Gentile nationalisms based on the idea of the Jewish People’s collective bond appeared in the thought of other religious Zionists contemporary to Kook; see Schwartz (2000, 177). Indeed, this idea’s lineage extends back to the Talmud, wherein all Jews are described as part of “one body” or “one soul” (see Stern 1994, 12–3). The novelty is Kook’s identification of Zionism specifically as that collective soul’s direct expression.
divisions. In this both err, for all the matters of thought, feeling, and ideality that we find in the Israelite nation are one indivisible unit” (Yisrael U-Techiyato, XXXI).

For Kook, Zionism was thus “inherently sacred and exalted” (Goldwater 2009, 133): “all the national assets, which are beloved to the nation o account of its national spirit, are all invested with the spirit of God: her land, language, history, and customs” (Orot HaTehiya IX). Thus, “there is no ‘secular’ Zionism” (Kavon 2009, 22). This approach reached its pinnacle in the teachings of Tzvi Yehuda14 In his students’ words: “The combination of spiritual and material holiness in the life of the nation is a uniquely Israeli creation. We are the only holy nation on earth. ... Our Kedusha15 is a national Kedusha, a national holiness which sanctifies every aspect of life, from the wisdom of our holy writings, to our agricultural laws, to the piloting of an Israeli Air-Force jet. Instead of relegating G-d to being an abstract, heavenly being, we reveal His Divine rule on earth” (Samson & Fishman 1995, 75). Hellinger traces this thinking to the original corpus of Avraham Kook, who speculated that the State of Israel would be “‘the foundation of God’s throne’. There, the mundane – the secular – will indeed serve as the basis for the sacred, which nourishes it” (Hellinger 2008, 537).

Avraham Kook’s ideas also contain the seeds of rejection of the secular state and liberal democracy by many latter-day religious Zionists.16 While identifying a positive historical and metaphysical role for Zionism, he nonetheless criticized its secularism

14 He argued that the essential character of Judaism was national. “National awareness lies at the very essence of Torah!” he wrote; “[t]he nationhood of Am Israel, of Am Segula, of the Kingdom of Kohanim and an Am Kadosh, is a Torah commandment, in accordance with our teachers, the Ramah, and the Ramban, to conquer and rule over the Land of Israel in perpetuity” (quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 22–23). His student, Samson, confirmed: “The concepts of Israeli nationhood, and of Clal Yisrael, were among the most basic teachings we learned at the Yeshiva” (Samson & Fishman 1991, 27).

15 Holiness/sanctity.

16 Hellinger argues that they “had an enormous impact on the anti-liberal positions that struck roots among his followers in the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva” (Hellinger 2008, 537). See below re Tau’s criticism of democracy, for instance. On the other hand, Hellinger attributes a more nuanced stance to Tzvi Yehuda Kook, mentioning his belief “that in Israel the principles of the sovereignty of the people and the rule of the majority should apply in public issues,” though “only to the Jewish population” (his source: Eretz Ha-Tzvi, 74 [ed. Melamed]), an approach he characterizes as “a non-democratic ‘democracy’” (Hellinger 2008, 541–2). See Rosenak (2013, 72–3) regarding the diminishing emphasis in Koikian religious Zionism over the decades on the intrinsic value of the State of Israel, as opposed to the extent of its compliance with Halakha. Note, however, that at least some of these claims are exaggerated; e.g., Waxman saw settlers’ use of civil disobedience strategies during the Hitnatzut “and, in a few cases, … acts of violence” as “shocking evidence of a complete disregard for the will of the majority and a disdain for the state’s laws and agents (i.e., the army and police)” (Waxman 2006, 215–6). This at least is in very stark contradiction to the strategic reasoning described throughout Roth (2014), in which the overwhelming majority of the settler leadership insisted on tactics that respected the army and police—and which moreover describes settlers’ complaints about the Hitnatzut as an undemocratic decision.
and its “political idea of nationhood that turned the state into no more than a giant insurance company” (trans. Yaron 1991, 202), allowing the profane, individualistic aspects of nationalism to suppress the sacred aspects (Ma’amarei, 315; see too Bokser 1978, 11–8; Hellinger 2008, 537). Bare nationalism, denuded of Torah, was for Kook a distortion of true, all-encompassing Judaism. Zionism had to be supported to unite its profane nationalism with the holy faith Kook supposed was hidden at its center, rather than simply imitating the insipid, crude nationalism of the Gentiles (Gershuni 1972, 27–9; Hellinger 2008, 536–7).17

In Kook’s view, secular Zionism could not survive because the Jewish nation was too intimately bound up with the divine. He believed the nation-builders would eventually return to full Torah observance, as the Torah was the true, inner character of the Jewish nation.18 This “Great Return” was the aspiration of Kook’s short-lived Degel Yerushalayim (Banner of Jerusalem) movement of the early 1920s (see, e.g., Yisrael U-Techiyato XI). He argued that Zionism must be supported with Jewish spiritual vision by the Torah-observant community—to “breathe the holy fire into the secular because Israel’s deliverance cannot succeed without the blending of the sacred and the secular” (Ma’amarei, 259; trans. Goldwater 2009, 133), as per the historical mission of Mizrachi described in Chapter 3.

The nations in Kook’s thought: Universalism and particularism

Kook’s thought on the status of Gentiles contains many inclusive, universalist elements as well as dualistic and particularistic ones.19 Firstly, until the recent release of his wartime diaries by his disciples (see the end of this subsection), Kook’s teachings did not obviously endorse the Zohar’s implied restriction of human status to Jews alone20 (see, e.g., Orot Ha-Techiyah II; Yaron 1991, 39–41, 189), although he clearly argues for Jews’ superiority as the most sublime expression of human nature and possessors of a supra-human spark of divinity. He asserted that the nations too have sanctity, in line

17 Lamm (1991, 28–9, 31) sets this call in the context of Kook’s monistic desire to dissolve the false dichotomies between profane and sacred in Judaism, and between Aggadah (legend) and Halakhah (law); to combine all domains of Jewish thought in one united whole (Ma’amarei, 79, 257–9) and interweave the Torah and human culture in the new Israelite nation, for their true nature is One (p. 101).
18 This followed a teaching of the Maharal of Prague; see Garb (2006, 256 note 13) for sources on the influence of the Maharal on Kook’s thought.
19 For a summary in the context of Kabbalah, see Wolfson (2006, 121–2).
20 By contrast, see Appendix 1 and chapters 6 and 7 on Rabbi Ginsburgh, who wholeheartedly embraces this position and has used it in secular courts to defend the murder of Arab civilians.
with his immanent concept of divinity and monistic model of creation: “To invoke God is to proclaim the unity of the Universe, of man, of all nations, of all existence” (trans. Yaron 1991, 71). Moreover, in line with the unity of opposites, he also argued that each nation’s particular character enhanced the universal human character (see generally Ha-Milchamah VI). Accordingly, Hellinger asserts: “The unique Jewish identity is not to be realized at the expense of other nations. For Rav Kook, God’s choice of Abraham both as the progenitor and founding father of the people of Israel and as ‘the father of a multitude of nations’ (Gen. 17,4) makes him the archetype of the fundamental connection between nationality and universality” (Hellinger 2008, 535). He appreciated Gentile philosophy and science as lower reflections of the higher divine truth of Torah, and seemed to believe in the possibility of Gentiles’ salvation and divine reward in the afterlife (Korn 1994, 277–8). His early essays also describe the Jewish people’s “general duty [to ensure] that the whole of mankind conducts its life by living as one single and undivided family” (trans. Hellinger 2008, 353).

Further, he stressed that the nature of Israel is to relate to every nation with righteousness and mercy, and that the “conquest” of Eretz Yisrael taking place in his time was not to be by force of the sword, but rather by ways of peace (Ma’amarei, 252–3). Kook envisaged that “politics in the future Jewish state will be conducted on the basis of morality, in contrast to what is customary among the nations” and thus “[t]he messianic Jewish state (‘Jerusalem’) will spread its influence in the world spiritually rather than through warfare” (Hellinger 2008, 537).

Some of Kook’s contemporary disciples are eager to stress this inclusivity and gentleness. In the introduction to their commentary on his Ha-Milchamah (The War), rabbis Samson and Fishman take an apologetic stance: “A treatise on war written by Rabbi Kook seems to be an anomaly. After all, probably more than any other person in our time, Rabbi Kook is known for his great love of mankind and for his outstanding tolerance. … Rabbi Kook is no militarist” (Samson & Fishman 1997, 21). They are at pains to present this treatise on war (which contains some of Kook’s harshest criticism

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21 See Yaron (1991, 28–32); Lamm (1991, 28); see too Diamond (2012) and the discussion in Kook’s Ma’amarei, pp. 243–5. Note though that Kook had limited exposure to non-Jewish thought, and his evaluation of it was less high than is often assumed: Garb, for instance, argues that “while leaving some scope for limited exposure to secular knowledge, at least on an individual level, perhaps like his own limited exposure, … [t]he renewal of Jewish culture should be based on internal sources, and should influence world culture, rather than be influenced by it” (Garb 2006, 260).
of the European nations) as unrepresentative, preceding the book by a ten-page summary of his other teachings on love of humankind, including the following quotes from Midot Ha-Re’aiyah: “A love for mankind must be alive in the heart and soul, a love for every individual and a love for all nations, desiring their spiritual and material upliftment” (Midot, 22–3). While wickedness and evil must be opposed, “we must know that the basis of life, its light and holiness, never abandons the Divine image with which every man and every nation has been graced, each according to its station – and this nucleus of holiness will elevate us all” (pp. 23–4). This should be no mere passive feeling of goodwill, “but a working force compelling a person to seek out the betterment of his fellow man, wherever he or she may be on the planet” (p. 24; see too Bokser 1978, 8–9, 22). Samson and Fishman state that the tendency of some Jews to make “disparaging comments about ‘the goyim’” is itself “a distortion which Rabbi Kook is trying to correct” (Samson & Fishman 1997, 25). Similarly, Bokser translates the following quotation: “I love everybody. It is impossible for me not to love all people, all nations. With all the depth of my being, I desire to see them grow toward beauty, toward perfection. My love for the Jewish people is with more ardour, more depth. But my inner desire reaches out with a mighty love toward all” (trans. Bokser 1978, 29–30).

On the other hand, Orot also contains polemics against “inferior” faiths and European depravity (see, e.g., Hellinger 2008, 536). Christianity is singled out for special criticism (e.g., Yisrael U-Techiyato IX, XV; see too Yaron 1991, 26–7): “How many deposits of evil are subsumed under this awful lie, which has the feet of a swine that are extended, as if to say to passerby: ‘See that I am pure!’ And how unfortunate are the conceptions that must flow from the real, pure world to this polluted spill” (Yisrael U-Techiyato V). He castigated Gentiles’ alleged perversion of God’s law through distorted versions of monotheism (Yisrael U-Techiyato III–V), in contrast to the purity of Am Yisrael, which Kook held had already “triumphed over the heavy, filthy clouds of the pagan kingdoms, and we are also going to vanquish the lighter clouds of darkness” represented by impure forms of monotheism (Yisrael U-Techiyato III–V). Kook’s descriptions of the messianic era anticipate the end of idolatry and the downfall of the wicked nations (e.g., Ha-Milchamah VIII, X; Yisrael U-Techiyato XIX, XX), following standard themes in Jewish apocalyptic literature: “Israel will see with its own eyes the perfection of the wicked, will stride on the destruction of new idolators as it strode on
the ruins of ancient Assyria and Babylon. ... The dissipation of the strength of the nations, who have drunk the cup of poison, must come” (Ha-Milchamah VII).22

Kook’s works also contain calls for the separation of Jews and Gentiles to prevent Israel’s contamination with idolatrous thoughts (e.g., Yisrael U-Techiyato VII). Am Yisrael “is not called to draw from foreign wells but rather to tap her [own] depths” (Ha-Milchamah IX).23 The critical tone is even harsher in Kook’s recently published diaries from the war years (see Rosenak 2007, 137).24 Thus, Hellinger quoted from the recently released Shemonah Kevatzim: “The poetry of the nation cannot admit any admixture, it must be wholly its own. If there are any alien mixtures, it […] is already completely blemished in the essence of its form. The poetry of Israel is the Torah” (Shemonah Kevatzim 8:124 [Volume 3, p. 282]; trans. Garb 2006, 260).

More alarming to the liberal sympathizer are indications in Kook’s recently released diaries that he at least partially subscribed to the Zohar’s functional restriction of the category “human” (adam) to Jews. I have not undertaken an independent study of these texts, but as an example will present the following passage:

“All the nations are as nothingness and chaos, chaos without complete form, and their elevation will come through the total nullification of their previous form […] The basic content, the vessel in its form, has not yet been completed amongst all the nations, the human form has not yet descended on them: ‘And you are my people, the sheep of my pasture, man you are (Ez. 34, 31) – you are called ‘man’ [adam] and the nations of the world are not called ‘man’. All the knowledge and sophistication, intellectual and practical, which seem so rich in their external form, do not bring about the internal soul, which fixes the inner will of the people and its intrinsic character in a clear ideal form, worthy of the

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22 There are further methodological difficulties in drawing firm conclusions about Kook’s true thought because of the at times heavy-handed censorship by his redactors. Rosenak describes one example, concerning “a paragraph written by R. Kook at the height of the First World War. He there sharply criticizes the nations of Europe, which he calls ‘idolatrous,’ and he envisions their destruction under the heel of resurgent Israel. It is clear that R. Zevi [Yehudah Kook, who edited this passage for publication,] deletes every passage directed specifically at the European nations, transforming the citation to one speaking only against idolatry” (Rosenak 2007, 126). See further Appendix 1.

23 Goldwater argued that Kook believed other cultures posed a risk to Jewish coherence only in the Diaspora, under the constant threat of assimilation. In an era of Jewish strength and homecoming to their own land, secular knowledge and other nations’ literature could be beneficial (Goldwater 2009, 135).

24 Bokser, however, asserted that “Kook’s writings are almost wholly devoid of religious polemics” (Bokser 1978, 2). On the balance, this was a fair assessment at the time, but such polemics certainly exist, and the more recently released writings express them in much stronger language.

25 See further Appendix 1 and Chapter 7.
complete human contour, the divine image [tzelem] in the clarity of its existence. And compared to the holy, they are in this unformed and limited state, and any holiness they imagine is but impurity relative to the exaltedness of true holiness of Israel [...] and from this [the people of] Israel will know how much it should preserve its form, how far it should escape from mixing its tzelem, which is holy in the holiness of the holy of holies with the ‘Aramaic [i.e. Gentile] tzelem’, for all that God has granted them under the sky (Deut. 4, 19) is an abomination for Israel” (Shemonah Kevatzim 6:193 [vol. 3, p. 71], trans. Garb 2006, 261).

In such private journals, he also once wrote that “Israel among the nations is as a human among all creatures” (Rosenak 2007, 125 note 82). Definitional subtleties aside, even if Gentiles are considered human, these passages unambiguously show Kook viewed them as inferior—created in an image of God, but not the complete image of God, in contrast to the Jews.

Such apparent devaluation of Gentile worth is also found in the statements of Tzvi Yehuda Kook, whom Afterman (2007) criticizes for xenophobic attitudes toward non-Jews and especially Arabs. He asserted that “Israel is truly unique, a special Divine creation, independent of the natural evolution of mankind, in effect a different species of man” because of its collective metaphysical character (quoted in Samson & Fishman 1991, 142–143). He interpreted the Arab–Israeli wars as proof of the Gentiles’ eternal hatred and the need for militant activism against them (Afterman 2007, 112–113), and often referred disparagingly to the “defiling influence of foreign cultures” (quoted p. 126). For instance, in his foundational essay Le-Netivot Yisrael, he wrote that the

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26 I.e., the divine image in which all “humans” were nominally created.
27 This is consistent with the teachings of the Maharal of Prague, who did not categorically deny that Gentiles shared the divine image but nonetheless posited an “ontological chasm separating Jew and non-Jew” (Wolfson 2006, 117; see pp. 116–20); see, e.g., Garb (2006, 256 note 13) on the influence of the Maharal on Kook.
28 At a stretch, the context of the passage (arguing against admixture of Jewish and gentile culture) could be argued to constrain the axiological assessment to the question of whether exposure to other cultures is beneficial to Jews, and the subtle qualification “not yet” regarding the appellation adam at least implies that gentiles have the potential to rise to full humanity, in the sense of fulfilling the divine image. This would be consistent with the idea (explained shortly) of a dialectic unity of opposites between Israel and the nations. If that dialectic is understood as one of the mechanisms of the divine creative process, Jews and gentiles are both participants in the ongoing perfection of the human form—i.e., ongoing creation of humans be-tzelem elohim (in the image of God). As is so often the case with Avraham Kook’s writings, his stream-of-consciousness prose obfuscates a straightforward conclusion.
29 Note however the apologetic explanation by Samson and Fishman (1997) of Ha-Milchamah.
“impure air of the Exile, full of the filth of the influence of alien cultures, blocks the movement of our life and its ideals” (Le-Netivot Yisrael, p. 11; trans. Garb 2008, 255).

One possible resolution of the above tension between universalist and particularist attitudes, as argued by Hellinger (2008) and Rosenak (1998), lies in Kook’s complicated doctrine of the subsumation, elevation, and perfection of the universal human essence within the particularity of Judaism and the Jewish people. For Kook, “Israel is … the summation of humanity in its entirety, for they [Israel] gather in themselves the virtue of all the nations, and they unify in themselves in an ideal manner the holiness and sublime unity” (Wolfson 2006, 121). For Kook, humanity’s quintessence, archetype, and center rests in Am Yisrael—the heart of the nations—whose divine trait “embraces the totality of the human being” (Goldwater 2009, 135) and is “the essence of all that exists” (Afterman 2007, 104–106). Indeed, refinement and enhancement of the particular character unique to each nation was, for Kook, a prerequisite for the spiritual “completion” of Israel itself (Ha-Milchamah VI). Rather peculiarly, therefore, Kook at once held that the Jewish essence was uniquely divine but at the same time somehow constituted by the diverse contributions of the Gentile nations, which it would embody and reflect back in a rectified form, attached to the divine “root.” Similarly, the purpose of Judaism was to be a “speculum” or mirror of all humanity, and so to assist all faiths to reach toward a higher holiness without erasing the distinct character of each (Bokser 1978, 26–9); i.e., “not to destroy or absorb the other faiths... but to perfect them and to stimulate them toward a higher development” (trans. Bokser 1978, 29).

Hellinger’s (2008) analysis emphasizes this paradigm of the universal-within-the-particular in Kook’s thought, albeit based principally on an early publication (Te’udat Yisrael u-Le’umiyyuto [Israel’s vocation and nationality]) that is uncomplicated by such

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30 In response to such rhetoric, and political developments post-1967, some scholars have pointed to an apparent decline in religious Zionism’s emphasis on the universal dimension of Avraham Kook’s teachings on the nations (see, e.g., the discussion in Rosenak 2013, 91–7, 155–66). Rosenak (2013, 78–80) describes the progressive erosion of the emphasis on love, and in particular love for gentiles; e.g., Rabbi Dov Lior has spoken publically of the need to combat the excessive love of gentiles on the part of leftist Israelis (p. 80). However, Don-Yehiya’s warning is apt: “there have indeed been far-reaching changes in the ideology of religious Zionism. However, they do not constitute a definite linear change from one ideological position to another, [and] they do not constitute a dramatic change that occurred at a definite point of time” (Don-Yehiya 2014, 259; see too Don-Yehiya 1994). Avraham Kook’s commitment to both universalism and particularism did not imply a symmetric axiology; thus, while the universal–particular imbalance may have become more pronounced, the seeds already existed in Kook’s works.

31 See especially Orot Ha-Techiyah V and Hellinger (2008).

32 I.e., it is part of global tikkun. Rosenak (1998, 40–56) similarly argues for a reading of Kook in which Israel’s particularistic nationalism is itself a universal mission.
challenging passages as the one above from *Shemonah Kevatzim*. Hellinger argues that Kook consistently framed the Jews’ divine uniqueness “in terms of its spiritual, universally oriented calling” and claimed that this pattern persisted throughout all Kook’s publications; as an example, he cites one of Kook’s later letters, which states, “From the nation to humanity as a whole is only a step, and from humanity to the embrace of all living being is another step” (trans. Hellinger 2008, 535).

He argues moreover that this orientation was preserved by Tzvi Yehuda Kook until it began to crumble in the face of the Arab riots and attacks against Jews in Palestine in the 1930s and especially the Holocaust. He also asserts that while Kook’s political credo (expressed in *Le-Netivot Yisrael*) has at its core “a distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish politics and nationality … because [the former] is based on theological foundations” (Hellinger 2008, 540), particularistic Jewish politics inherently includes a universal orientation:

> “Unlike the other nations of the world, we do not subscribe to chauvinistic nationality; our nationality has always been cosmopolitan as well, universal and oriented to the world at large … For the global ideals, those eternal, infinite and divine ideals that were articulated in the early beginning of our nation and in the spring of its kingdom, are inherent in our nationality and maintain it” (*Le-Netivot Yisrael*, p. 11; trans. Hellinger 2008, 540).

This parallels a similar teaching by Avraham Kook on the function of the *galut* in purifying Jewish nationalism: “the exile purified the nationality of Israel from its dross, refining it from the impure, material elements that result in violence and physical conquests. The return of the Jewish people to political life is forthcoming because the time has come to practice a completely different kind of politics” (p. 536). Many of these patterns persist in Tau’s thought, although he adds an original dialectical interpretation of the State of Israel’s wars.

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33 On the impact of the Holocaust on religious Zionist thought, see, e.g., Don-Yehiya (1992, 140–6); Schwartz (2001, 31); Achituv (2005); and Hellinger (2008, 541).
**Am Yisrael in Tau’s thought**

**Unity of the material and spiritual**

A first angle of the “unity of opposites” in Tau’s thought on *Am Yisrael* concerns the material and spiritual. Tau argues that material progress plays a role in the overall process of *geulah*. In a divine perspective on history, the great miracle of the national rebirth reveals the inner truth of Israel’s character, relative to what came before (i.e., the darkness of individualism in *galut*), regardless of the outer appearances of the secular Zionists. They too serve a higher purpose: we need builders, says Tau, in the realms of the holy and *chol* (the secular or profane), who in fact share a hidden unity through the interclusion of *Klal Yisrael*. “Man and beast”, “holy and secular” are one “face,” writes Tau, or a “pair of wings” (*Perakim*, 30).

Consistently, Tau advocates caution toward complete addiction to the side of the holy, to the exclusion of the secular. God’s love of Israel is tied to their *inner segulah*, he writes, not outer appearances of either religiosity or secularism (p. 31). Tau argues that the holiness (*kedushah*) that is achievable within a purely spiritual life, rejecting the material, is in fact far less than that which is possible when the spiritual and material are united in a Jewish state, and that the construction of the material vessel for *geulah* is a necessary prerequisite for the revelation of spiritual *geulah*. As expanded on in previous chapter, Tau embraces a vision of redemption as a slow, natural process, unfurling in layers and stages from “below,” i.e., starting with the basest or most material dimension, attuned to the present world rather than the coming world (*ha’olam haba*). He quotes Kook’s teaching in *Orot* (*מג*, לב) concerning the blockage of the rays of most sublime light during the physical building phase of redemption, which starts with the creation of an earthly structure and only concludes with spiritual perfection once the earthly vessel for the most sublime spiritual light is complete. Moreover, Tau argues, the messianic age will be the more perfect for its foundation in the material realm, as its character is unification of the worldly and supernal.34 Tau cites Kook’s teaching (*Igrot* ז*ס*) on the need to connect the “upper lights” of the spiritual with the “revealed sparks” of the

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34 For the link between these ideas and Tau’s interpretation of the symbolic significance of Jerusalem, see Tau’s “Yerushalayim.”
Shekhinah extracted from the mundane world, as the light of the messiah encompasses both the upper and the revealed lights. The character of the messiah, he writes, is interclusion, starting from the “small”—the revealed lights of the mundane.

**Segulat Yisrael**

Tau’s teachings on the nature of Israel’s segulah resemble those of the rabbis Kook in all respects germane to this analysis, particularly Rabbi Abraham Kook’s teachings in *Orot* on the essential, collective nature of Israel’s national character. Firstly, Tau embraces the conception of *Am Yisrael* as a metaphysical unit, and the endowment of Zionism with a unique character among the nationalisms of the world in consequence of this. The Jewish people’s virtue is not the sum of the spiritual or human virtues of individual Jews—even its wisest sages or the “great ones” of the generation—because *Klal Yisrael* and *Knesset Yisrael* are greater than the sum of individual tzadikim. This national collective identity is more essential and true, according to Tau, than the nature of a Jew’s individual self (*Perakim*, 11), and the forces operating in public life are stronger than those affecting the individual, such that during emergencies like wars, these inner forces in are even stronger (p. 7). Consistently with this picture, Hellinger affirmed that “[i]n R. Tau’s teaching, the particularist–collectivist aspects [of teachings by the rabbis Kook] stand out. His determinist notion of redemption stresses faith in the good that is found in each individual Jew as part of the organic vitality of the nation as a whole” (Hellinger 2008, 544).

Similarly, Tau quotes Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s teaching that Israel’s value in the universe, and the seat of its influence upon the world at large, lies not in personal virtues, such as individual Jews’ good-heartedness, ethics, or idealism, or those of its chachamim (wise ones or sages) or giorim (heroes), but in the natural character of the Jewish nation as a nation, or the nation’s collective “public psychology” or spirit (*Perakim*, 9–12). Tau thus attaches great importance to this organic flourishing of Jewish national life for the benefit of the whole world. In his commentary on *Isaiah* 2, Tau states that flourishing as a national community is the mechanism by which holiness will spread through all human culture, ushering in a new world order of justice and righteousness (p. 78). Although the influence of Israel’s national essence on the world

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35 See the distinction made in *Midrash Shemot Raba*. On the sparks of the Shekhinah, see Appendix 1.

36 Tau’s source: Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s *Tzemach Tzvi: Igrot* (8”2).
operates regardless of whether non-Jews know or like it (as Israel’s connection with all of humanity is intrinsic, like that of the heart among the organs; p. 12), this influence can be either revealed or concealed. Tau asserts that the “divine light” or truth is revealed in the world to the extent of the fullness of Israel’s national life (p. 10), consistently with Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s interpretation of Halevi’s Kuzari. The influence of the Jewish people on the world is channeled via its national self-expression. Moreover, the seat of *segulat Yisrael* is not Judaism in the abstract; rather, it stems from Judaism and the Jewish People as one, such that the people and the faith constitute one another spiritually and (at least in an ideal world) politically.

Also consistent with the rabbis Kook, Tau identifies the Jews’ collective interclusion as their qualitative difference from any other “nation among the nations” (*Zekhero*, 2). Moreover, the nature of Jewish government is also qualitatively different from that of the nations. Tau expands on Avraham Kook’s teachings on the intimate relationship between *Klal Yisrael* and its government. The government, Tau says, is essentially the life force of the collective, *Klal Yisrael*, manifesting in some personal concentration, and is connected to that life force and dependent on it. The government is thus just a vessel, and its value lies in the public power expressed through it (*Perakim*, 17; Kook’s *Ein eyah Shavuot* 57). It represents the “pulse” of the “general situation” in the wider nation, and is affected by its morale and state of consciousness (*Shlach*, 1).

As shown more fully in the next chapter, this motivates both Tau’s explanation of the root cause of ‘wrongheaded’ pro-peace policies and the strategy he proposes to address them. For example, Avraham Kook’s analysis (*Ein eyah Shavuot* 57) of Ahijah’s prophecy against the wicked king Jeroboam (1 Kings 14) reveals the imperative of addressing any ruler of *Am Yisrael* with respect, however evil their deeds. King Jeroboam made golden calves for the people to worship, and Ahijah predicted his son’s death as punishment. However, Ahijah himself died, because “insults are not the way to persuade a king” (*Shlach*, 2-8). Like the king of Kook’s parable, Tau asserts that the government of the State of Israel is not a private individual, and insulting it is not the same as insulting a private individual. The government is essentially the life force of the *klal* manifesting in concentrated form. If God allows the ruler to stay in

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37 "שעשת רוחיدير יהומ האלהים... אני מחבק מקום מעפתי ירושלא במלים“ (*Perakim*, 10).

38 For Avraham Kook’s teachings on the interclusion of all Israel, see, e.g., *Igrot* (ג, *Mishpat cohen* (-2*; "רומ ר"); *Olat re aiyah* (8), “Korban Pesach.”
power by virtue of the power of the Jewish/Israelite public he embodies, Tau asserts, there is some essential and ideal basis to the ruling regime that the faithful must find and spur into action. Even if the government is eventually going to be replaced with a better one, says Tau, right now, this is it—and it concentrates all the nation within her and must be treated with the corresponding level of respect (p. 37). Shaming the ruler shames the entire public, and if we so denigrate the public and weaken the life force in it, we weaken the general force of the divine in the world (Perakim, 17). This explains Tau and Aviner’s partial departure from the dominant ideological position in settler leadership circles the Hitnatkut, according to Roth (2014, 282–5). They and their mamlakhti colleagues maintained that there was no theosophical distinction between the sanctity of the state and that of the present government (Sharon’s), and therefore that there should be no rhetorical or operative distinction. (Most of their contemporaries did not agree that the temporary government of the time was holy, as opposed to the government as an institution.)

It is understandable that such a stance would be praised by liberal analysts as “moderation.” However, this mistakes a strict and coherent religious logic for a compromise. Tau is no “moderate” in the sense of ideological flexibility. For instance, when Israel’s then president Moshe Katsav was charged (and unanimously convicted in December 2010) of rape, sexual harassment, committing an indecent act while using force, harassing a witness, and obstruction of justice, Tau led a campaign defending him (see Rosenak 2013, 102–110). His main justification for this stance was Katsav’s status as the effective head of the Jewish kingdom (p. 103). Thus, the ‘mamlakhtiyut = moderation’ frame may be as conceptually and empirically problematic as the ‘religious Zionism = fundamentalist extremism’ frame.

I now turn to the ontological, logical, and axiological dimensions of these ideas for “wicked” Jews and their relation to the klal. These significantly influence Tau’s ethical stance; that is, his long-standing advocacy of patience and empathy vis-à-vis secular Israelis, “wicked” political leaders, and “leftist provocations.” This stance is rooted not

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39 See Chapter 5.
40 Tau’s fellows in the campaign also explained their stance in terms of the alleged “bias” of the court system and its application of Western-style values and the “law of goyim” to Jews, or similarly, the fact that one of the judges was an Arab (per Aviner, for instance; see Rosenak 2013, 105). The perceived role of the secular courts in enabling the Hitnatkut was another background factor (p. 106).
just in Tau’s intellectual alignment with classic, mamlakhti (loosely, “statist”) religious Zionism but also in the present logic of Jewish interclusion, as one spiritual nation.

**The “wicked ones”**

At the highest level of abstraction, the “unity of opposites” in this context captures the notion that the “bad” and the “good” exist in a divine partnership. The bad strengthens and “forges” the good, just as the good tzadik can rechannel impulses of evil in positive directions, in both cases yielding an expression of life in a more full and correct form (*Hokhiach*, 21).Tau’s language on this topic reveals the Hasidic influence he shares with Avraham Kook.41 Evil and sin, he writes, provide the potent “life force” that is necessary to enable the fullest and, paradoxically, most spiritually elevated expression of life.42 The value of sin lies in its embodied, primal nature as a powerful “flow of life,” and this force can be greater than the force of morality. Morality, by contrast, performs the negative function of restraint: it contains the unruly flow of the life force, imposing boundaries, rather than contributing its own positive energy. Hence the paradox: the very highest possible expression of goodness draws its power from the possibility of sin at its heart. If sin were impossible, morality would lack any spiritual strength of its own (p. 21); the outer opposition is thus revealed to be a unity (p. 21).

For Schwartz (2001, 101), Tau’s emphasis on this dialectical tension or relationship as an indispensable component of unity is unique within the religious Zionist fold. It has implications for intra-Jewish politics. The life force needs direction, says Tau, which can be provided by the religious community. Indeed, this relationship is a necessary part of the divine design, and great hurt can be done if religious people eschew this duty and disengage from seculars (a path increasingly advocated on the far right of the settler movement in recent decades), leaving the life force vulnerable to being channeled in a destructive direction (*Hokhiach*, p. 21). In short, the righteous have a positive duty to “channel” the wicked toward the good (p. 21), and the disaster and disadvantage that may be born through their failure to do so will be proportional to the life force contained in the sin that is being hidden or blocked from appropriate expression. Such forces must find an outlet, says Tau, and if the outlet is in the right place, the divine

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41 See generally Garb (2004).
42 This connection will be made clearer in the discussion in this section on the relationship between the spiritual and the material. On this aspect of Hasidism, see, e.g., Loewenthal (1990, 16) and Wolfson (2009, 169–80, 206–11). See too Appendix 1.
purpose is served, but otherwise the forces are destructive. If they are suppressed entirely, the outcome may be even worse (p. 73).

This duty to channel the vital force of the nation toward the good plays out on various levels. One pertains to the necessity of Zionism in the process of geulah, and its present imperfections. Tau explains that in its diasporic existence, Israel’s vital forces, tied to its essential collective being, cannot find appropriate national expression and so do great damage; they find a channel into evil (pp. 80-1). The return to Zion in the modern era signals impending redemption, and this period is marked by a heightening in these forces; however, in mainstream (secular) Zionism they have not yet found their full or correct expression. Divorced from the guidance of the Torah, Tau writes, these national forces take us to “dust” rather than “the stars” (p. 86).

In the arena of intra-Jewish relations in Israel, particularly between the religious community and seculars and/or “leftists,” Tau asserts that drastically different elements are placed in a single society and generation according to a divine plan. Everything is necessary and interconnected, and even the wicked ones serve a purpose: God has placed great tzadikim and people of great wickedness in the same generation by design—following the now-familiar logic of the “unity of opposites.” In fact, the tzadik and the wicked person are two faces of one force and one spirit. The wicked one’s crimes are, on some level, those of the tzadik, because both are rooted in the same supernal soul, Knesset Yisrael (p. 12). This doesn’t mean the faithful should refrain from arguing against the misguided and evil elements of Jewish society, but this battle should be an inner battle within the conception of a greater partnership. Moreover, Tau argues, we should seek a real peace as an outcome to this fight: not a “fake,” “strange,” “alien” peace that consists of blurring or erasing differences, but rather one that realizes all forces are needed for a higher purpose; Tau sees the life of Avraham Kook as an example of this work (pp. 22-2).

In another context (Ha-yashar; also Le-emunat itanu (8), 72-8), Tau argues that any Jewish government must necessarily embody both the good and the wicked within its generation, owing to the intimate nexus between the government and Klal Yisrael. Thus, King David necessarily embodied both the positive and negative within the nation, and was able to channel both toward the ultimate service of God (Ha-yashar, 12). The whole point, writes Tau, is to perceive or reveal divinity in the real world, in which both
goodness and wickedness are entangled. This task of “drawing back the veil” entails not just delivering “educational content” and appropriate hasbarah, but also emulating the example of David. One must serve God with one’s evil inclination (יצר הרע) as well as the good—with all the forces of life, as David did. Every Israelite could be found embodied in its perfected or elevated form in David, Tau writes, with even the basest elements channeled toward a higher purpose (pp. כז-כח). Am Yisrael is commanded to work with God, as partners, and Tau stresses that this is a call upon the whole nation—“not a part of the nation that thinks it’s the whole nation” (a criticism against the religious community; Perakim, 15). In other words, the virtue of one community of devoted believers, such as the settlers, is insufficient. We’re all organs in one body, he says, and the Shekhinah won’t settle on a defective body. As long as one person among Am Yisrael lacks a full consciousness of Eretz Yisrael, we all (i.e., the entire klal, including the settlers) have a defective consciousness (p. 16).

However, even as their role is honored, the wicked must yet be directed toward the “truth,” because the consciousness of the entire nation must be perfected for redemption to unfold. The radical interclusion of Israel implies not just the need to accord honor to the wicked, but also the “right and duty to repair all branches from the same root” (Hokhiach, כ). The same argument proffered for embracing the secular community with compassion and understanding also demands its reform and persuasion to abandon “leftist” and “atheist” ideas, such as the peace process. This forces Tau to walk a fine line on events such as the Hitnatkut and the clashes at Amona.

This chapter now turns to the ontological, logical, and axiological status of the nations in Tau’s thought, his understanding of the logical (and, paradoxically, epistemological) relationship between the nations and Am Yisrael, and the ethical implications for i) the permissibility of exposure to Gentile culture, and ii) Israeli political and military strategy vis-à-vis Arabs in general and Palestinians specifically.

43 One fault affects/belongs to all. Believing otherwise (e.g., we’re pure, they’re bad) undermines all. On all-inclusive fraternal love, see, e.g., Kook’s Ma’amarei, p. 523.

44 As noted by Achituv (2006, 149).
The nations in Tau’s thought

Universalism, the-universal-in-the-particular, & particularism

Tau’s teachings parallel the writings of the rabbis Kook draw on universal and particular paradigms of Israeli and Gentile nationalism—and a paradoxical unification of both paradigms through an understanding of Israel’s particular nationalism as encompassing the universal.

Firstly, Tau retains the Kooks’ universal understanding of \textit{geulah} and the role of Zionism therein, arguing that Israel’s (national) concentration of its \textit{segulah} as a political and cultural entity elevates the entire world spiritually and metaphysically (e.g., \textit{Nehalta}, 3; Achituv 2006, 148–9). Moreover, this inner dimension of redemption is greater by far, he says, than any of the material transformations foreseen by the prophets (\textit{Perakim}, 12). Israel’s national redemption is tied up with universal redemption and the revelation of God in the world\footnote{On this concept in Judaism and religious Zionism generally, see, e.g., Ravitzky (1996, 84–85).}; the development of justice, morality, and idealism\footnote{See too Tau’s \textit{Nehalta}, p. 13, and Kook’s \textit{Olat ha-re’aiyah} (ע”ת, ר”א).} and the expansion of their dominion in the whole world; and with spiritual progress and the redemption of the \textit{Shekhinah} (\textit{Perakim}, 71, 76).\footnote{See too Appendix 1.} Similarly, in line with his immanent conception of divinity and monistic reading of lurianic Kabbalah,\footnote{That is, as discussed in Chapter 3, the understanding that the “evil” \textit{kelipot} or shells from \textit{shevirat ha-keilim} (the breaking of the vessels) contain divine sparks that animate them, and that they perform a positive dialectical role; see too Appendix 1.} Tau holds that all the nations contain a grain of good (Rosenak 2013, 91).

However, as noted by Rosenak (2013, 92–4), contemporary religious Zionist teachings on Gentile nations and their culture walk a fine line between monism and dualism, and Tau is no exception.\footnote{E.g., Schwartz (2001, 96) notes the tension between universalism and particularist nationalism in Tau’s responses to the Oslo process.} As analyzed by Hellinger (2008, 545–6), Tau uses biblical metaphors to associate distasteful or politically threatening cultural groups, e.g., the West or the Palestinians, with Canaanite nations from the time of Joshua. For example, \textit{Le-emunat itanu} (ל-מענותני) identifies the West as neo-Amorites, described as “abominable elements, which debase humanity and make it deviate from the right path” (as paraphrased by Hellinger, \textit{ibid.}), just as he elsewhere identifies the Palestinians as neo-Philistines (see below). Tau is scathingly critical of the ethical bases of Western
political and social culture in individualism and liberalism (vs. the collectivism and halakhic observance that should characterize an ideal version of Israeli culture). For Hellinger, this leads not just to a cultural rejection of the West but also to a rejection of the liberal democratic model:

“The neo-Amorite western culture stresses individualism, negates the value of family life ... and places emphasis on greediness, cruelty and above all careerism. The original Jewish culture provides an alternative model of life, one that places emphasis on duty and purity and glorifies the value of the family and the connection between the individual and the community... The liberal democratic regime is based on western culture, which is individualistic, universalistic and rationalistic. It dictates the subordination of the state to the individual and prefers the discourse of rights to the discourse of commitments. There is no way to bridge the gap between liberal democracy in its extreme individualistic form and the theological-political premises articulated by R. Tau and presented as the ‘true’ Jewish heritage” (Hellinger 2008, 546).

Moreover, despite Tau’s subscription to the inclusive, universal conception of geulah, whereby Israel’s particular redemption is a means for global redemption, Hellinger points to stridently dualistic elements of that vision’s content. Tau submits that the polluting neo-Amorite elements in the world will not be rectified (i.e., will not attain their perfected form by tikkun) “until the word of God comes out from the Israeli nation in the course of its redemption and the revelation of its inner virtue. Only the divine truth, in all its purity, will gain the strength to demonstrate the insignificance of all worldviews and will thus redeem the world and human culture from their captivity” (pp. 545–6). It is possible to interpret this in a monistic light, as the rabbis Kook taught that each nation had a positive purpose in the divine design and that its inner positive content would be refined over the years through dialectics of friction, e.g., war, leading to their perfected or rectified forms (see below). However, the dismissal of “all worldviews” as “insignificant” presents an axiological and epistemological dualism, albeit embedded in a more general monistic ontology and logic.

This particularistic stance edging into dualism has consequences for Tau’s ethics, firstly in the domain of religious practice and learning. Tau advocates strict isolation by the spiritual elite from Gentile culture. Indeed, this was the crux of the debate at Merkaz
Ha-Rav that nominally led him to break away and found Har Ha-Mor. The reigning rosh yeshiva supported opening a college for secular studies attached to Merkaz Ha-Rav, but Tau and his many allies objected strongly to exposing students to a mixture of Western secular learning and Torah learning, for both pedagogical and metaphysical reasons, as analyzed by Rosen-Zvi (2003). Rosenak (2013, 95–7) also relates many comments by Tau’s close associate, Rabbi Aviner, that dismiss the value of Western ethical systems and natural ethics compared with Torah, presenting them as “lower” and “higher” ethics, in a clear axiological–ethical hierarchy.

Secondly, Tau’s identification of the peace process as a result of Western pressure and Jewish Israelis’ confusion by the polluting influence of foreign ideas leads to an association between the pro-peace stance and cultural and moral perversion.50 He asserts that the pro-peace, Gentile-loving Left are “bound to impose on us the dying western culture and make us drown in a sea of lusts, licentiousness and permissiveness, confusion, and misguided beliefs that would lead us astray from the right path” (Le-emunat itanu (8), 137; trans. Hellinger 2008, 546).

The integration of these universal and particularist strands in the unity-of-opposites paradigm is only partial. Tau’s narrative of geulah does anticipate a “renaissance of human culture” that will spring from Israel’s return to its homeland—the universal good as the end goal of the particular redemption of Israel (Nehalta, 4).51 He is also explicit in rejecting any martial dimension to Israel’s revelatory function in the world (i.e., in the context of the Halevian notion that Jewish history embodies the divine). While messianic fulfilment requires Israel to be a strong nation on its Holy Land, being a light to the world will not involve any war of expansion. Tau stresses that wars are limited to the phases of Israel’s national creation and consolidation, so that she can be a light to the world through example, not war (Nehalta, 16–7)—and peace will be the final stage in redemption when the world accepts Israel’s light (Achituv 2006, 148).52

50 E.g., Schwartz (2001, 97) recounts one of Tau’s critiques of secular immorality in his responses to the Oslo process; see Le-emunat itanu (8), p. 127.
51 Thus, responding to the Oslo process, Tau argued that it was only because of peace-proponents’ unconsciousness of their true Israelite segulah that they (mistakenly) believed Jewish national control of the Greater Eretz Yisrael contradicted universal morality; see Schwartz (2001, 98).
52 See Rosenak (2013, 155–66) regarding the tensions inherent in Avraham Kook’s thought around the function of the use of force, and the divergence of approaches among students. These approaches range from the stance described here and also by Aviner (i.e., violence has a limited purpose only in the establishment of Israel on its land and in enabling long-term peace), to the defense of murdering innocent gentile civilians in Torah Ha-Melekh (written by two rabbis educated in religious Zionist yeshivot but now working at Od Yosef Chai; see
However, this universal good is premised axiologically on the superiority of orthodox Judaism over all other thought systems. Consistently with the rabbis Kook, Tau sees the achievement of this “universal good” as involving the “purification/cleansing of the idolatry and crude materialism tied up with all the world’s nations and religions” (ibid.). On the other hand, this does preserve other nations and religions—in rectified form.\(^{53}\)

This is not the most insidious element of dualism. A closer reading of Nehalta and Emunat Itamu than that offered by Hellinger reveals a subtle implication that this Israel-led process is necessary for Gentiles to attain full humanity in the sense of creation “in the image of God.” Tau writes that the “purification/cleansing of all frameworks of the human mind/spirit” is intended to prepare the Gentiles (literally, “make them fitting/kosher/capable”) for the higher measure and conception of peace and freedom they will enjoy—a freedom for “the image of God” and soul (ibid.). This is a subtle hint; not a bald statement that Gentiles are (temporarily) sub-human, but it is nonetheless dualistic (at least in a local, temporal sense if not in an eternal scheme) and echoes Kook’s difficult passage from Shemonah Kevatzim discussed earlier.\(^{54}\)

Somewhat more coherent is the resolution of Tau’s ‘closed’ stance on the need for separation between Jews and Gentiles with his ‘open’ stance regarding the grains of good embedded in the Gentile nations. As Rosenak explains, Tau frames this as an extension of the paradigm guiding his separation of religious and secular studies (Rosenak 2013, 91–2) and the paradoxical separation of Har Ha-Mor from the prevailing secular life—despite the value of the mundane substance of Israeli nationalism and the national life in the Kookian worldview. In Rosenak’s analysis, the separation is necessary to enable the dialectic of opposites to do its work. The separation enables Har Ha-Mor to function as the heart of the nation, embodying in its students’ consciousness the divine grains of the national essence, from which position it can exert a unidirectional influence on the nation, steering it toward the good (Rosenak 2013, 100–2). Similarly, cultural separation of Israel and the nations enables the former to steer the latter toward the good, where the epistemological accuracy of Israel’s notion...

\(^{53}\) The ambiguity regarding just how much of their content needs rectification could conceal a much greater degree of dualism. For instance, if Christianity must reject the ‘idolatrous’ notion that Jesus was the messiah, it will effectively cease to exist.

\(^{54}\) Cf. Rabbi Ginsburgh, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.
of the good is ensured by the logic of interclusion that understands the Jews as the heart of the nations. That is, the Jewish collective is the “center” at and through which the universal divine essence, diffused throughout the periphery, is reflected and concentrated (i.e., Israel is the speculum of the nations’ divinity), and the unidirectional back-transmission of that essence’s influence enables amplification of the hidden good within each nation of the world.

The remainder of this section discusses Tau’s explanation of the Arab–Israeli conflict as part of the process of geulah, and his adaptation of a teaching by the Vilna Gaon to argue that the Palestinians are neo-Philistines, whose dialectic purpose can be understood by reference to the biblical Philistines’ opposition to Jewish rule. He also emphasizes the root of the conflict in the Gentile nations’ “eternal hatred” of the Jews. However, he makes at least intermittent efforts to link this to geulah, by referring to the nations’ sense of instinctive threat from the dramatic transformation Israel’s redemption will effect in the whole world. In contrast to his calls for unity, understanding, and perception of the segulah hidden in even the most wicked Jews, Tau calls for an uncompromising stance vis-à-vis all Arab demands, and rejects any Palestinian right to national independence, not just because it would require ceding parts of Eretz Yisrael but rather because, like the Philistines, they allegedly lack any essential national character or value in the order of the world, and have been placed in the world solely to force Israel to become stronger by overcoming them.

Israel’s wars, & the Palestinians as neo-Philistines

The earliest versions of Tau’s thinking on the true causes of Israel’s wars (e.g., the 1990 publication Perakim) owe much to Tzvi Yehuda Kook. Following Kook, Tau explained that “the inner and outer wildness of the time” were symptoms of the persisting contradiction between Israel’s (secular) external political structure and its (religious) internal essence (Perakim, 72; see too Schwartz 2001, 96). This represented an unnatural state of affairs, in turn provoking the resistance of the nations to the state of Israel in the world (see Tzvi Yehuda’s Le-netivot, 2). This contextualized his recommendations to abandon thinking about Israel’s wars in terms of limited, secular

55 There are subtle echoes here of Halevi’s embodied epistemology, by which Israel reveals divine truth through its lived experience rather than just its teachings. See Appendix 1.
56 Schwartz (2001, 101) sees this element of Tau’s thought as an innovation in the religious Zionist fold.
concepts such as “secure borders”; the trappings of the nation state, Tau asserted, live only through the force of Israel’s inner holiness (*Perakim*, 73).

Tau also builds on teachings by Avraham Kook regarding the divine purpose of wars in history, catalyzing a strengthening of the positive particular characteristics of each nation dialectically (see, e.g., Rosenak 2013, 133; Achituv 2006, 145), as part of the *tikkun* process leading to the messianic age.\(^\text{57}\) Achituv (2006, 145) points out that Israel was not a participant in the wars Kook described; the texts in question were written during WWI. Tau’s innovation, he asserts, was to identify the same process as operating on Israel: the nations’ wars were involved in upbuilding the Jewish nation not just passively, in the sense that they were part of the same redemptive process, but also actively: *Am Yisrael* itself is built up by other nations’ wars against it in the age of the state of Israel (p. 146). Achituv traces this theosophical development to Tau’s fusion of Avraham Kook’s metaphysical interpretation of Zionism as part of the “revealed end” with this dialectic, metaphysical interpretation of wars between nations (p. 148).

These strands of thought are united in Tau’s analysis of Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians.\(^\text{58}\) Tau mostly continues the predominant frame among religious Zionists (and much of the Israeli public) from the 1960s–80s; i.e., Arabs are an example of the general hatred toward Israel of the Gentile nations through history, as discussed by Avraham Kook, and Palestinian nationalism is an “invented” nationalism with no authentic substance, as argued many Israeli leaders (including, famously, Golda Meir; see pp. 137–8). However, Tau’s adaptation of the Vilna Gaon’s teaching\(^\text{59}\) on the dialectic role of the Philistines to justify this political stance (in *Nehalta*,\(^\text{60}\) recounting a lesson from 1991) represents an original\(^\text{61}\) effort to integrate the Palestinians specifically into a coherent narrative of *geulah*. This represents the only intellectual effort I have encountered in Kookian religious Zionist publications to stretch the *messianic* unity-of-

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\(^{57}\) See further Achituv (2006, 144–145).

\(^{58}\) This area of his thought is less well developed intellectually than the material on intra-Jewish affairs. This is arguably in consequence of his source material: a specifically Palestinian national movement was not a prominent feature of Avraham Kook’s world, or even Tzvi Yehuda’s.

\(^{59}\) On Tau’s interpretation of the (then recent) revelation of this teaching as a sign of divine providence—i.e., it appeared specifically to enable the correct theosophical interpretation of the wars of the state of Israel, especially with the Palestinians (*Nehalta*, 6)—see Achituv (2006, 146). Regarding the basis for Tau’s ideas in other sources, namely the Maharal and Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook, see Achituv (2006, 149).

\(^{60}\) And repeated in *Le-emunat iamu* (8), pp. 73–75.

\(^{61}\) Achituv (2006, 143) concurs with this assessment.
opposites paradigm to include the Palestinian national movement (as opposed to framing Palestinians as just individual Arabs or “goyim”).

This framework has been systematically analyzed by Achituv (2006). He presents Tau’s analysis as providing Palestinian nationalism with “legitimation” and as asserting that the Palestinians concretely “reflect a metaphysical entity” and fulfill a “divine purpose … in the course of the history of humanity” (p. 138). However, I argue that the force of this assessment is undermined by Tau’s statements reducing the Palestinians’ metaphysical being to the status of just an instrument for Israel’s development.

Tau’s 1991 Nehalta Be-Azkha is based on a prophetic reading and expansion of the interpretation of the Song of the Sea (ים חזותי, צ-ז) by the Vilna Gaon in Aderet Eliyahu. The Gaon’s talmudic sources interpret the Song of the Sea as foretelling a slow, natural process of redemption, and he identifies seven distinct stages of arousal, opposition, and panic among the nations of the world in response to Israel’s return to Eretz Yisrael, corresponding to lines in the song (Nehalta, 2–3). A crucial turning point arises with Israel’s return to Jerusalem (i.e., 1967 in Tau’s interpretation), which precipitates world and internal foment—a battle from which Israel will emerge “forged” and go into action, transitioning to “God’s nation” (עם ה,), which constitutes all and revives all (Nehalta 3; see too Achituv 2006, 147). Israel’s purpose is to illuminate all the world in the knowledge of God and divine ethics (Nehalta, 4). Sensing this, the nations rise up against Israel, paradoxically to facilitate her transition to “God’s nation” in furtherance of that purpose; i.e., opposition to Israel is part of a divine dialectic, and moreover an expression of her opponents’ hidden “inner will” for her to succeed. Tau (p. 5) grounds this in an interpretation of Kook’s (Igrot ת”ש) discussion of the “רוחות תמיסיות” in the world as part of transition period leading into geulah, which Tau associates with fear and anger toward Israel among the nations. But in the depths of their hearts and spirit, the nations feel love for Am Yisrael and hope for the revelation of its power. This inner love is suppressed by the nations’ outer character of wickedness,
pollution, and confusion; this imperfect outer form perceives Israel as an enemy, knowing that Israel’s *geulah* will lead the corrupt outer character to collapse in the global renaissance, as a base and outdated aspect of humanity.

The Song of the Sea mentions three nations by name: the Moabites, Edomites, and Philistines, interpreted by the Vilna Gaon as three types of opposition to *geulah*. The Moabites represented impurity (e.g., temptation with idolatry, nudity, etc.), and the Edomites inflicted the worst injuries of spirit, body, and property. The Philistines denied Israelite rule over *Eretz Yisrael* (p. 6). Tau extends this to argue that the whole existential purpose of the Philistines was the performance of a dialectic function by uprising against the exclusive rule of Israel in its own land, thus forcing the growth of Israeli power (p. 7).

Justification for this reduction of the Philistines’ existential role stems from an analysis of the language of *Genesis* on the genealogy of the sons of Ham. The pattern of ‘so-and-so begot so-and-so who begot so-and-so, etc.’ continues until the arrival of the forefather of the Philistines, when the language changes loosely to “…and Casluhim, out of whom came Philistim.” This change was interpreted by Rashi as a sign of their adulterous origin. For Tau, this means that there is no need for the Philistines in the order of the world (*seder ha-olam*); they’re a “departure from the natural order,” and “from the whole divine program”—although, as shown below, the unity of opposites implies “there is also a program to this [departure from the program]” (*ibid.*).

The natural order of the world—the divine ideal that is God’s ultimate purpose—is the presence of *Malkhut Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael* (the Kingdom in the Land), as stated by the Maharal at the start of *Netzach Yisrael*. Opposition to the emergence of this order is created providentially to be overcome, so that *Malkhut Yisrael* will blossom in its most successful and most precisely directed form (p. 9). Philistine resistance forced Saul to create the earthly apparatus of the divine nation, starting with an army (p. 10). The pattern was repeated with the establishment of the Davidic monarchy in Jerusalem: by divine design, the two kingdoms reached their peaks of power in synch (p. 11). This is explicitly rooted in Tau’s monistic historiosophy, explained in Chapter 3, whereby the

68 In Tau’s own words:

לעם ישראל יש לאומיות שמולדתה היא הארץ הזאת הוא שולט עליה, והוא לבדו שולט עליה. נגד זה הם מתקוממים, לכך הם נוצרו, בשביל ההתקוממות הזאת.

69. מצרים ילדו את לודים ואת... כסלחים אשר יצאו משם פלשתין

70 See Garb (2004) on this approach by the Vilna Gaon (and thereby Avraham Kook) more generally.
“divine technique” of creation utilizes a precise opposing force to elicit the desired outcome. Tau identifies the contemporary Palestinians with the Philistines etymologically, arguing that the antisemitic hatred of the Romans who first coined the name shows that those who want to negate Israel’s right to Eretz Yisrael call themselves Palestinians. Thus, today’s Palestinians are neo-Philistines, and they fulfill the dialectic role of the historical Philistines (p. 8), to make more pronounced and “push into action” the gevurah and oz (might) of Israel (p. 14). This is the historical parallel to the monistic dynamic of fruit and kelipah in Kook’s Kabbalah (p. 19, citing Kook’s Ein eyah, ש”).

However, besides this role in the monistic logic of history, the (neo-)Philistines have no value. Philistine nationality/nationalism has no essential (etzmi) content—ethical, historical, or ideal—in and of itself; they are a pseudo-national group, with all the trappings of nationalism but no inner content.71 This is why they had no purpose or place among the seven nations, in the building of the world described in Genesis; rather, the point of their existence is solely in assisting to establish Malkhut Yisrael dialectically through their very rebellion against it. Besides this task, they have no purpose/aim (takhlit), and moreover they have no metaphysical foundation in the created order (yesod) (Nehalta, 13–4).72 They have nothing to contribute to creation (besides via Israel)—no positive value, purpose, special talent, or genius required for the completion and perfection of the form of humanity; no foothold in eternity, unlike Israel (p. 14).73 In consequence, once they’ve fulfilled their divine purpose by being conquered by Israel, they have no further future, and “all their being is likely to be shattered” (p. 15) when Malkhut Yisrael is fully established. Moreover, consistent with Halevian epistemology, the outcome of this battle will reveal Israel as the one anointed to rule over Zion in a total victory over their national “nothingness,”74 functioning doubly as a revelation of the superior power tied to Israelite–Israeli essential godliness, by which the beacon of Torah is shared with the world (ibid.).

71 In Tau’s own words (Nehalta, 4):


73 On a more metaphorical and less conceptual level, Tau associates the Philistines’ laughter at Shimshon’s degradation with Palestinian celebration of ‘successful’ terrorist attacks (Nehalta, 16). The nature of the Philistines–Palestinians, he asserts, is to delight in Israel’s downfall. That’s all. Any active or positive national attributes are merely an illusion (Nehalta, 25).

74 In Tau’s words (Nehalta, 15):

...
There are several ethical implications to this narrative. Firstly, a two-state solution would be contrary to the entire natural order of the world. The establishment of Malkhut Yisrael on all of Eretz Yisrael is a requisite component of the universal redemptive process and cannot be compromised (see Achituv 2006, 147). Therefore, Tau argues, the whole land must be under exclusive Jewish rule; there is no scope for Palestinian sovereignty over any part of Eretz Yisrael (Nehalta, 25; see too Achituv 2006, 149). Moreover, since the divine purpose behind Palestinian nationalism and its rebellion against Jewish rule is to strengthen Israel’s physical might and the consolidation of its rule over Eretz Yisrael, any attempt to solve the Palestinian issue will fail unless it is based on exerting Israeli power to impose exclusive control over the land. That is the secret purpose of the (neo-)Philistines, which they are fulfilling now as yesterday (Nehalta, 14). Therefore, Israeli concessions oppose the Palestinians’ divine purpose (Achituv 2006, 148), and the peace movement represents a futile attempt to stop the natural progression toward geulah, which will proceed as inexorably as childbirth. Attempts to avoid or neutralize the conflicts, pressures, and pains eliciting Israel’s national gevurah are pointless, says Tau, because they simply strengthen the Palestinian opposition to Israel, which cyclically amplifies the trend toward fulfillment of the divine design (Nehalta, 25). Thus, once again, the ‘mamlakhtiyut = moderation’ frame is shown up as conceptually and empirically unsound.

Lastly, the narrative contains further hints of Tau’s main innovation: central emphasis on the role in geulah of consciousness, and specifically that of an elite core of spiritual giants capable of perceiving the true meaning of the times.\(^{75}\) If the people can be helped to understand the “true” destination at the end of the confrontation with sorrows and pressures (e.g., through education), they can act to create that reality voluntarily, without the need for such painful external drivers and catalysts.\(^{76}\) Those who do not understand, like the leftists, will stubbornly try to escape the dialectic—they’ll want to be relaxed now ("הוא רוצה שלום עכשיו"—a pun on the Israeli peace movement, Peace Now; p. 23). We can get there with fewer victims, Tau asserts—but only if the destination is better understood, thus ensuring appropriate choices. Enabling this understanding is the role of talmidei chachamim (wise students of Torah), he writes, and of Merkaz Ha-Rav. The (neo-)Philistines’ purpose is to evoke Israel’s full

\(^{75}\) See Chapter 5.
\(^{76}\) See too Appendix 2.
consciousness of her right to all her land. If that consciousness can be attained through education, the Palestinian rebellion and national movement will implode as an inevitable consequence of the logic of creation and the world order.

The above analysis is thus only partly consistent with Tau’s approach to intra-Jewish relations. The monistic ontology and the logic of the unity of opposites in a historical dialectic survive, but their axiological and ethical consequences diverge sharply. Tau devalues the Palestinians as elements of the divine creative process to the maximum possible extent without abandoning monism or the dialectic historiosophy, and in doing so, he constrains the axiological and ethical possibilities of these paradigms to a fairly simplistic minimum. Metaphysically, the Palestinians as a nation are “nothing,” and the sole source of their virtue stems from their instrumental function of catalyzing greater Jewish martial prowess and national consciousness. Therefore, rather than empathy and positivity, he advocates uncompromising firmness. Though Tau asserts that there is no problem with individual Arabs living in Eretz Yisrael as private citizens, he utterly rejects the possibility of a Palestinian state, arguing that their existence as a pseudo-nation is a temporary perversion of the natural order of the world, designed only to foster the growth of Israeli might.77 Thus, although he is technically able to integrate the Palestinians into dialectical narratives of geulah, and so escapes the need to abandon his main analytic paradigms, the extension is partial and strained.

Conclusions

This chapter explored more deeply a key pillar of Tau’s Kookian worldview: the unique collective character of Am Yisrael and its cultural–spiritual superiority to the Gentile nations because of its direct link to the divine. This furthermore had concrete ethical implications—many of which diverge from Tau’s usual appellation of “moderate.” The insights gleaned through this exercise can nominally be labeled as follows, though the divisions are somewhat arbitrary given the interconnected character of the elements:

77 That is, he frames the Palestinians in a manner not unlike the way Avraham Kook’s framed the sinful, heretical Zionist movement in terms of the ability of divine providence to temporarily utilize non-halakhic modalities to achieve God’s design; see Chapter 2. However, in this case, the compromise is to the logic of the world order rather than ethic (or practice more broadly).
Ontology: *Am Yisrael* is ontologically different from the nations because of its *segulah* (based on its close, even intra-constitutive relationship with God) and because it is a single, collective metaphysical entity. Tau preserves the monistic Hasidic-style ontology of good–evil and virtue–sin, which denies the possibility of complete distinction and sees these twin trends as operating in creative concert.

Logic: Because of Israel’s collective character, the ruler or government embody within themselves all the elements found within the nation, including wicked ones. However, because good and evil exist in a divine dynamic, evil impulses can strengthen and elevate the good, if properly channeled. Similarly, Israel is the “heart” and “speculum” of all the nations, and so concentrates and reflects the divine essence of all other nations—though to perform this role Israel itself must strive to avoid cultural contamination (because of the prevailing outside spiritual–cultural pollution). Through this concentration of the universal within its particular national being, Israel is able to influence the rest of the world and steer it toward the perfection of the divine design for humanity—*tikkun* and *geulah*. This is also the hidden will of the nations themselves. Therefore (and because of the epistemological assumptions below), consolidation of Israel’s national strength is being dialectically catalyzed through the opposition of the nations generally and Palestinians specifically to their exclusive rule over the whole of *Eretz Yisrael*. This opposition is a natural part of the process of *geulah*.

Axiology: Because of the total interclusion of all Jews, whether virtuous or sinners, in one collective entity, “wicked” Jews and righteous Jews share the same intrinsic value. Jewish rulers or the government are unconditionally holy because they are a concentrated embodiment of the entire nation; this consideration can outweigh even the worst sins. Compared with the nations, *Am Yisrael* represents a
superior or more complete human form. Moreover, Gentile culture is polluted with immorality, hypocrisy, etc. Notwithstanding the valuable dialectic *function* of the Palestinian national movement as neo-Philistines, its existence is otherwise wholly meaningless and a temporary perversion of the natural order, designed to spontaneously disintegrate once *Malkhut Yisrael* is fully established. It is impossible to frame the axiological stance vis-à-vis Palestinians as either monistic or dualistic: dualistic denigration of Palestinian culture as worthless to the world and denial of any intrinsic footing in God’s cosmic order (*vs.* Israel’s cultural “light” and cosmic “eternity”) is embedded in a monistic dialectic whereby they are the driver of Israel’s national consolidation (and thus Israel’s and universal *geulah*)—precisely through the otherwise “empty” nationalism, defined by opposing Israel.

- Epistemology: Because of the intimate relationship with God implied by Israel’s *segulah*, Jewish culture, history, and even nationalism reveal God’s will. (This is now familiar, and follows Halevi’s *Kuzari*.) Contemporary history must be read as a process of *geulah* (per Kook’s original innovation). Moreover, the final outcome of *geulah* is a logical assumption, and this dictates the “correct” interpretation of all events.

- Ethic: Because of *Am Yisrael’s* collective character, its politics should ideally fuse the spiritual and material/practical. Moreover, the

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78 However, it is not clear that this should have ethical consequences beyond the asymmetry already present in the classic texts of Halakhah. Broadly speaking, majority halakhic opinions in the Talmud typically stipulate stricter provisions for the protection of Jewish rights than for gentiles; see Novak (2011a). Cf. the arguments by Ginsburgh in chapters 6 and 7 devaluing gentile life as equivalent to that of beasts, which explicitly informs his and his colleagues’ halakhic arguments (*e.g.*, in *Torat Ha-Melekh*) that killing innocent gentiles is easily justified in the context of conflict over *Eretz Yisrael*.

79 This actually describes a very intimate and co-dependent relationship, though this is my commentary—not Tau’s. Paradoxically the very “nothingness” of the Palestinians comes close to implying near-total existential identification with Israel (moreover, only insofar as they stand as a national entity opposing Israel): Israel is the only thing that gives the Palestinians ‘being’ as a nation, and the Israelite–Philistine dialectic leading to the upbuilding of *Malkhut Yisrael* is described as Israel’s “essential self-opposition” (*םינסידי תנועתי היי-שלום*; *Nehalta*, 10)—that is, the Palestinians and Israel are in an obscure sense one theo-historical unit, though Tau would most likely find that commentary perverse. I address the discursive possibilities this presents in Chapter 8.
collectivist ethical systems of Torah-observant Judaism are superior to the liberalism and individualism of the West. Because the righteous and the wicked are part of a united whole, the righteous have a duty to steer the wicked lovingly toward correct thought and conduct. Because Jewish rulers or the government embody within themselves all the elements found within the nation, they are to be respected unconditionally in rhetoric and deed (regardless of how personally or politically foul their conduct). Because Israel is the heart/speculum of the nations and reveals God through its national history, its national flourishing in Eretz Yisrael should be pursued in order to elevate all of humankind. Because increasing Israeli strength is the divine purpose of Palestinian nationalism, the correct political response to their rebellion is to enforce exclusive Jewish rule over all of Eretz Yisrael and reject all their claims to even partial sovereignty.

The discursive possibilities of this worldview are obviously substantial in the arena of intra-Jewish relations. The detailed ontology, axiology, and logic of Jews’ segulah and collective character imply an ethical and rhetorical priority of Jewish unity and fraternity—even vis-à-vis the wicked. Similarly, the notion that the government reflects the pulse of the nation shows an enormous (and arguably ridiculous) flexibility for accommodating horrendous conduct on its part. While this can and should perhaps be understood as politically useful by liberal peace advocates (in view of the fact that many settlers consider pursuit of a two-state solution a criminally dangerous policy, against the Halakhah, militarily suicidal, and in opposition to the messianic process), it is not “moderate,” as shown by Tau’s defense of the rapist Moshe Katsav.

Moreover, Hellinger’s (2008) critique of Tau’s anti-liberal politics highlighted several common peace-discourse frames that ‘activate’ negative axiological and ethical domains in Tau’s worldview—and by extension, those who are even less liberal.

The discourse of individual rights (e.g., human rights) does not resonate, because individualism is negatively valued as an inferior Western form of ethics and because Western morality is largely seen as hypocritical and fake. By contrast, a discourse that framed the negotiation of a solution for co-existence (or at least the peaceful acceptance
of the government’s right to pursue this on behalf of the klal) as a duty to the whole Jewish family would perhaps resonate.

Similarly, appeals to the goal of Israel joining the “community” or “family” of nations do not resonate, because i) the nations are not seen as a family in the same sense as Israel, but rather a collection of individuals, ii) Jewish separation from the nations is considered desirable, iii) a primary commitment to the Jewish klal is dictated by the entire Kookian worldview, and iv) the value of love and of love of Gentiles specifically seems to have been progressively de-emphasized in the broader religious Zionist movement over the years. On the other hand, there may be some traction using arguments based on the frame in which Israel is the heart/center of the nations. One could point to the possible corruption of Jewish morality through ongoing military policing of the Palestinians, or the possibility of the nations perceiving Jewish morality and Israel’s redemptive mission as just as coercive, violent, and chauvinistic as the despised “hollow” Gentile nationalisms. The latter would pervert the correct function of Israel in Halevian epistemology and in the global redemptive process.

The place of non-Jews and specifically Palestinians in this worldview poses greater rhetorical challenges. Although Tau technically incorporates Palestinians into a monistic dialectic, his axiology (value statements) and rhetoric (e.g., metaphors) are overwhelmingly dualistic: as a national entity, the Palestinians are less than nothing.

However, the experiment of mining rhetorical resources was not fruitless. As Rosenak (2013, 155–66) points out, Tau’s constraint of the dialectic logic to the national struggle means that Arabs still have legitimacy as private Israeli citizens which indirectly points to the restraining function of the monistic paradigm of divine immanence (they contain individual sparks of divinity). Moreover, in the arena of intra-Israeli civic affairs, this stance arguably places Tau and Aviner on the same spectrum as prevailing secular Israeli conceptions of citizenship for Jews and Arabs. Peled (1992) analyzes liberal and republican models of citizenship, and argues that Israel applies a republican model for Jewish citizens (the state functions as a means to express collective values, e.g., through national symbols and rituals) and a liberal model for Arab citizens (they enjoy legal protections as individual citizens but no right to collective self-expression through state institutions). This broadly characterizes the

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80 I am ignoring for the moment obvious counter-narratives in the teachings surveyed above.
81 In contrast to the growing chorus of more severe voices among rabbis surveyed by Rosenak (2013).
approach of Tau: as we have seen, his conception of ideal Israeli political culture is extremely collectivist (i.e., “republican”), but as noted, he does not dismiss the basic liberal-democratic protections enjoyed by Arabs as private citizens (i.e., a limited “liberalism”). Thus, on the Philistines and neo-Philistines, he asserts that they can live in Eretz Yisrael, and the war has nothing to do with objections by individual Jews or because the Jews must follow a different cultural path. The latter point also disqualifies any interpretation of Tau’s advocacy for Jewish insulation from Gentile culture as demanding political rather than personal enforcement, e.g., by expelling Arabs from Eretz Yisrael (cf. Ginsburgh; see chapters 6 and 7).

By contrast, we face limited discursive possibilities in the frame whereby Palestinian nationalism is considered empty, existing only as a dialectic instrument whose existential fulfilment entails being conquered. While it is technically possible to extend Tau’s theosophical treatise on the Palestinian “neo-Philistines” in such a way as to mitigate its current axiological asymmetry and promote respect for Palestinians as a national collective, as I will discuss in Chapter 8, it is a creative exegetical exercise, and its conclusions are unlikely to resonate widely—particularly if they come from an unconventional source (i.e., people who are not accepted spiritual authorities).

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82 He quotes Tzvi Yehuda Kook as affirming the conflict was not about “Ahmed or Mustafa as individuals,” but the “pseudo-national entity” contesting Jewish rule over the land (Nehalha, 14).
Chapter 5

Tau’s “positive” theo-politics of consciousness and ahavat Yisrael

Introduction

This is the last chapter analyzing Rabbi Tau, and it closes the circle opened in Chapter 2, which questioned the roots of Tau’s advocacy of restraint and public education in response to disasters like the Hitnatkut. Here, I discuss Tau’s foremost theosophical innovation in the Kookian worldview: a creative extension of teachings by Avraham Kook to place consciousness and “true sight” at the center of the logic of the redemptive process. I also trace the consequences of this innovation, in conjunction with the broader worldview outlined over the previous chapters, for Tau’s intra-Jewish ethics.

The chapter first addresses Tau’s understanding of “consciousness” as an active mechanism in geulah, and the special role played by yechidei segulah, or units of holiness. It next turns to Tau’s identification of the root of “wicked” policies like the peace process in Am Yisrael’s weak national consciousness or spirit. This in turn imposes a particular ethical duty on the religious public to respond to such policies in ways that raise the nation’s consciousness and morale rather than dampening it; hence Tau’s critique of “negative” settler rhetoric and protests. The chapter then presents Tau’s alternative of “positive” politics, and a “cultural war” anchored in love. Lastly, it illustrates how these elements operate in Tau’s response to the Hitnatkut and the clashes at Amona. The conclusion also points to the limited traction of this response among radicalized youth, such as the Hilltop Youth, which leads into my analysis in the next chapter of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh as a key ideologue in that milieu.
True belief and true sight in the mechanics of geulah

The generation of kriyat ha-shem and Tau’s consciousness-raising project

Two of Tau’s key metaphors for describing Israel’s experience of geulah (the unruly teenager, and the creation of ha-adam ha-rishon) implied that the next stage in redemption would require an expansion of conscious. Tau uses the first metaphor to argue that, like a child turning into an adult, Israel must advance through the next stage of geulah with intent, not just instinct (Dor ve-dor, 26). In the second metaphor, the identification of Tau’s own generation as entering the stage of kriyat ha-shem (calling God’s name) likewise implies that Am Yisrael can no longer be a passive tool in the messianic process; it must become a fully conscious participant. This is also tied to Tau’s concept of a necessary shift from externally coerced repentance (teshuvah from fear)—albeit ultimately driven by the true “inner” teshuvah of the supernal Knesset Yisrael—to voluntary repentance (teshuvah from love). The generation’s movement toward teshuvah must become conscious and intellectual, Tau asserts. Moreover, as the nature of Israel is so radically different, the intellectual paradigm chosen must be Jewish rather than something borrowed from the Gentile nations. However, in the absence of proper guidance, the generation may latch onto the wrong form of idealism, e.g., liberalism, materialism, or the misguided peace process, seen as a Gentile agenda led by the U.S. and E.U. (Perakim, 34). Tau thus characterizes his generation as seeking ideals to pursue—but in the wrong (foreign) places. He diagnoses this as the surface-level symptom of the generation’s impetus toward conscious rather than instinctive repentance teshuvah, and thus geulah.2

Accordingly, those who wish to support the redemptive process must focus their efforts on raising the nation’s consciousness. Tau thus attaches supreme importance to the teaching by Avraham Kook (Orot 7”ס) that tzadikei hador (the righteous of the generation) must work to reveal the light and kedushah hidden in all the generation, so the nation can know itself. Tzadikim are commanded, says Tau, to heal the breach

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1 See Appendix 2.
2 See Appendix 2.
between the secularist “builders” and those cleaving to “regular” holiness, by promoting better understanding; to “bring the generation to consciousness.”

In Tau’s framing of this teaching, however, there is a substantial innovation. The knowing becomes the key thing; the key logical mechanism of the unfolding of redemption. The techniques by which to facilitate the nation’s self-knowledge are entirely secondary and must be tailored to the generation’s capacity to understand (Dor ve-dor, 21). This provides further context for Tau’s evaluation of the settlement project as “a detail,” and his advocacy of i) public education and positive communication and, paradoxically but consistently, as we shall see, ii) the isolation of spiritual elites such as the Har Ha-Mor community from the mundane secular affairs of the nation.

Tau describes both the mental–emotional–spiritual stance that should be taken by the religious community in pursuing this elevation of consciousness and the desired mode of seeing reality in the new consciousness. Firstly, the correct stance is a radical, all-embracing empathy: feeling the pain of the entire nation and adopting a national identification, rather than an affiliation to just one group; this is consistent with his logic of essential national interclusion (Perakim, 47). Tau holds that the spiritual background of a deed and the deed itself are interwoven, and that lack of belief is a bad basis for action. The power to argue effectively with the rest of the community, he says, comes from seeing the light in all (Perakim, 21). Love and belief in all Israel’s segulah—“truly seeing” the segulah—enables persuasion, in addition to being a “great mitzvah” in itself (Neshamah, יג-יו). If our arguments come from the right mindset of belief and true perception, “we can demand right conduct with all forcefulness,” because one’s level of belief and level of influence are directly proportional (Shlach, נ). By contrast, without seeing reality at the deeper level of the perspective of the holy, he argues, whatever we do to protest bad policies will injure rather than aid the klal (Perakim, 20).

The correct stance also means fulfilling Kook’s original call (e.g., Igrot ו-י) for the religious Zionist movement to become a comprehensive people’s movement led by talmidei chakhamim (wise Torah students), not as the movement of a special interest group or single political party: that, says Tau, would be chilul hashem (the desecration of God’s name), as if belief and the Torah were a purely private matter, concerning one exclusive sector of the population, and as if matters of the nation and klal were purely

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3 Notwithstanding that he framed this as a continuation of Avraham Kook’s teachings, by logically extending the latter’s ha-adam ha-rishon metaphor to associate his generation with a higher stage of the process.
secular concerns, not of heaven. *Knesset Yisrael* includes the entire spectrum of parties and opinions, whether they are in government or opposition, from the right or the left, and true believers must identify with the nation in this total sense (*Perakim*, 49, 52). Thank God, says Tau, we already have a national “body” with “organs.” But without an illuminating spirit, the organs will break apart. This indicates the greatness of the task of achieving inner peace within the Jewish community—raising the nation’s spirit and unifying that which is becoming fragmented is a spiritual duty above politics.  

The required mode of seeing (המבט של קודש or perspective of the holy) is that which is described in the *Kuzari* as Israel’s unique prophetic consciousness, adopted by Kook as a guide to the interpretation of history (pp. 79–80). This is Israel’s prophetic consciousness—its special knowledge of God, in the divine language of Hebrew—or, alternatively, an inner knowing that stems from its *segulah* and connection with the divine, rather than the defect of “deifying” human rationalism, which Tau describes as a form of idolatry (p. 81). These labels are an intriguing rejection by Tau of the validity of secular, rationalist worldviews as “idolatrous,” which is to say *invalid* according to religious logic, much as modern, rationalist scholars reject religious Zionism as “fundamentalist,” which is to say invalid according to modern, rationalist logic.)

**“The world exists for truth, not truth for the world”**

Tau asserts that human apprehension of the “true” spiritual structure and process that underpin the surface level of society and history has enormous power to affect the course of events, and this power implies that a small community of “true see-ers” or “true believers” has an influence over reality disproportionate to its small numbers. The atheistic or wicked majority in the nation is not a metaphysical majority, says Tau; it can be outweighed by the spiritual force of the “minority” of true belief (*Chosen*, \( \pi \)). Tau’s logic of consciousness thus implies a scale of influence, where one’s effect on *klal Yisrael* and *geulah* is proportionate to one’s level of consciousness—defined by a Torah orientation and more specifically familiarity with classic spiritual authorities of

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4 Tau’s sources: *Orot* (8-7”\( \text{"ט"} \))=*Igrot* (2, 7”\( \text{π} \)).

5 See Chapter 3 and Appendix 1.

6 See too *Orot* (7”\( \text{"ט"} \)), *Ma'amarei*, p. 234.

7 See too *Igrot* (7”\( \text{π} \)), 7”(p). Tau points to the prevailing belief that humans, not God, built the State of Israel.

mystical nationalism, e.g., Halevi and the Maharal (see *Orot* ת"ז; *Ma’amarei*, 234). Obviously, religious Zionists generally and yeshivot specifically are at the vanguard.

The entire nation, Tau asserts, is incomplete without “our belief” (*Shlach*, ו). National leaders’ capacity for effective leadership depends on “our belief in them” (p. י). Even miracles can be produced, he writes, when a minority of true believers succeeds in elevating the spirit of the nation, as was achieved by Isaiah during Hezekiah’s defense of the badly outnumbered Jerusalem. Miracles are not disconnected from the morale of the people—miracles inspire the nation, and *vice versa*. If the true believers can effect a shift in the nation’s spirit, all reality shifts in turn in response to the spirit of Israel (*Chosen*, י-ז).9

The root of this stance lies in Tau’s most innovative contribution. The assertion “The world exists for truth, not truth for the world” (*Hokhiach*, ח) encapsulates Tau’s theosophy, not just of the reason for creation, but of the order in which reality unfolds. “Truth” implies unification of the ontological and the epistemological; i.e., the epistemological somehow has ontological reality and is an active player in Tau’s logic.10 Tau is thus implying that the design of creation is to facilitate this alignment. The subservience of the world—the physical and human—to this purpose renders reality itself an almost incidental tool for the enablement of a union between human apprehension and the divine viewpoint, which sees the completed form of creation through all dimensions (including the temporal one; i.e., to the end of *tikkun* and the actual reality of *geulah*). Reciprocally, true thought and belief constitute a more fundamental layer of reality than the material, allowing Tau to ascribe to it a decisive power in shaping material reality. Perception of the latent divinity in all things and processes becomes, for Tau, itself an engine of its elevation as part of *tikkun*.

As discussed previously, Tau embraces Kook’s dialectical paradigm of creation,11 in which progress unfolds through a divine balance of forces of positive growth and negation. In this balance, *tzadikim* have a special force or energy—and a special duty—because of the overwhelming power of consciousness to affect reality. Indeed, Tau

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9 He notes claims that Israel’s powers of visualization, belief, and self-faith produced the miracle of the Exodus.
10 Schwartz (2001, 101–2) appears to acknowledge this also.
11 As discussed previously, according to Avraham Kook’s historiosophy, both modern history’s causes and its *telos* were supernal, and so all political developments were laden with messianic and metaphysical causes and ramifications, and braided into a messianic teleological design. See Korn (1994, 278); Marcus (1996, 23); Ratzabi (2008, 116–7); Rosenak (2007, 136–7); Yaron (1991, 71–2, 86–7).
argues that this “true sight” is a necessary component of the mechanics of creation and of geulah, whose nature is hidden and disguised, demanding close inspection (He’arat, 27). True believers must consider the world as if from heaven, with God’s eyes: that is, the future has already happened (p. 27). This explains the assumption underpinning Tau’s epistemology, whereby the correct interpretation of events requires the assumption that they are leading to geulah.

It is therefore essential for tzadikim to undertake a deep inspection of reality (e.g., seeing the true spiritual nature and purpose of secular Zionists), because of the great power of their consciousness to affect the entire klal and thus reality at large. The task of the true believers takes considerable work, Tau says, but if one can perceive reality on a high level of abstraction, one has the ability to find and elevate the hidden good.  

He places this skill of clear perception on the same spectrum as prophecy, and relates it to Kook’s own life’s work—finding the good hidden in the “wicked” secularists of his generation (Hokhiach, 7). The consequence of a failure by tzadikim to apprehend the truth underpinning the wider reality, says Tau, is that all the powers within them are channeled in negative directions (e.g., trivia and/or arrogance). The character of Torah is thereby distorted in the eyes of the people, leading them to reject the association between religiosity and righteousness, and thus retarding redemption (p. 2). His epistemology (i.e., his theory of knowledge and perception; or how can the truth be known?) becomes, by implication, an active player in the logic of his worldview.

**The role of yechidei segulah in society**

Tau discusses the need for yechidei segulah or units of holiness in the broader society who already embody the world to come, in order to perform this essential function of true sight (Hokhiach, 2). These true believers are agents or guarantors of the klal as a whole, and redemption depends on them (He’arat, 7). Their belief in Am Yisrael’s divine essence is what in fact allows this essence to operate on the community in general and thereby on all reality (p. 7).

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12 See generally Le-emunat itanu (7), pp. ע-טכט.

13 This has parallels in Hasidic teachings on devekut or cleaving to God through contemplation of his immanent presence in all creation: at a basic level, this entails building one’s awareness of the radiance of letters in the Torah and prayers, but the extension is “one’s perception of existence as a whole… [even to] the recognition of the Divine radiance in evil itself” (Loewenthal 1990, 16).
This leads to Tau’s paradoxical advocacy of insulation from the main cultural–political currents of the time; the fundamentalist “enclavization” critiqued by Inbari (2012) and others, as related in Chapter 3. The holy minority, he argues, must be pure, concentrated, and secluded from outside influences, like Hezekiah and Isaiah (Chosen, ר). Those who aspire to true sight and playing a positive role in geulah must insulate themselves from secular “experts” and opinion-shapers, who present a selective and “leftist” view of events, in order to see society and the events of the time from the perspective of the holy (חוכמיה, ר). This serves the community at large.

Just as truth is more fundamental than (and produces) reality, so too do the true believers constitute the central core from which ontological truth shapes the physical form of reality. In the structure of reality according to Tau, true see-ers are at the center, and the general public is the outermost layer—just as Israel is the heart of the nations. True see-ers unite superficially opposing worlds by seeing and embodying the truth of the united divine program of creation, encompassing and concentrating all the components of Am Yisrael within their own consciousness (Perakim, 75).

Their work extends beyond being conscious of and teaching the true meaning of events of the time (He’arat, י). They must also internalize the inner divine content of secular Zionism’s “external,” national love; they must embody in revealed form the true inner substance of the process, just as Israel embodies and reveals the divine will through its history in the Kuzari. Thus, they will constitute a seed by which recognition of the truth will spread through the whole nation, “filtering” and “clarifying” the national atmosphere and evoking the inner good of the nation, as a basis for the unfolding of redemption, naturally (ל), just as the consciousness of Isaiah and Hezekiah facilitated miraculous deliverance in theirs (Chosen, ר).

Merkaz Ha-Rav represented Kook’s prophetic cause and life vision as a concentration of believers, a yechid kodesh, whose students were “inner builders” of the nation; literally, the “center.” The Merkaz was also intended as a concentration of the Jewish national idea—its in fact and action (He’arat, ל). It was meant to found a battalion of believers, and these men would form the innermost “line” of the entire nation, and hold firm in their position, thus anchoring the community in true

14 Tau’s source: Kook’s Orot Ha-Teshuvah (ב, י).
belief.\textsuperscript{15} Tau’s attitude to \textit{Har Ha-Mor} is similar.\textsuperscript{16} He tasks his followers with serving the nation as a center of true “see-ers,” perfecting consciousness of the truth of goodness hidden in the entire community and bringing that community to self-awareness. We’re meant to be the “inner battalion,” he says, breathing air into the whole organism, as envisaged by Avraham Kook. If the “see-ers” fail to raise the nation’s spirit, the settlement movement is reduced to “mere ideology”—like the spiritually hollow Gentile nationalism criticized by Kook (\textit{Zekhero, ס}).

**Practical utility of true belief in intra-Jewish disputes**

Tau also sees this true belief as contributing practical utility in the campaign of persuasion against secular and “leftist” Israelis on matters such as peace negotiations and the status of territories captured in 1967. In such campaigns, says Tau, belief must be the basis of the religious community’s entire approach, spiritually and practically: belief in redemption and in the essential divinity of the nation. This has two dimensions. First, the act of perceiving the redemptive truth underlying political and historical events has its own value (see above). Second, this true sight serves as a guide to ethics, amplifying the effect of one’s actions and ensuring they operate correctly on both the actor and the outer world.

The spirit in which an action is performed “changes everything,” says Tau. Deeds do not succeed of themselves, but rather because of the appropriateness of the spiritual stance in which they are performed. Deeds undertaken from an inner place of belief “echo in the nation” (\textit{Perakim, 22}), because awe of heaven and true belief have an influence on oneself and on others: one’s words will be heard if they are spoken from this correct spiritual stance, and one’s deeds will have a greater impact (p. 9).

The value of one’s deeds, whether private or public, also lies in the effect on the person’s own soul of that deed; his spiritual life becomes richer. These luminous souls can then push back the forces of darkness and determine the fate of the generation. From this illuminated stance, Tau says, actions move powerfully toward their target (p. 8). All public \textit{tikkun} is achieved by the illuminating spirit (\textit{הנשמה המאירה}) of such actors, whereas speech and the deeds themselves have merely technical value (p. 22).

\textsuperscript{15} Tau, \textit{Chosen}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{16} See Tau’s \textit{Le-derekh ha-kodesh}. 
Tau's critique of “negative” politics and division

The spiritual root of wicked policies

Tau explains the reasons for what he considers misguided government policies (e.g., territorial concessions) and public preferences on varying levels of abstraction. In "חושן ישועות", he asserts that when the nation is in a weakened spiritual state (as it still is, post-galut\(^\text{17}\)), people are liable to be influenced by the “leftists” who “dominate all fields of national life” (Chosen, ב), and so become able to talk about Eretz Yisrael as merchandise and willing to discuss the terms of trade (p. ק). On a higher level of abstraction, Kook explains the deficiencies of the government as being a result of deficiencies in the consciousness of the klal, because of the government–klal interclusion. If we wish to see an enlightened and ideal government, he says, the public must be suitable vessels (pure souls) to receive such rule. To be governed in an ideal way requires being ideal (Hokhiach, ח). While the messianic age is still unfolding, the leadership is influenced by supreme (Torah) ethics only to the same extent the klal is, because the leaders and society are built of the same material. Thus, leaders must encompass even the base dimensions of the society they lead, and deficient policies may be the result (pp. ק-ט). However, if the faults of the government stem from the deficiencies of the nation, they must also stem at least in part from the deficiencies of the religious community, which occupies a more fundamental layer in the progressive unfolding of reality because of its higher consciousness. The fact that such policies can even be contemplated suggests a need for soul-searching and contemplation of the consciousness of the religious community itself. Tau’s teachings emphasized this argument most saliently in relation to events that triggered calls for vigorous protest against Israel’s leaders, secularists, or the security forces. He argues (based on Rashi’s interpretation of a talmudic passage\(^\text{18}\)) that a person is responsible for that which he could have fixed but failed to. If he could have elevated his fellow, but instead protested and sharpened insults, then that person shares in the guilt. Moreover, the negative course of criticism and insult involves perpetrating additional crimes, e.g., adding

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\(^{17}\) See generally Le-emunat itanu (נ), pp. ק-ט, ו-פ, עא-מ, זט-יז.

\(^{18}\) "נתפס על אנשי ביתו וכו" (Bavli Shabbat, נד ב).
negativity to the atmosphere with scorn and incitement, making it cloudy and obscuring the “holy perspective” that Tau considers so critical (Hokhiach, 2). This imposes a responsibility on those with sufficient learning and belief to exercise it for the betterment of the nation. Such capable people can see the divine design of history and serve as the nation’s spiritual and ideological leadership, using the special amplified influence conferred by their true belief to set individual and collective goals. If they neglect to do this, and instead become mired in opposition campaigns about details on the surface level of reality, e.g., because they mistakenly believe that the overall process of geulah is threatened by surface-level setbacks and begin to react in panic, then they must take a great share of the blame for the errors of the wicked (p. נָא).

This leads to a closer investigation of Tau’s ethical prescriptions for how the community of believers should—and should not—respond to policies to which they are inimically opposed, in view of a consciousness-centric logic, and indeed ontology.

**The error and spiritual danger of division within Am Yisrael**

Tau embraces and amplifies Kook’s (Orot Ha-Techiyah 2) assertion that religious Jews are misguided if they disengage from seculars, who are still in the process of purification as part of geulah (Perakim, 26). The reason is not merely because disengagement would impede the purpose of the true believers to elevate the nation, but also because of inherent spiritual dangers in communal division. Those who foment even sharper divisions do worse. Tau is ruthlessly critical of those “who lost the way” at Yamit in opposing the Israeli authorities with extreme protest methods (most likely an allusion to the disciples of Meir Kahane who locked themselves in a bunker and threatened to commit suicide if the evacuation went ahead) and of the Jewish Underground, for taking into its own hands the role of the state in meting out vigilante justice and planning to blow up the Dome of the Rock. Such internal Jewish division, he writes, is the greatest achievement of our enemies (Zekhero, ). The war of those dividing the nation internally, says Tau, is a war against the segulah of Israel itself, and is rooted in lack of belief and baseless hate. It is also indirectly a war on Torah, he implies, citing Kook’s teaching that the Jews’ ability to cleave to Torah comes from an

19 As is clear from his own cultural isolation in Har Ha-Mor, Tau sees this on some level other than day-to-day communal integration; the unity is a (constructive, in his view) unity of opposites, which requires enhanced differentiation in order to function effectively.
inner spiritual urge, the root of which lies in being part of the collective soul, *Knesset Yisrael*. A great injury is thus done by introducing separation into the foundation of *Knesset Yisrael* (*Perakim*, 29). Tau frequently recalls the talmudic teaching that baseless hate within the nation caused the *galut*—and if it happens again, he says, it will be for the same reason (p. 27).

In his writings on clashes between settlers and the security forces, Tau is at pains to argue that such internal division was unequivocally *not* what Tzvi Yehuda Kook intended for Gush Emunim. Tzvi Yehuda, he argues, claimed that all Jewish sorrows stemmed from Jeroboam, the first king of the breakaway northern kingdom of Israel in biblical times, which ended the united monarchy. Jeroboam subsequently allowed idol worship, but Tau says that the origin of the sin was his decision to break off part of the nation from the united whole. The “true sight” of the unity of the nation is needed to repair such breaches in our hearts and minds, Tau says (*Zekhero*, 1). He also draws on Avraham Kook’s teachings that there is no end to the evil of division among the people. The mere thought of division within *Am Yisrael* is *avodah zarah* (idol worship)—even if the division of the community can never be fully *realized* because of the essential and inescapable truth of Israel’s interclusion. Tau calls those Jews encouraging division “Amelekites,” as the inner separation they attempt to create undermines the foundation of the holy, as did the nation of Amalek (*Perakim*, 28). He reminds his readers that Tzvi Yehuda equated disbelief in the nation’s unity with atheism, because of the relationship between Israel’s unity and divine unity (p. 85).

Tau also frequently refers to Tzvi Yehuda’s response to a complaint that Gush Emunim undermined Israeli democracy. Against the charge that Gush Emunim was a “negative” voice, Tzvi Yehuda declared that Gush Emunim was “entirely positive,” “the negation of the negative,” and an embodiment of “love” (*Shlach*, 2). He also asserted that Gush Emunim must never induce separation in the nation, and Tau claims that all of Tzvi Yehuda’s support for the settler movement was premised on raising the spirit of the nation as the primary goal, rather than the physical fact of settlements themselves. Inspiring the silent majority, rather than opposing it, had likewise been the purpose of the public demonstrations against territorial concessions. If such protests no longer

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20 See Kook’s *Igrot* (2"ת, 1-4"ככ) on his work prior to the Balfour declaration.
raised the nation’s spirit, said Tzvi Yehuda, “we’ll get rid of the word ‘demonstration’ \([hafganah]\) from our vocabulary” (\(Zekhero, π\)).

Tau notes that there are contexts where isolation from outside influences may have some limited use. Avraham Kook called this the “way of Saul,” the critical way, and argued that it had virtue in contexts such as the self-protectiveness of nations, to preserve their unique character (\(Ha-yashar, \phi\)). This mode of self-defense in the arena of intra-Jewish relations corresponds to the sense that the inner spiritual essence of Judaism must shut its windows against influences in society and the world at large that would erase her (p. \(\psi\); see too \(Hokhiach, \chi\)). However, says Tau, there is severely limited virtue in battling threats to the essence of Judaism by condemning all seculars. Its value is that it doesn’t require much knowledge or education to follow. However, he says, this is not the way of \(Orot\).

The error of us-vs.-them thinking

In a presentation given during the Oslo process, Tau addressed sentiments of victimization and injustice: “we” (the settlers) suffer, and “they” (the general public) do not. Tau unequivocally rejected all such thoughts of “us vs. them” (\(Shlach, τ\)) disparaging this as a diaspora mentality unsuitable to \(Eretz Yisrael\) and the time of redemption (p. \(\kappa\)).

One aspect of such thinking that he criticizes specifically is the use of the term “\(erev rav\)” (mixed multitude or, more colorfully, ‘rabble’) by some on the Israeli religious right against secularists and “leftists,” implying that the latter are not truly Jews but instead descended from the Gentiles who left Egypt with the Israelites during the Exodus. Tau reminds his audience that God has placed great tzadikim and people of great wickedness in the same generation for a purpose: there is no reason to err by calling the latter \(erev rav\) (\(Hokhiach, \chi\)). Every Jew shares in \(segulat Yisrael\), Tau asserts, not just the tzadikim, and all the nation are part of the generation of geulah. To those who would say that “we” are of the side of \(segulah\) and the others are \(erev rav\), Tau replies that “we” must see the \(segulah\) in the entire nation, even the “diseased” (\(Shlach, \chi\)).\(^{21}\) Around the time of the Oslo accords, Tau reminded his audience of the

\(^{21}\) The medical metaphor frequently reappears in Tau’s works.
great potential of the generation, even the “leftists.” The “handicapped” can be still redeemed, he said (p. 8).

As discussed in the previous chapter, Tau’s thought follows a monistic, Hasidic paradigm wherein there is no clean separation between tzadikim and the “wicked ones” of each generation, as morality or virtue draws its inner animating force from the primal power of sin. The tzadikim depend in part on the evil ones of the generation, like the culture needed for fermenting wine (Perakim, 28). Moreover, because of Israel’s interclusion, the tzadik and the wicked person are in fact one force and spirit, not two, and on some level, the wicked one’s crimes are shared by the tzadik. Those who wish to disengage from the rest of the nation are thus working against God, says Tau, and they retard the building of the vision of geulah as much as the wicked themselves do (Hokhiach, 22). Israel is one soul, and the focus should be on helping to extract the light that is hidden in the dark ones of the generation. Tau demands: who is showing them the way (Shlach, 3)? The light shines in all political parties and individuals constituting Klal Yisrael, however poor their thinking (Perakim, 21), and Tau argues that the nation will only “be stood on its feet” once all its constituents are repaired and whole, and the divine light of Israel’s segulah is acting in fullness in everyone. The religious public must strive to include everyone, and to see the good inside (p. 22).

The error of zealotry and judgment

Tau criticizes judgmental attitudes and violence by the religious public. We need to persuade, he says, not coerce, rejecting all “zealotry in flesh and blood” (Perakim, 17). The most extreme forms included deeds such as those of the Jewish Underground. In no source consulted for this thesis does Tau express anything but a zero-tolerance approach to organized vigilante violence for the sake of a religious cause. He asserts that Tzvi Yehuda never agreed to support heinous acts (Zekhero, 3), and implies that those involved are indulging in private vendettas rather than acting in alignment with the national or religious cause. The joy felt by some after the payback attacks by the Underground represents only the joy of private individuals, he claims, not of the public (p. 17). He warns that some people are blind to the damage caused by groups like the

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22 Recalling from Chapter 1 Anat Roth’s (2014) argument that the mamlakhiti advocacy of public education had informed the platform of the Jewish Home party, it is intriguing to find in these statements from Tau clear forerunners of the party’s “there’s a place for everyone” (יש מקום לכל אחד) slogan.
Underground, which put the very State of Israel at risk. In response calls for the military defense by individual Jews of parts of Eretz Yisrael threatened by negotiations, Tau bluntly points out that no-one founded a private army to deal with the Syrian Heights pre-1967. The state, representing the beginning of the divine goal of redemption and its earthly vessel, is more important than any settler’s private dwelling (p. 17).

Moreover, in addition to the above danger, Tau casts religious fanaticism against one’s fellow Jews as a theological error and even sin, based on the following reasoning. The interclusion of the entire Jewish community with one another and with the Torah implies that negative interaction with one’s fellow Jews, such as rejecting or attacking them, is form of sin, in that it implies a false limitation of the Torah: namely, that it is not wide enough to encompass the misguided individuals within the nation (Ha-yashar, 17). In turn, Tau says, this limitation of the Torah delays its full expression on the earthly plane and so delays geulah. The true purpose of the disputes and crises within the nation is to lead to a fuller realization of Torah—one that can encompass all aspects of life and all members of the nation, and thus is compatible with God’s dialectical methods of creation (Ha-yashar, 17).

Tau also identifies such attitudes with atheism. He says that the righteous anger of those who condemn or judge others in the nation may look like religiosity on the outside but actually reflects a lack of belief. The interclusion of Israel and God implies that a challenge to Israel’s unity is a challenge to God’s unity. Tau further suggests that detachment or separation from the nation is the source of atheist ideology per se. We can’t fix atheism with atheism (i.e., rejecting secular Jews is itself a form of atheism), Tau says, and harsh internal criticism and delegitimization is a form of “terrorism” against ourselves (Shlach, 17). He repeats the famous story of King Solomon and the two women petitioners who both claimed to be the mother of a disputed child, and relates it to present-day calls to divide the nation into the pure and impure: those who would tear the nation apart and say, give us half each, are not the “real mother,” however devout they appear to be in their religious practice and passions (Perakim, 27).

This is the deeper context behind Tau’s rejection of fanatic tactics. He also argues that they are ineffective. Fighting the opposition just hardens their positions (Ha-yashar, 17).

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23 That is, collective mitzvot are the responsibility of the state.
24 And indeed with God, via the Shekhinah.
25 See too Perakim, p. 17: all zealotry in flesh and blood is deficient and leads to anger.
The error of “what-ifs”

A final form of negativity criticized by Tau is a preoccupation with speculation as to what might happen as a result of wrong-minded government policies. Ruminating and panicking about “what-ifs,” he says, damages the nation’s morale rather than raising it.

In "פרקים בהלכות ציבורי" and "חוסן ישועת", Tau explains this vulnerability as a legacy of גלות. Avraham Kook (Ein eyah ב"ה, ת"ה) taught that Israel’s spiritual and physical health are linked. In ancient Israel the people were healthy because of the spiritual flourishing that came with living in Eretz Yisrael. In this state of health, knowledge of the challenges faced by the nation only strengthened it (Perakim, 66). Thus, knowledge of future calamities need not weaken the spirit if Israel is in a healthy, non-diasporic state (Chosen, ו). This situation contrasts sharply with spiritual and physical vulnerability internalized by Jews during גלות. In the Diaspora, Israel learned to be excessively cautious, and its gevurah (its might) was damaged. Israel has sustained lasting scars from this experience, says Tau, and is still far from its true power. People still needed strengthening in his time, said Kook, because of persisting diasporic tendencies toward hysteria and panicking. This applies even more so today, according to Tau. There is a special need for speech and conversation to strengthen the spirit (Perakim, 66; Chosen, ו) for inspirational discourse to keep the nation from depressing thoughts (Chosen, ו).

When threatened territorial concessions become the focus of fear and obsessive speculation, Tau teaches, the states of pessimism that arise interrupt the ability to sustain a consciousness of belief and clear/true sight, and thus may in fact attract disasters (Perakim, 67). Tau therefore criticizes the discourse of “what if.” It is a self-deception and rationalization of a weakness, he says, to think that such thinking does no

\[26\] However, the tactical frame is logically superfluous (despite being implied to be primary by several scholars reviewed in Chapter 2). Indeed, his occasional references to pragmatic considerations seem to function more like rhetorical devices; they are not the main thrust of his arguments.

\[27\] On the importance of the style of communication during challenging situations, see too Kook’s Ein eyah (Brachot פ"ט, סע’ קע”ז).
harm. The analysis of all “what if” scenarios is a task for those who are politically responsible, not the religious Zionist community, whose task is to worry that the spirit of the nation is healthy and to pursue this from a consciousness that is secure in full belief of the revealed end (see Neshamah, למ). If the whole nation were spiritually strong, writes Tau, even the small territory of Quneitra could never have been returned to Arab hands. “Everything depends on the spirit and spiritual stance of the nation” (Perakim, 67). If you care, says Tau, then fight the battle to raise the spirit of the generation rather than being preoccupied about negative worries. Such negativity is like a doctor “talking about burial when you’re trying to save the patient” (Chosen, י). 

This, Tau alleges, is the correct interpretation of Tzvi Yehuda’s famous “it won’t be and won’t come to pass” declaration (לא יהיה ולא יקרה): it was not a prophetic prediction that the Sinai withdrawal would not happen; rather, it was an assertion that it is forbidden to talk and worry about what may come to pass. In a state of weakness, Tau says, people are very vulnerable to the power of words. Bad visions contribute to psychological weakness in the nation, which in turn makes it more likely to stumble (Perakim, 67). Thoughts of weakness, doubt, and what may come to pass are thus forbidden during battle (Chosen, י). This is not naivety, says Tau, but rather stems from the understanding that all reality is a consequence of consciousness. Leave political and security concerns to the specialists, says Tau; it’s their responsibility (p. י). We’re not politicians, but rather people of belief (Shlach, י). 

This leads to the flip-side of Tau’s criticism of the negative; that is, his advocacy of “positive” politics anchored in the correct spiritual stance and consciousness.

Positive politics and the importance of right consciousness

Positivity, empathy, patience, unity

Tau advocates “positive politics” of consciousness-building as the ethical response to the inadequacies of secular society and the government. He grounds this ethic in teachings by Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook as spiritual authorities. Tau cites the approach recommended by Avraham Kook (Pinkasei, רי; Ein eyah Shabbat ת"א) for

28 Warnings against doubt and depressing are also a feature of Hasidism (see, e.g., Steinsaltz 1988, 199).
repairing defects (private, national, and global): patience and mercy (Perakim, 20). He also cites Tzvi Yehuda’s letter to a Mizrahi leader in which he wrote that the battle against the wickedness of the Jewish government should de-emphasize the negative and warlike aspects and amplify the positive (p. 83). Tau also mentions empathy’s pragmatic utility for persuasion. If you approach someone in a way that suggests you’re not taking them seriously, he writes, he is likely to reject you out of hand. You must feel the person’s pain and empathize with their situation, making this first contact and identification with the person before attempting to educate them about true belief and appropriate conduct (Dor ve-dor, 34–5). However, the thrust of Tau’s justification of this approach is theosophical rather than practical, and articulated by reference to the essential unity of Jews and the active role of consciousness in the redemptive process.

**Perceiving and elevating the positive rather than condemning the negative**

In "הוכיח במישור" Tau describes two ways to cope with evil or wickedness. The first is self-defense: opposing everything that’s “outside,” strange, or alien. This approach, says Tau, can only strengthen one’s isolated group, not the whole nation. The second way is through clear or true sight: one can perceive the inner good within the other camp, and with patience and tolerance one can eventually capture all the good elements and turn them toward God’s design; the earthly mechanism of the elevation of divine sparks in the world in *tikkun* (Hokhiach, ו). Much the same framework is presented in "הישר כדוד", where Tau presents Kook’s interpretation of a talmudic passage comparing Saul and David as an illustration of two possible ways to conduct a war of ideas. One is opposition to, or criticism of, the wicked. However, every idea (even a wicked one) that captures hearts has a grain of truth within it, and this is the basis of its attraction, consistent with his monistic worldview (*Ha-yashar*, ו). Therefore, the oppositional or critical mode of a war of ideas has limited effectiveness, especially against those who already perceive or believe in the grain of good in the wickedness. Tau argues that one must find that grain of good in order to achieve complete victory, by showing those who have become attached to the wrong idea that there is another, better way to realize that grain of good (*Ha-yashar*, ו). Once this has been done, the contrast in that person between their state of

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30 *Bavli* Eiruvin 2a.
Consciousness and the perfected or full form demonstrated by the true believers will begin to grate and cause discomfort, by which method the wickedness will resolve itself dialectically (p. 7). This is especially true of cases where the person who needs to undergo teshuvah is not evil in their intent, but rather a mistaken idealist, which Tau sees as the general character of much of secular Zionism, and many of the “misguided” political figures of the Israeli left and center. With this approach, the mistaken person can simply recalculate, and continue pursuing the same good but in the proper way. The seed of goodness is replanted “in a field blessed by God.” This helps such people to undergo teshuvah from love rather than fear (see Appendix 2), facilitating the consciousness-driven stage of redemption Tau believes to be underway.

This process represents a higher level of practice than simply “telling” the truth, says Tau, because of its deep spiritual significance. In language reminiscent of the kabbalistic project, again, of revealing and uniting the scattered sparks of the Shekhinah, Tau argues that the perfection of reality requires the full expression of all these scattered truths hidden within the lies of the world, so that all such lies will have no reason and therefore no power to exist. This positive mode of discourse is therefore part of a process of havdalah (separation, i.e., of the sparks of holiness from the sinful forms in which they are trapped) and refinement of the grains of truth, as part of tikkun (pp. 5-7).

**Consciousness and the government**

As noted previously, Tau sees the strength (or lack thereof) of the government as dependent on that of the klal (Zekhero, נ; Shlach, פ), so the solution lies in raising the nation’s spirit and morale (Shlach, נ; שלח). However, in order to have any influence within the nation, Tau stresses the need for all engagement with the government and the public to come from correct consciousness. There are two components to the mindset of belief that must be sustained: belief in the redemptive process, and belief in the capacity of the government to act virtuously, because of its connection with the entire nation.32

Firstly, belief in future redemption imparts a deep sense of security about the process, which in turn allows for balanced decision-making around the practical steps in the war of consciousness that must be conducted within the nation (Perakim, 25). Rather than weakening one’s stance in a comfortable assumption that all will be well,

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31 See most generally Le-emunat itamu (2), 33-34.
32 This could be viewed as a coping strategy for prophecy failure, following Melton (1985).
Tau argues, great strength can be drawn from knowing the truth. Secure in true perception of the redemptive process and the *segulah* of the generation, we need not fear or despair even after the worst stumbles (pp. 13–4). Belief in the nation, its leaders, and the revealed end means that one will not be “panicked” by the appearance of external weaknesses (*Shlach*, 12). God finishes what God starts, like childbirth, and so it is with the birth of the Israeli nation (*Perakim*, 18), whereas the speech and actions of politicians, cultural figures, intellectuals, etc., are just “screenplays” (p. 19).

Although there is necessarily great sorrow after a disaster, such as a territorial concession and/or settlement evacuation, even great sins and disasters are of limited import in the overall scheme of redemption, Tau says. They can only delay the arrival of the good that will be brought by *geulah*; they cannot destroy or diminish it (p. 22). The religious community is part of the whole national organism, so the latter’s deficiencies cause it pain. Yet it is necessary for them to strengthen their belief proportionately to that pain in order to act effectively (p. 20). Appropriate sorrow, says Tau, comes from a deep hope for *geulah* and sense of attachment to the nation and to *Eretz Yisrael*; it is thus rooted in belief. This is distinct from the mindset of despair, which Tau criticizes.

He also distinguishes between holding to a sense of belief and security (in God’s plan) in the face of crises (p. 20).

Secondly, he argues that it is necessary to believe in the essential virtue of the government. While sympathetic to the sorrow that must be experienced as a result of the government’s wrongful policies, Tau argues that a “cry of pain” doesn’t heal the “sickness of the generation and of the age,” and moreover, that the campaign of delegitimization that took place during the Oslo period did not constitute a natural and spontaneous cry of pain but rather an organized, systematic attack (*Shlach*, 19, 12). A more useful approach is to focus on the deeper layer of reality, not the distorted portrayal one receives through the media, which will lead to anger and panic. Journalists, says Tau, offer only a cheap, shallow description of Israel’s political leaders; “*Orot* and your belief” are more important (p. 22).

Kook and *Orot* describe a worldview in which the government, *Klal Yisrael*, and the true believers and “see-ers” within the nation are interdependent because of Jews’ essential interclusion. In Tau’s ethics of attitude and consciousness, the underlying unity of the nation must be perceived and supported by true believers because of the amplified
power of their consciousness to affect reality. The resultant empathy and ahavat Yisrael (love of Israel) are not about “reluctant tolerance” or the simple practical utility of including as many people as possible, writes Tau; the guiding paradigm is not mere “cooperation,” but absolute unity. Peace within the nation is not a technical matter; rather, it’s tied up with the divine connection that unites Jews (Perakim, 26; Neshamah, קלו-קלז). The more the true believers can perceive the inner segulah of all Israel, says Tau, the stronger it will be expressed on the plane of reality (Perakim, 26–7). Thus, perceiving the inner holiness of Israel’s soul even in the wicked, and the inner impetus toward geulah concealed in the secular, aids those trends (He-arat, 7).

Seeing the segulah hidden in evil is not the same thing as embracing evil, says Tau (p. כט). One should not refrain from battling evil entirely, but his worldview does dictate the patient and loving manner in which this battle must be conducted—as an inner battle within a partnership (Hokhiach, 2). Similarly, this does not amount to simply ignoring national and policy defects, Tau says. The purpose is not to “soften our hands”; rather, it is to strengthen the foundation of all our prayers in true and correct sight (שהקפות; Perakim, 20). When asked whether this focus on belief, and choosing to see the positive in the nation and government amounted to an irresponsible capitulation on important political issues, Tau replied that he was not talking on the level of government policy but rather deeper (Shlach, טו). He argues that the religious settler public’s preference for a “security solution” to challenging situations involving the territories, rather than focusing on belief, is mistaken (Zekhero, יח). The task of belief is vastly more important, Tau implies, than the status of specific parts of the land. In response to opinions that this stance “ignores reality” and is “dangerous”, Tau replies (p. ר): what’s more important, Hebron or the entire state? The eyes yes or the heart? The existence of the entire state depends on correct belief, he argues—it is the task of a heart surgeon to save the entire organism. He dismisses the claim that this is somehow a less serious approach than focusing on politics with passion: “You’re an emissary [שליח] of Klal Yisrael! You’re an emissary of God!” (Shlach, י). The klal–government interclusion also imposes an obligation of careful speech toward the government. We must learn the “lesson of Sodom,” says Tau, drawing on another of Kook’s interpretations (Arpilei tohar, 1): Sodom teaches of the need for “purity of speech” toward the government as the concentrated embodiment of the whole
nation. One must never describe the situation of the *klal*, whether material or spiritual, in terms of despair. Doing so abases the collective spirit rather than elevating it, and represents a repudiation of responsibility. Individuals within the nation might need guidance, but the nation as a whole must be praised (*Perakim*, 69; Kook’s *Ma’amarei*, 279, 285). Israeliite souls are “drowning in polluted waters,” Kook wrote, trying to reach the “shore of divine light”; they need help, not insults (*Perakim*, 68). Belief in the generation and in *geulah* was like throwing a lifebelt to these struggling souls. For Tau, the “sick patient” needs encouragement and mercy from the doctors, not criticism and insults (*Shlach*, י-ח). The nation’s spirit is already degraded, and adding insult by cursing the government makes matters even worse (p. 8). One should focus on the inner light of the nation, says Tau; that is, rather than protesting from a stance of condemnation of the secular public or misguided leaders, the duty of the religious public is to communicate the truth of their *segulah*, hidden even within the wickedness, so that the nation can become self-aware of its *kedushah*. Its consciousness itself will disavow such bad choices once it has reached a greater level of self-knowledge (pp. 3-7).33

This has nothing to do with approval for the government’s policies, which may be utterly sinful, says Tau. As established in Chapter 4, he is no political progressive when it comes to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Like religious Zionist thinkers in general, he asserts that Jewish rule over *Eretz Yisrael* is necessary for *geulah*, and that settlement and conquest are *mitzvot*. The religious community must stand against the government when it attempts to give up parts of *Eretz Yisrael* for the sake of peace. The peace process does not raise the nation’s spirit, he asserts, and should be opposed (p. 7).

However, those who call the government “Hamas” and “traitor” are calling the *klal* these names (p. 87), and we “strike down Israel” if we insult the government instead of persuading it through constructive speech (p. 92). The leaders may well be wrong, but their intention is good, says Tau. If they are misguided, we must open their eyes. If they aren’t listening to us, then insulting them is pointless (p. 92), and will diminish the government’s capacity to do good.

Tau asserts that there is a need to have faith in the government’s capacity for ideal leadership (see generally *Neshamah*, לה-לח): we must demand that the decisions won’t be harmful, he says, but we must also truly believe that the government is capable of

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33 See too Tau’s *Neshamah*, pp. ח-ב.
improved policies (Shlach, 1). Because of its spiritual link to the klal, the government draws its strength from the klal, all of which contains a grain of segulat Yisrael, and therefore leaders have the innate capacity for new and better policies that do not entail “bowing to the goyim” (the peace process is seen as driven by an external Gentile agenda). But their capacity for effective leadership depends on this belief on the part of those who can perceive the spiritual truth of the times, because consciousness determines reality (p. י”). This is a crucial task: the government must not fail its divine purpose through a deficiency of their belief in it (p. ב”י).

Though the emphasis across Tau’s writings leans toward discouraging criticism of the government, particularly in the writings of the 2000s, he does at times state that there is a need to protest wrongful government policies outright. However, in so doing, his stress is always on the careful differentiation between criticism of policies and criticism of the government or politicians (p. ז-ח”). Criticism may be merited, provided it is delivered from the right consciousness, but the essence of the government cannot be attacked (p. ב”). If criticizing the government, the basis of the reproof must be love, not anger (Perakim, 17). Those receiving the tikkun must know the loving spirit and worldview at its root (p. 20).

Cultural war, not civil war: The battle over consciousness

The crises of the 1990s and 2000s indicate the need for a “war of brothers” (מלחמת אחים) says Tau, but this is a war of culture or opinions or ideas (מלחמות תרבות/דעות; Perakim, 13). Zionism is in a crisis of consciousness, says Tau, and we must rebuild it.

In Tau’s view, the Left understands the importance of the public consciousness, and works all the time to direct the mind and heart of the nation in the directions it deems best, which Tau says are materialistic and atheistic (Be-chokhma, 5)—post-Zionism’s “stock exchange individualism” (p. 6). The left is brainwashing the nation, he claims, and there is a need for a campaign of consciousness to reverse the trend.

In this present situation, he notes that the leftists and the religious settlers are performing paradoxical roles: the materialists are shaping the nation’s consciousness, while the settlers shape the material, by constructing buildings, planting trees, setting up outposts, and so on (p. 6). He says it is necessary to consider how to fix this strange situation, whereby the leftists have become anashei ruach (people of the psyche/spirit)
and the religious Zionists have become anashei ma’aseh (people of action/practice). Tau argues that the situation arises from poor understanding on the part of the religious public of the value of the psycho-spiritual realm: we think that concrete and practical actions determine reality, he says; we think “the horses beat us” at Amona. But in fact, we were defeated by public opinions that had been shaped by bad influences (p. 17). In Tau’s view, the “goyish” Left is thus presently winning the battle for the nation’s ear. He describes this situation by adopting the “historical concept called a ‘culture war,’” such as that in Prussia against the Catholics, which was conducted by banning their publications, preventing them from teaching, etc. Today, he says, Israel is in such a culture war (p. 15). The intelligentsia promote a pro-peace stance, he says, and work to eject anyone with right-wing opinions out of the universities. The filtering has been methodical, says Tau, so that by the mid-2000s everyone intelligent and advanced (mitkadem) had to be a leftist. Talking about Israel’s segulah has become like using foul language, he objects. The leftist intellectuals have won, said Tau, because the religious Zionists have not invested sufficient energy in this culture war—the war of consciousness (p. 17). When asked whether the settlement project itself was not a sufficient campaign in such a war, Tau replied that it was not, and called for an organized civic and education campaign throughout the nation (p. 18).

He stresses that this campaign must be conducted from an appropriate consciousness. In war, even a cultural war, the spirit in which one acts changes everything, says Tau. Deeds don’t succeed of themselves; they must stand on the solid foundation of correct belief and consciousness (Perakim, 22). This has various levels. On one, a consciousness centered in confident belief in geulah will enable a more confident stance in the war: its soldiers will be mighty heroes rather than in despair (p. 23).

However, in other respects, a war of ideas requires a different strategy and mindset to a physical war, and a “war of brothers” requires a different strategy and mindset to a war with enemies (pp. 23–4). We must fight, says Tau, from a spiritual feeling of brotherhood, not enmity. Negating the truth of brotherhood would be a form of blindness to the truth and a lack of faith, and will “collapse the house of Israel” (p. 24).

Writing at the end of the 1980s, after the evacuation of Yamit and the discovery of the Jewish Underground, Tau lamented that the nation seemed close to an actual civil war, even though all the divine aid the nation had been granted so far in the creation of
the state and its victories in war was because of its unity. That unity, he said, had to be the basis underpinning the required war of ideas. We can’t stop praying for the state when we’re in the opposition instead of the ruling coalition, he insisted (pp. 24–5). We must fight this war, but within a consciousness of ahavat Yisrael, and with care to refrain from sin (p. 25). He called for a measured, thoughtful approach: we must speak less “from the heart and kidneys” (p. 31).

The approach he advises for engaging with the generation in this cultural war is to elaborate on Kook’s teachings in a literary style suited to the generation (pp. 39). We need to explain holy concepts in a way society can receive and digest at its present level, he says (Hokhiach, כט). He recalls Avraham Kook’s open letter to young Torah-lovers settling in Israel (see Igrot 17), in which he expressed a hope that they would learn to voice their beliefs and thoughts to the generation in a manner the generation could grasp; that is, he envisaged these students becoming educators of a public audience. As the public has been influenced by foreign intellectual currents, temptations, and fashions, what it needs to hear is not the same as what it wants to hear, and so the communication must be skillful in order to succeed. It should take strength, Kook taught, from carefully selected aspects of the surrounding culture, but it must be delivered from a full and pure consciousness even if the message has to be adapted: true and full belief and “true sight” must overarch the limited hasbarah (Perakim, 31–2). It’s acceptable, Tau says, to drop the level of discourse to what the nation can understand if one’s consciousness is right. The task is simply about opening the way. Once the public’s alienation from Torah is removed, the inner essence of the nation will take care of the rest (p. 33).

**Interpretation of the 2005–06 unilateral withdrawals**

Tau’s response to the Hitnatkut and Amona clashes provides a lens through which we see can see how his theosophy molds the interpretation of political events, leading to the same consistent advocacy for “positive” internal politics within the Jewish community. Here, all the dimensions of his predominantly monistic worldview come together very visibly in his rhetoric to justify interpreting the “negative” event dialectically as part of geulah and his ethic of patience toward the “sinners.” The main publications in which Tau grapples with the shock and confusion experienced by the settler community after these events are "זקוי ד’ יחליפו כח" and "בחכמה ייבנה בית;" already drawn on substantially
above. The remainder of this chapter discusses the thrust of these publications. The former is a more formal and abstract exposition of Tau’s interpretation of the events and the required course of action, and cites extensively from the works of both Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook. The latter is the transcript of a question-and-answer session Tau held with educators in religious Zionist yeshivot after the clashes at Amona. In both, Tau addresses the community’s grief. Gush Katif, he says, represented an ideal community—an example of the future messianic kingdom. This devout religious community, whose people served the state, had now been “betrayed” by the state. He acknowledged the “psychological scars” inflicted by the experience, but said the community must seek the divine purpose behind the event (Kavei, י; see generally Neshamah, ה-יו). 

With regard to calls to condemn the secular leaders as responsible, Tau argues that this confuses the nature of what’s happening by failing to perceive the divine dialectic in history. The Talmud, he argues, suggests an association between the generation of the “heels of the messiah” and the prevalence of a shallow perspective or understanding, or the misattribution of causes to local, concrete agents rather than the grand scheme. The situation, he says, is analogous to that of a dog being hit with a stick. The foolish dog thinks that the stick is responsible, not the man holding it. The “stick” here, says Tau, is the prime minister, but those who are wise will perceive God’s control over the process (Kavei, י; Ha-yashar, ו). Similarly, Jacob mistakenly thought that Joseph’s brothers, not God, were responsible for his kidnapping and exile in Egypt, but nothing happens outside the divine design; the apparent tragedy was a necessary prelude to future miracles (Kavei, ו). Similarly, in analyzing the purpose of the withdrawal, one must see that “God is wielding the axe” and try to discern his purpose (p. י). 

Tau compares the current trials to the birthpangs experienced during the original forging of Am Yisrael as a nation and its conquest of Eretz Yisrael, only this time, the trials signal the struggle to enter the messianic era, in which ha-olam haba and the current world will unite. Tzvi Yehuda taught, he says, that the messiah will come at a moment of despair. The despair is thus a requirement for the messiah’s arrival, and so is

34 Supplementary description is available in Appendix 2.  
35 Bavli Suta 2, ו.  
36 The metaphor comes from Bavli Menahoth 53b, and it also appears in classics of Chabad Hasidism; see Loewenthal (1990, 93).
in fact a surface-level “negative” symptom of the positive process of *geulah* (p. 77). Consistently with the worm–butterfly metaphor in which the base vessel that precedes and contains the good is proportional to the good that will finally be revealed, Tau argues that the measure of “revealed light” will be proportionate to the measure of darkness and obscurity that precedes it. The disengagement from Gaza was an unparalleled evil in history, he says, and so it will be with the subsequent light (p. 78). All the trauma is thus part of the dialectical process of (national) rebirth: at first the light is hidden, but eventually it will be revealed. So Avraham Kook (*Ma’amarei*, 360–1) taught on the massacres of 1929: however traumatic, good has always eventually come from the *yishuv*’s challenges. They facilitate inner growth, and strengthen the people’s longing for the revealed end (*Kavei*, 13).

One form that the “revealed light” will take is an elevation of consciousness—and specifically that of the “heart” of the nation, the religious Zionist public. The disengagement, argues Tau, will force the community of true believers to refine its perception of reality, moving to a fuller and more elevated level of consciousness. The surface-level appearance of reality may be that the settler world is being “punished” for some inexplicable “sins,” but rather than righteous retribution, what is going on is a creative dialectic process: these “sins” are just present inadequacies and deficiencies from which one needs to detach to enable the emergence of a more perfect form (p. 81). As the depth of sorrow of the events is “too great to be apprehended” within our present mindset, writes Tau, they function as a catalyst for the development of an even grander conception of reality—a deeper and fuller understanding of divine reality on earth (p. 82).

The purpose of the apparent tragedy is to facilitate the destruction of “lesser concepts” (*ibid.*); we must “awaken” our hearts and consciousness to a higher level (p. 81). We’re not yet ready, writes Tau, to embody the most supreme consciousness, so we are “being shaken” to enable its development. The settlers were *chosen* for this task because only pure, devoted believers *can* attain such a high level of consciousness; others would just abandon Israel and move to the United States when confronted with such a challenge, e.g., the seculars and the *Haredim* (p. 83).

Moreover, the radical interclusion of all Israel implies on some level that the faults of the seculars are at least partially the responsibility of the devout. Tau has argued that weakness in the government is not the fault of the left alone, or any one group within
the nation, first because of the relationship of interclusion and second because of the role of “true sight” at the most fundamental level of reality. Tau has declared that the weakness of believers, “us,” is the cause (Zekhero, ט) of national and government weakness. As long as there remains one Jew “who shaves off his sidelocks,” “you [the religious person] have half a nice beard, and half a defective one,” Tau asserts. The same is true, he argues, of attachment to the Greater Land of Israel in the wider community: while there is even one Jewish Israeli who doesn’t feel ownership of Eretz Yisrael, our attachment to the land is incomplete, our belief is defective, and a spiritual state of wholeness not yet been attained (Shlach, פ).

Tau argues that the disengagement, although an outer disconnection from the land, in fact strengthens the religious community’s inner connection with the land; a spiritual, rather than human, connection (Kavei, פ). The physical appearance of separation is not the reality: it is like the process of childbirth, and the pain of physical separation in fact strengthens the connection with the land, like a mother and child during labor (p. צ). However, the apparent implication of the superiority of a transcendent spiritual connection over one that is embodied and lived sits uneasily with Avraham Kook’s emphasis on the importance of living a “natural,” normal life tied to the land as the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, and with the character of the messianic era being the unification of the earthly and physical and the spiritual. It is difficult to reconcile this interpretation with Tau’s teachings that the unification of the material and spiritual is superior to focusing on spirituality exclusively.

Consistently with his theosophical teachings on the relationship of “true believers” and “true see-ers” to the rest of the nation and the redemptive progress, Tau argues that this task of raising one’s consciousness has great importance for the Israeli public and is a divine mission. The argument flows more naturally here. The religious public represents the spiritual elite within the nation, he writes, like a special military unit, and it is blessed by God, even in sorrow, to walk a hard path for kiddush ha-shem (sanctification of God’s name, understood in traditional usage to mean martyrdom), and to walk it in might and joy (p. ח). We’re legions of a king, he asserts, entrusted with the “drug of life” for the whole nation (p. צ). Gush Katif was just the start of a greater mission (p. כ). The ideals behind it have not suddenly disappeared and become irrelevant; on the contrary, it’s clearer now just how essential they are (p. י). These
ideas give the klal a reason to exist. Therefore, when the nation is deficient, God brings this to our attention. Gush Katif, writes Tau, was as an ideal, sheltered, religious community. It contained “no worms.” Now, it is undergoing a forced confrontation with a very different, “sick” community, in order to reinforce its sense of mission to “heal” it. Unconsciously, this “sick” community’s policies against the settlers are like the bad behavior of a small child acting up to get its father’s attention (p. ทร). The task is therefore to show the nation the way, and the religious community was chosen for this task because it embodies the spiritual “nutrition” the nation needs (p. ภ).

I now turn to Tau’s critical response to the clashes that took place between settler protesters, chiefly youth, and the Israeli security forces during the evacuation of Amona, an outpost in Samaria/the central West Bank, in early 2006. The Amona evacuation was marked by unprecedented violence between the protestors and the security forces. In his question-and-answer session with yeshiva educators, Tau was asked whether the strategy of violent protest was perhaps the way to deal with attempts at evacuations by the government (Be-chokhma, 4). His response, emphasized again in his answers to several other questions throughout the session, was unequivocal: violence is forbidden and ineffective. “You can’t rehabilitate people from violent clashes like that,” he asserted (p. 12). Amona “galvanized a generation” and left a “scar of hate.” It is forbidden to participate in such violence (p. 7). An audience member protested: but the police committed such great wickedness! Tau replied that it is still a duty not to hate the them. He sees a tremendous error in giving in to hate. “We specialize in insults,” he complains, but such fraternal hate damages Israel more than the hate of “the goyim” (ibid.). The Amona clash was chilul hashem, a desecration of God’s name (p. 9, 12).

The police don’t know any better, he says; they didn’t learn in a yeshiva (p. 9). They’re not our enemies; they’ve simply been coerced or brainwashed by the secular left, and in a secular person’s eyes, the settler is a “messianic,” “irresponsible,” “damaging” actor (pp. 6–7). It is the “leftist extremists,” says Tau, who want the conflict with the settlers (p. 6). They want the violence and the shocking photos (p. 12). The left incites the Israeli public to hatred and is irresponsible, whereas “we have a higher duty” (p. 9). Tau insists: “don’t be part of the performance” (p. 12). Tau thus redirects responsibility for the acts of the security forces from the officers themselves to the broader culture and spiritual situation. When questioned about whether one should
fight with the security forces, Tau says that this is like “throwing the baby out with the bathwater,” or the confusion of the dog being beaten with a stick: the police and the soldiers are the stick, says Tau, but who is holding the stick (p. 5)? Answering this question leads to a focus on the task of elevating one’s consciousness and that of the nation rather than conflict. “Don’t fight the soldiers; invite them to tea,” he says (p. 14).

Several participants questioned Tau about how to engage with settler youth who were disillusioned with mamlakhti ideas and wanted a more aggressive campaign. “The youth are sick of mamlachtiyut,” said one participant (p. 12). Tau sees the “kids” as naive, and being manipulated by older people within the settler movement (e.g., certain of the Kahanists and Od Yosef Chai, though Tau does not name them specifically) who want escalation and a secessionist movement (p. 6). He stressed the need to teach the youth about the duty to work with God to find the light within the darkness in the nation (p. 12). We need to explain the distinction, says Tau: teach them to love their fellow Jew but hate the wickedness in him, like a child who loves an alcoholic father because he sees that the poor old man is sick and needs mercy. “Poor you?” Tau asks rhetorically. Those with “no values” are the unfortunate ones. Look at their condition, he advises, and instead of hating them you’ll begin to pity them (p. 14). Questioned as to whether this work represented too great an intellectual burden for children, Tau asserted that, if necessary, God will make it so that children can understand such complicated things, just as it is said that in the messianic future to come, children will understand the deep matters of Kabbalah, for it will be an existential need. In times of great need, he says, God enables even average people to think subtly and make careful distinctions. Educators should simply fit the “clothing” of the message to the audience, and communicate this idea to the youth gradually (ibid.).

When a participant asserted that the youth had grown and “want to lead,” Tau stressed that leadership required knowledge of how to “build consciousness.” It’s about not doing injury, he said: you can’t kill the sick person (p. 16). The children must learn to be illuminated with Torah, so that they can help convince the nation and public opinion (and its spirit and culture) through Torah’s light (p. 17). The first requirement is to strengthen the youth in their belief, so that they will not be affected by public opinion or the media’s shallow representation of events. If you’re going to be a zealot and use clubs, says Tau, smash the television, which is the worse enemy (p. 17–8).
We need to help the nation become *ba’alei teshuvah* (i.e., help them to repent and return to the faith), Tau finally reaffirms, and “it’s not kids’ work” (p. 11). If we don’t talk to *Am Yisrael*, others will fill the void with propaganda. Tau sees a dire need for public engagement and education rather than separation. The press are “conning” people; kids are on drugs; the nation is polarized; family values are being undermined. We followed the Zionist movement, he reminds his audience, in order to bring the nation with us. If the settlement project of Gush Emunim is not enough to achieve this, we must do more (*ibid.*).

**Conclusion, & segue to the analysis of Ginsburgh**

This chapter has shown how Tau’s dialectical paradigm of the redemptive process and overriding emphasis on the unity of *Am Yisrael* and consciousness inform his “positive” politics centered on national unity and consciousness-building, and his rejection of critical and aggressive approaches as spiritually incoherent and dangerous. This chapter also showed how his theosophy translates into a call to respond to the *Hitnatkut* by raising the consciousness of the generation through education. To summarize the last key components of Tau’s worldview:

- **Ontology:** The chief insight from this chapter was that consciousness itself, for Tau, is as ontologically real as “reality” itself—at least inasmuch as it corresponds to the divine reality. In fact, it may be a more fundamental layer of reality, since “the world exists for truth, not truth for the world.”

- **Logic:** The above innovation involves epistemology in the logical patterns of creation and redemption. Recalling previous chapters, we know that Tau’s epistemology largely involves perception of the divine will through Jews’ lived history, following Kook, who followed Halevi. Now, because consciousness is “real,” this correct perception can *in itself* have an active influence on the cosmos. By this logic, Tau sees “true sight” or “the holy perspective” (seeing the world and history as though with God’s eyes) as a vital mechanism in
the unfolding of geulah. This is particularly the case for true believers’ perception of the essential interclusion and divinity of the entire Jewish people, including the wicked.\footnote{There are echoes here of Chabad Hasidism’s contemplative tradition, in which “various levels of love of the Divine [are] to be attained through a Maimonidean* style of contemplation,” whose “chief subject matter…[is] the unity of the world with its infinite source in the Divine” (Loewenthal 1990, 49), such that “[t]he world ceases to have even the similitude of separation. Sin itself is perceived as having a more exalted source which is pure and sacred” (p. 16). The theurgic effect of this contemplation also has antecedents in Chabad’s tradition of the tzaddik. Through “this contemplative joining of two levels of existence” (mundane differentiation and holy unity) “the ascetic, contemplative kabbalist is transformed into a theurgic master, a spiritual leader with a direct and active relationship with the world around him. From lonely kabbalist he becomes the Zaddik of Hasidism. His thought processes have a direct effect on the world and on other people; conversely, the spiritual balance of the world around him is mirrored in his thoughts and in the events which take place before his eyes” (ibid.). *See Appendix 1.} Much as Chapter 4 showed that Israel operated as the heart of the nations, concentrating and back-transmitting their hidden divinity, this chapter showed that Tau conceives of the religious Zionist community and especially Har Ha-Mor as fulfilling the same function within Am Yisrael. Thus, they have a disproportionate effect on national consciousness. We also saw how the logic of Jewish interclusion rendered the Israeli government the personification of the klal, thus making its state of consciousness dependent on that of the nation, and therefore that of the believers.

- Axiology: There are several consequences. The government–klal interclusion endows the government (even a leftist one) with immense kedushah as the embodiment of the national spirit. The essential unity of Am Yisrael means that political unity and fraternity are overriding values. And the supreme ontological reality accorded to consciousness in Tau’s worldview renders the settlement project secondary to the task of raising national consciousness in religious Zionism’s support for geulah.

- Epistemology: See ontology and logic regarding the effect of “true sight” on the world.

- Ethic: We come full circle. In addition to settlement being “a detail” in the real war over consciousness, the correct approach to the
disappointments of secular Zionism is loving-kindness, empathy, perception of the hidden divine element within Israel’s apparent evils (thereby elevating and strengthening the good), respectful communication to and about the government, and a public education campaign based in a stance of love and complete fraternal identification, to help bring the nation back to its ‘natural’ Torah consciousness. Intellectual ideas from the West, including the peace process, must be fought through an internal cultural war, but from the root and within the boundary conditions of ahavat Yisrael.

The last sections of the chapter were particularly illuminating in terms of showing Tau’s rhetorical style in action. He uses traditional Kookian metaphors to articulate the duty of the faithful to “save” their wicked fellows, especially the medical analogy of the doctor/surgeon, and draws on Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook as spiritual authorities, in addition to classic religious rhetorical devices such as biblical and talmudic analogy. His rhetoric frames the settlers as the spiritual elite of the nation, on whose shoulders rests a supreme duty to advance the redemptive process, but in this case the correct medium is a campaign for rectified national consciousness.

This chapter also revealed, indirectly, one of the key limitations of Tau’s worldview as a resource for persuading the more rambunctious youth of the settler community, such as the Hilltop Youth. Paradoxically, although Tau’s worldview emphasizes the essential unity of the holy and profane within Am Yisrael, and of its grand and low spiritual figures, he is simultaneously an unapologetic intellectual elitist whose logic of geulah and of the structure of reality itself accords prime value to a learned elite. The correct consciousness needed to serve as a mechanism of geulah, in Tau’s view, requires deep study of suitable texts38 to enable the student to apprehend the divine will in all the events of the times, thereby facilitating tikkun and geulah. 39 The

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38 E.g., the Kookian corpus, Halevi’s Kuzari, or the writings of the Maharal.
39 In a sense, Tau thereby unifies i) Maimonides’ identification of the attainment of supreme holiness with perfection of the human intellect through study and reason, ii) the lurianic kabbalists’ focus on experiential mystical exercises aimed to advance tikkun and geulah cognitively—spiritually, and iii) Halevi’s conception of lived Jewish history as supreme divine revelation. Tau argues that the wise must cultivate consciousness of “the holy perspective” (of Halevi) in order to apprehend intellectually the deep truths of the world, history, and ethics (Halevi and Maimonides), and that this intellectual apprehension, grounded in the correct consciousness, itself theurgically promotes the tikkun of the world, history, and ethics, and thereby geulah (Halevi, Maimonides, Luria).
persuasiveness of his stance also depends on acceptance of the extremely intricate logic traced herein. The skeptical questioning Tau received after Amona about the traction of this message among radicalized, angry youth thus hits the mark: Tau’s ethical program (centered on a carefully considered public education strategy) and its profound theosophical substructure are not matters for “kids,” as he put it.

An alternative spiritual guide within the settler community whose message has achieved considerable reach among radicalized youth is Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, to whom the thesis now turns. This serves several purposes. It allows me to add to the literature first by presenting a fairly detailed history of Od Yosef Chai’s controversies, and to explain the links between the yeshiva, the Hilltop Youth, Kahanist-style politics, and vigilante violence, including the price tag phenomenon. I then analyze Ginsburgh’s worldview and rhetoric, though the treatment is less in depth than for Tau. This also allows me to appraise the value of Rosenak’s (2013) thesis that the balance between monistic and dualistic theosophical approaches is key to how violence is framed in the ethical systems of various settler religious thinkers. I also consider what, if any, discursive possibilities might be extracted even from a dualistic worldview, militant ethic, and rhetoric of demonization—which, I argue, characterizes the political teachings of Ginsburgh and Od Yosef Chai.
Chapter 6

Ginsburgh, Yeshivat Od Yosef Chai, and the Hilltop Youth

Introduction

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh (1944–) is a Chabad rabbi and head of the *Od Yosef Chai* (Joseph Still Lives) yeshiva in the Yitzhar settlement, near Nablus (biblical Shechem). The yeshiva occupies an unusual discursive space, neither mainstream religious Zionist (though some of its teaching staff were educated in this tradition) nor formally affiliated with the Hasidic movement, despite Ginsburgh’s own affiliation with Chabad and despite his teachings being steeped in its Kabbalistic inheritance. *Od Yosef Chai* is no stranger to negative publicity: its rabbis have drawn flak from all quarters for allegedly inciting racist and/or vigilante violence, including the controversial phenomenon of price tag attacks—with the Hilltop Youth at its vanguard. The police and Shin Bet claim yeshiva students have participated in such violence and have imposed both administrative detentions and travel bans, backed by secret intelligence. Most recently, military police were deployed at the yeshiva for a whole year after Yitzhar settlers vandalized an IDF outpost.

The decision to include in the thesis an analysis of this yeshiva’s history in the public eye, a review of the secondary literature on the demographic milieu where Ginsburgh has influence, and an analysis of his theosophical worldview was informed, as stated in Chapter 1, by the need to identify the limits of resources mined from Tau’s discourse. The results of the overall enquiry in this respect are presented at the end of the next chapter. However, this exercise yielded the following unexpected contribution.

The Hilltop Youth, among whom Ginsburgh’s message is popular (Garb 2009, 18), are typically characterized as the hard edge of Israel’s right wing, and in the imagination of the secular public represent the clearest archetype of the “radical,” “extremist,”
“messianic,” “fundamentalist,” “violent” religious settler. It seems a likely place, therefore, to find at least a limited vindication of the fundamentalist paradigm, whereby Ginsburgh’s theo-political teachings (some of which in fact saw him legally indicted for inciting racist violence; see below) produce the sort of vigilante violence we’d logically expect. The historical review in this chapter indeed provides evidence of this. However, the two chapters, jointly, also problematize the easy association between Hilltop Youths’ aggressive—and not uncommonly violent—style of activism and Ginsburgh’s theosophical worldview, especially in view of the ability of rational, interests-based models of vigilantism in the literature to explain the phenomena of price tagging and anti-Arab violence generally, leaving an ambiguous picture.

This chapter proceeds as follows. It first explores the connections between Od Yosef Chai and the brand of settler activism led by Hilltop Youth called price tag acts, commencing by situating price tagging in the context of extant studies of settler vigilantism. It then presents a historical overview of public controversies around the yeshiva—relating both to publications by its teaching staff, including Ginsburgh, and to accusations of violence and incitement thereto—and analyzes the claimed links with price tagging specifically. (I defer my brief review of the literature on Ginsburgh until the next chapter, as most academic works address his theo-political or purely religious teachings rather than exploring the social milieu in which he and his associates teach.) The conclusion recaps the main points of significance for the thesis.

**Tag mechir, the balance of terror, & vigilante logic**

**The price tag phenomenon**

In the years since a 10-month settlement construction freeze announced in late 2009, price tag attacks have been on and off the radar as a signature tactic of anti-bourgeois, counter-cultural fringes of settler youth opposed to territorial concessions and constraints on settlement expansion. Activists try to deter the Israeli government from construction freezes in the settlements and/or demolitions of unauthorized outposts by retaliating with vandalism and sometimes violence against various targets: most often Palestinians or their property, but also the homes of Jewish public figures who advocate or implement such policies, and even IDF facilities. Though rare, the latter has raised
exceptional ire in Israel. Even mainstream settler leaders have been threatened, if they are viewed as complicit in policies to “uproot” Jews from Eretz Yisrael (e.g., by enforcing the construction freeze locally). The graffiti tag mechir (תג מחיר), “price tag,” is commonly left as a signature and warning at vandalized sites, to indicate that the act is the price to be paid for the authorities’ transgressions.

Thus, it represents the “balance of terror” tactic castigated by Tau (in Shlach, שלח), and follows at least in part an uncomplicated, instrumental logic, being intended to alter the cost–benefit equation for the government or other authorities implementing policies the perpetrators disagree with. So this “religious radical” tactic must a priori be viewed as rational—though ethically abhorrent in the eyes of many—in the conventional sense of goal-rationality dominant in modern, secular discourse. Indeed, the goal-rational bargaining paradigm is explicit in the chosen tag-line (no pun intended).

Demographically and organizationally, price taggers stand on ‘the fringe of the fringe’ of the settler world. Estimates suggest they number in the mere hundreds. The coordination (if any) of attacks is informal and spontaneous. Teenagers with mobile phones can quickly and quietly organize a response to perceived provocations; there need not be a central architect, and no operational “hub” has been persuasively identified—no “Price Tag Regional Council,” as remarked sarcastically by one right-wing activist—although the researches of the security agencies have concentrated heavily on Samarian Hilltop Youth and Od Yosef Chai.

However, the price taggers’ impact on Israeli–Palestinian intercommunal relations and public discourse has been disproportionate to their demographic and ideological marginality. They have been lambasted by the mainstream settler rabbinical and lay leadership—though condemnations flow more freely when Jews are targeted—not

1 See Chapter 1.
2 Note that I do not ignore the role of religious worldview in rendering this choice of tactic ethically acceptable as well as “rational”; the issue is taken up in the next chapter.
5 “[Yesha Council head Danny] Dayan admits that when attacks were perpetrated against Arabs, motions put
least because of concern that the price taggers’ alienation of mainstream Israelis threatens public support for settlers per se, as transpired after Rabin’s assassination. An attack on an IDF base in 2011 stunned the nation, and the Hilltop Youth behind it were publically shamed by defence minister Ehud Barak in the harshest language Israeli discourse could offer: “there is no doubt that we’re talking about terrorists.”

Vigilantism

Though the price tag slogan and targeting of the IDF are novel features, there is substantial continuity between price tagging as a mode of vigilante-style intimidation and prior vigilante acts in a similar vein, dating to well before such political triggers as the Hitnatkat and 2009 building freeze. Such trends have, unsurprisingly, been amply recorded and analyzed in the mainstream literature on Gush Emunim. Further, there is an overlap between price tag activism as a form of political protest and intimidation whose intended ‘address’ is the authorities, and the pre-existing phenomenon of revenge attacks against Palestinians, or pre-emptive acts described by the perpetrators as aiming to prevent future terrorism. The latter mode of vigilantism, predating the price tag slogan, has generally been accompanied by arguments that the IDF and police fail to adequately protect settlers from terrorism by Palestinians, thus justifying self-protection and the implementation of extra-legal punishments for the sake of justice and deterrence (e.g., Weisburd 1989, 68–76). In the late 1980s, Weisburd’s pioneering criminological study of settler vigilantism identified it as “a community-supported strategy of control in which a large number of settlers participated”; his survey of Gush Emunim settlers found that the vast majority supported taking independent retaliatory action against

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7 “Barak: Consider ‘Hilltop Youth’ a Terror Group,” Jerusalem Post, December 14, 2011. With regard to the legal suitability of the label “terrorism,” see Byman and Sachs (2012); theoretical support can be drawn from Sprinzak (1995).
8 See, e.g., the section “The Strong Stony Land” in Chapter 8 of Zertal and Eldar (2007), which describes (among other events) how Adi Mintz, secretary general of the Yesha Council, had his tires slashed in 2002 for criticizing Hilltop Youth as ‘criminals.’
9 The phenomenon of vigilantism beyond the green line is a long-range pattern, as testified by the 1982 Karp report. It has been noted and analysed by many scholars of the settler movement, both with regard to militant opposition to government policies (such as the Sinai withdrawal and Oslo Accords) and vigilante attacks against Palestinians. See, e.g., chapters 2 and 3 of Zertal and Eldar (2007); Pedahzur and Perliger (2003); Weisburd (1989, 1988). See too the various works by Sprinzak (e.g., 1999, 145–285; 1991a; 1987).
Arab provocations or aggression, and approximately one third of males had participated in some form of vigilantism (though not necessarily violent forms; p. 72).

Supporters framed the settlers’ extra- but not anti-legal “independent action” as a simple necessity to ensure deterrence and security, because the IDF and police could not protect settlers; and it was also a means to cement Jewish control of Eretz Yisrael (pp. 68–76). Unofficial road blocks were the mildest (and most common) form of vigilante retaliation for Arab violence or vandalism, but participants also reported revenge raids on Arab villages, in which windows and cars were smashed.

As the major settlement blocs have become institutionalized and suburbanized, this mantle has passed to the Hilltop Youth residing in relatively remote outposts, and acts in this classic vigilante mold have adopted the price tag signature. The triple goals of revenge/deterrence against Arabs, cementing Jewish control and Arab obedience in the territories, and persuading the ruling regime to change its policies are seen as complementary. 10 For example, Palestinian property is a legitimate target for “retaliation” against Israeli government policies seen as “choking” Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael. Firstly, the Arabs are “the real enemy,” whereas applying pressure tactics on the government is just a necessary intermediate step in the war with Arabs over Eretz Yisrael. Secondly, attacking Palestinians forces the government and army to invest expensive resources investigating the incident and preventing further ones, thus altering its cost–benefit equation.11

The Hilltop Youth

The demographic most involved in price tag acts, including attacks on IDF bases in September and December 2011, has been the so-called “Hilltop Youth.” The following brief sociological portrait is drawn from Borstein (2013), Feige (2009, 234–46), Imesch (2009), Kaniel (2003), Susskind et al. (2005), Weiss (2010), and Weissbrod (2008). The Hilltop Youth are a grass-roots movement (with no formal membership) of ‘tweenage’ Israelis, mostly second-generation settlers, who establish outpost communities outside

10 See further below regarding Rabbi Elitzur’s alleged price tag manifesto.
11 It is therefore possible to situate the price tag phenomenon within the typology of vigilante political violence outlined by Pedahzur and Perliger (2003) in their overview of settler vigilantism generally—which in turn was based on Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1976, 1974), Gurr (1989), and Sprinzak (1999, 1991a, 1987). These models find support in the criminological research on settler vigilantism by Weisburd (1989, 1988). See Satherley (2013) for further details.
the major settlement blocs. They are generally independent of the settler establishment (i.e., the Yesha Council and Amana) and have no permits.\textsuperscript{12} The lifestyle is frugal, seeking authenticity and spiritual connection to the land. Sociologists have identified echoes of hippie movements (Kaniel 2003, 21–3), and such allusions are common in journalism describing the phenomenon. However, ideologically the guiding hope is that the rough-and-ready outposts will eventually become permanent settlements that can never be handed over to a future Palestinian state (see, e.g., Feige 2009, 234–5).

Hilltop Youth often see their activities as a revival of the tradition of Gush Emunim in its heyday of pioneering \textit{chutzpah} (the late 1960s and 1970s). However, unlike Gush Emunim, no formal organizational structure coordinates or directs the hilltop movement (see Borstein 2006). This is in contrast to the collectivist settlement enterprise of Gush Emunim, whose ideological vanguard coalesced around a clear spiritual mentor in Tzvi Yehuda Kook, and which had formal organization and often coordinated settlement and protest activities centrally. Such outpost communities seem to have begun crystallizing in the early 1990s, perhaps in response to the First Intifada and the Oslo process, and the phenomenon expanded tremendously after the 2005 \textit{Hitnatkut}.

The youth are idealists and seekers, after their own fashion, sacrificing affluence and security for meaning. Socio-psychological investigations identify: a perpetual sense of friction and insecurity with respect to death and terrorism (ubiquitous during the formative experience of the Second Intifada for this generation); dedication to active implementation of the core norms of the settler movement (which youths see the ‘grown-ups’ as failing to do); not infrequently, histories of social and family problems; and individualism, with most making the decision to move to the hills without encouragement from—and sometimes in opposition to—their parents (Borstein 2006; Imesch 2009).

Many come to the outposts seeking belonging after failing to ‘fit in’ at formal educational institutions (Borstein 2006; Weiss 2010). For instance, those struggling with the extremely demanding schedule of an elite yeshiva education can be attracted to the outposts as an earthier and less cerebral mode of religious service, and a respected alternative to ongoing educational disengagement and failure.\textsuperscript{13} Kaniel (2003, 25)

\textsuperscript{12} On the distinction between Hilltop Youth and the settlers of outposts founded in cooperation with the settler establishment, see Kaniel (2003, 9–10).

\textsuperscript{13} There are also part-time participants, such as students in long-standing Gush Emunim yeshivot who have no
describes the hilltop settlers’ order of priorities, which places *avodah* (work, especially manual work) before Torah in the *Torah-Ve-Avodah* scheme; i.e., the unification of mundane and spiritual labor that characterizes the traditional religious Zionist ideal. By contrast, among Gush Emunim settlers, Torah study was considered more important, and yeshiva education was highly valued (though not so much that secular work was denigrated, in contrast to the Haredi sector).

Furthermore, Gush Emunim settlers tended to be white-collar workers, commuting to office jobs in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, rather than farming the land. By contrast, agricultural work is regarded with great pride on the hilltop outposts. In short, the milieu can at least partly be characterized as anti-intellectual. Thus, Tau’s intellectually driven approach to service in the redemptive process—centered on the acquisition through long study of a sophisticated “perspective of the holy”—is likely to be anathema to the many who choose the hilltops precisely because it is an alternative to the yeshiva world.

These youth also generally feel betrayed by the secular state. Even in the early 2000s, trust for Israeli law enforcement institutions was minimal (Kaniel 2003, 21–22), and it was further eroded by the *Hitnatkut* (see, e.g., Weissbrod 2008). In the hilltop outposts, “Israeli law is considered little more than a courteous recommendation, and respect for state institutions is practically nonexistent” (Feige 2009, 237). Further, whereas Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s *Merkaz Ha-Rav* circle deified the Israeli state and army as the vehicles of redemption—considering them hallowed and deserving of loyalty even as one battled policies impeding settlement in *Eretz Yisrael*—the Hilltop Youth, to generalize, believe the state has exhausted its moral and spiritual capital. The uprooting of Gush Katif is remembered as a betrayal of Zionism and Judaism by the state, a needless and cynical human tragedy, and a betrayal of the country’s most loyal servants—the settlers, who had risked their lives by serving in dangerous, elite combat units in disproportionate numbers and bearing the brunt of Palestinian terrorism. Many express a profound sense of victimization vis-à-vis both the uprooting of homes by the state and the routine loss of friends and family to Palestinian terrorist attacks, especially the almost daily carnage in the settler communities during the Second Intifada (Feige 2009, 7–9). They point to the cynicism, moral and ideological bankruptcy, and

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14 See Chapter 5.
15 See further Imesch (2011, 17–21) on these youths’ alienation from the state.
spinelessness of the state, security forces, and even the settler establishment, when it comes to protecting the Jewish right to live in Eretz Yisrael against local terrorism and international pressure. Accordingly, we encounter in this milieu a willingness to apply intimidation tactics and vandalism against symbols and leaders of the state and against its political leaders. This milieu generally rejects the authority of the state to uproot Jews from any part of biblical Eretz Yisrael, in any context.

The youth are, moreover, also scathing in their criticism of the “passivity” of the settler establishment—its unwillingness to fight tooth and nail against the uprooting, allegedly for the sake of maintaining good relations with a despicable, Torah-hating national leadership, and a preoccupation with protecting the cash flow of government budgetary support to the well-established settlement blocs (e.g., Gush Etzion) through “good behavior,” at the price of betraying the core value of settling all of Eretz Yisrael (Feige 2009, 239). This passivity must be countered, they argue, by firm and even militant resistance against the instruments of the state—and such spirit was in evidence at the 2006 evacuation of Amona, where the clashes between settlers (and prominently Hilltop Youth) and the security forces were intense (Weissbrod 2008, 7). They are moreover disenchanted with the “bourgeois” character of the Yesha Council and Amana, seeking to replace their materialism with a simple lifestyle in connection with the land. (Thus, the anti-materialism stance recurrent in Tau’s rhetoric also reappears here—but directed against the mainstream settler movement itself.)

Some youths have come to reject not only the secular state and the lay settler leadership but also its leading religious authorities, whom they blame for discouraging militant opposition to the uprooting of Gush Katif and encouraging the community to let itself be trampled by the state. The rabbis don’t have unconditional authority in this world. Most reject the authority of the mamalakhti rabbis who called for calm during the Hitnatkut, such as Aviner and Tau, and are attracted instead to more militant voices, as one young outpost settler declared angrily (and sorrowfully) in a letter-to-the-editor. The youth of the hills, he wrote, is one who has experienced the Hitnatkut and learned not to trust rabbis, because he has heard so many contradictory pronouncements in such a short time: one tells soldiers to disobey orders and block roads to save the Land, another says that this injures the Jewish people; one says to dialogue with soldiers and leave peacefully, another says to fight soldiers as if they were thieves invading one’s home.
He’s the one who believed the rabbis’ promises that a miracle would take place and the evacuation order would be cancelled—any minute now, just be patient—and saw these promises betrayed.\(^\text{16}\)

This parallels a more general trend among second-generation settlers of the decentralization or “privatization” of spiritual–ideological authority (see, e.g., Fischer 2011b). Parents and educators in the community have expressed their inability to impress upon their charges an authoritative ideological or religious framework through which to channel (and limit) their rambunctious political activities. If youths are frustrated with the pacifism of the leading mamlakhti rabbis, they simply seek out someone more militant.\(^\text{17}\) Kaniel explains: “The Gush Emunim generation accepted non-religious Zionist leaders, as well as the authority of both the Israeli government and of the chief rabbis. The Hilltop Settlers accept neither, deferring to local rabbis” (in Susskind et al. 2005, 186).

Two religio-ideological streams began to fill the void opened by this crumbling of traditional religious Zionist rabbinical authority: i) the Od Yosef Chai yeshiva and Ginsburgh’s brand of Hasidism, and ii) the community dedicated to the legacy of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane (leader of the Kach movement and Jewish Defense League, both of which are officially terrorist organizations).\(^\text{18}\) Rabbis, yeshiva students, and right-wing activists attached to these two spheres have been the outposts’ most constant sources of solidarity, religious legitimation, and practical assistance (e.g., arranging legal aid when youths are apprehended for attacking Arabs or damaging IDF property). According to Borstein’s (2006) analysis, the rabbis and yeshiva students provide the youths with “a listening ear” for their inner doubts, and the youths take on their new mentors’ worldview. They help endow the youths with a sense of purpose, she says, and inspire them to participate in settlement expansion as a positive outlet for their frustrations. Most mentors are themselves outpost dwellers, or live nearby, and provide logistical continuity for the outposts and role modelling for the troubled youths from the main settlement blocks, who “plug in” to this source of welcome and pastoral care.


\(^{17}\) See especially Weiss (2010) and Imesh (2009).

\(^{18}\) See Borstein (2006).
One such mentor is the prominent *Od Yosef Chai* graduate Ariel Groner, a long-time resident of the hilltop outposts neighboring Yitzhar. Groner is a key player in Chonenu, a solidarity organization founded during the Second Intifada by (Kahanist) Shmuel Meidad that coordinates legal aid for right-wing civilians accused of violence or damaging IDF property, including alleged price tag operatives, and assists both civilians and soldiers accused by security agencies of injuring or killing Arabs. Chonenu subsidizes the legal aid and provides intensive emotional and psychological support: Groner or other representatives attend the court hearings, and Chonenu’s team provides professional coaching on how to withstand police pressure during interviews. They also handle media liaison. A high-profile example was their highly effective legal and media campaign to secure the release from jail (to house arrest) of Haim Perlman, accused of involvement in a string of murders of Arabs.

It is unclear to what extent this supportive relationship confers authority upon the rabbis among this milieu. *Od Yosef Chai* and the Hilltop Youth around Yitzhar are meaningfully connected; however, it is not clear that this connection is one of authority and direction. As noted, this demographic does not stand in awe of hierarchical authority. The former head of *Doreshei Yehudkha* (the yeshiva ketanah attached to *Od Yosef Chai*) and rabbi of Yitzhar, David Dudkovitz, is one of the rabbis most friendly with the Hilltop Youth in the area—along with Ginsburgh and Rabbi Yosef Shapira (another teacher at *Od Yosef Chai*). He stated in an interview that some of the local Hilltop Youth accepted his halakhic authority, but others did not. He noted that the youth around Yitzhar were more likely to look to him for guidance than were those from the Hebron area. Even so, it was not a formal arrangement of supervision and authority. The youth choose their own path—and whom they’ll listen to.

Nonetheless, as will be shown in the following sections, the yeshiva confers practical and ideological support (if not authority) to Hilltop Youth engaged in militant activism vis-à-vis Arabs and state authorities. Further, elements of Ginsburgh’s teachings could, paradoxically, have particular potency in a milieu that rejects rabbinic authority, as shown in the next chapter. Moreover, Israel Ariel (one of Ginsburgh’s close

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20 He was convicted of obstructing an officer during the clearing of the outpost Chavat Gil’ad in 2002.
21 Chonenu is reported to have helped some 15,000 civilians and soldiers, including some 1,000 during the Hitnaikut alone; Atali, “Omedim li-yeminam.”
associates) has claimed: “After the Gaza disengagement... Ginsburgh became an inspirational beacon for disaffected national-religious youth, particularly in the outposts” (International Crisis Group 2009, 9 note 81). There are more rigorous indications of substantial religious and ideological influence. Unlike their religious Zionist parents, Borstein’s analysis notes, the meaningful figures to the hilltop youth are the local leaders (founders of outposts, e.g., Avri Ran\textsuperscript{22}) and the rabbis supporting the expansion of hilltop settlements (e.g., Kahanists, the Yitzhar circle). Where such figures exist, an intensification of religious and national ideology can be discerned that is lacking among settlers in outposts with no such senior figure. The youths’ ideology draws on the religious Zionist basis of their parents—but this is molded by the local figureheads and the rabbis supporting the outposts. Most outpost dwellers describe themselves as hasidim or hardalim (national Haredi), whereas their parents defined themselves as religious Zionist (national-religious)—a difference Borstein attributes to the youths’ attachment to the worldview and rhetoric of Ginsburgh, Dudkovitz, and others. The Hasidic identity, she found, was expressed through the youths’ dress code (such as Breslover-style yarmulkas). The accompanying nationalist ideology was expressed by identification rather with the political thought of the late Rabbi Kahane.\textsuperscript{23}

Borstein also describes a “monolithic” ideological conformity within this milieu—a paradox, in view of the youths’ rejection of authority. She attributes this to the influence of leadership figures and the supporting rabbis, socialization processes in the small community context, and what might be termed a ‘selection bias’ resulting from the fact that the choice to move to unauthorized outposts in the hills necessarily entails a rebellion against government policies. She describes a limited loyalty to the state and acceptance of its laws (insofar as they do not oppose Torah law), but a rejection of its institutions (except the Yesha Council and the army).\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} NB: Ran is not connected to the Od Yosef Chai sphere, to my knowledge. He stresses the need for firmness against Arab provocations and seems to view himself as a peace-keeping Jewish patriarch who oversees security, including with regard to internal Arab disputes. (See, e.g., Haim Lewinson, “Le-toshavei ha-meachazim nim’as mi-plishot ha-karka shel av no’ar ha-geva’ot,” Haaretz, January 31, 2013.)

\textsuperscript{23} Ginsburgh’s political program owes more to Kahane’s legacy than generally acknowledged, and so the implied distinction is moot, but developing this argument is beyond the scope of the thesis.

\textsuperscript{24} By contrast, the pre-Himaikut pilot study by Kaniel (2003, 23–4) found that the religious world-view of the hilltop settlers had not yet crystallized. Kaniel described it as “intuitive” rather than grounded firmly in a particular “Mishnah,” noting that settlers borrowed from different streams (one of which was Ginsburgh’s Hasidism; p. 23). However, the rabbinical influences were not Kaniel’s main analytic focus, and the pilot study was conducted before the upheavals of 2005 and 2006.
Having thus sketched a sociological profile of the milieu from which price tag attack perpetrators are drawn, and elucidated its link to *Od Yosef Chai* and Ginsburgh, the chapter turns to the yeshiva’s alleged collusion in racist and violent practices.

**Controversies around Ginsburgh & *Od Yosef Chai***

Prosecutions of Hilltop Youth involved in price tag operations—or the leadership figures who allegedly incite them—have been extremely rare, and most attempts either fail or are resolved by a plea bargain. However, it is clear nonetheless that the Shin Bet’s has been watching *Od Yosef Chai* for many years. This section sketches a historical overview of the controversies surrounding Ginsburgh, *Od Yosef Chai*, and price tag-style vigilantism.

Ginsburgh was born in St Louis, Missouri, in 1944 and immigrated to Israel in 1965. After the Six Day War of 1967, he began serious study of Chabad Hasidism, and studied briefly with the venerable late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the “Lubavitcher Rebbe”). In 1982, Ginsburgh established a yeshiva at the site of Joseph’s Tomb in the West Bank city of Nablus, or biblical Shechem. The yeshiva was relocated to its current site in the nearby settlement of Yitzhar after the IDF withdrew from Joseph’s Tomb in October 2000 under Oslo Accord provisions—to Ginsburgh’s chagrin. Ginsburgh himself lives in Kfar Chabad, behind the green line, but serves as president of the *Od Yosef Chai* yeshiva, which (until recently) included both the main yeshiva gedolah, a high-school-level yeshiva ketanah (called Doreshei Yechudkha), a kollel, and a publishing house that disseminated texts authored by Ginsburgh and his colleagues.

Early controversies included Ginsburgh’s declaration in an Israeli court, in defense of 30 of his yeshiva students, who had gone on a rampage in Nablus in July 1989 and shot a 13-year-old Palestinian girl: “It should be recognized that Jewish blood and a goy’s blood are not the same... Any trial that assumes that Jews and goyim are equal is a travesty of justice” (quoted in Friedman 1992, xxvii). He later similarly defended of a

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25 There have been very few successful indictments: see, e.g., Itamar Fleishman, “‘Price Tag’ Vandals Consistently Escape Prosecution,” *Yedioth Achronoth*, September 4, 2012; Don Futterman, “Israel’s Apathetic Hunt for ‘Price Tag’ Attackers,” *Haaretz*, July 1, 2013; Nadav Shragai, “The Rising Cost of Price-Tag Attacks,” *Israel Hayom*, October 14, 2011. Price tagging is a loosely organized and semi-spontaneous activity. Groups of friends typically co-ordinate price tag attacks discretely, e.g., by sms and word of mouth, with little advance planning, which complicates prevention and prosecution. And Chonenu also provides coaching on remaining silent under questioning.

26 Note that although Ginsburgh is affiliated with Chabad, *Od Yosef Chai* is not.
yeshiva student who fired indiscriminately on Palestinian laborers by a Tel Aviv highway in 1993 (Karpin & Friedman 1998, 11).

In 1994, Ginsburgh authored the now-infamous Barukh Ha-Gever (Barukh the Man/Blessed is the Man), a pamphlet praising the perpetrator of the Hebron massacre, the settler and former Jewish Defense League activist Dr Barukh Goldstein, who murdered 29 and wounded 125 Muslim worshipers in the Cave of the Patriarchs on February 25, 1994.27 Therein, Ginsburgh explored the possible Halakhic, moral, and mystical virtues of the massacre and its “blessed” perpetrator. He was detained by police over this publication and was warned but never indicted (Inbari 2009a, 136–9). Such events prompted Rabbi Joel Bin-Nun—a dovish voice within the religious Zionist leadership (see, e.g., Karpin & Friedman 1998, 104–6) and an associate of Tau and Aviner—to warn the Yesha Council in early 1996 of the “potential for murder in the yeshiva in Shechem. Do not accord it your protection. ... I have no doubt that Rabbi Ginzburg and his doctrine are a threat to our entire enterprise: to settlement activity, yeshivas, society, the state as a whole” (quoted p. 11).

Interestingly, Barukh Ha-Gever was one of the three books found in the bedroom of Yitzchak Rabin’s assassin, Yigal Amir, and terrorism analyst Jessica Stern has claimed that Amir was an enthusiastic reader, and that he extrapolated from it a license to attack Rabin (Stern 2004, 91).28 Moreover, one of Yigal Amir’s self-professed role models was another ideologue attached to Od Yosef Chai: Noam Livnat, who was in turn an associate of Yehuda Etzion (of the Jewish Underground) in the messianic group Chai Ve-Kayam (Alive and Enduring; see Karpin & Friedman 1998, 10–5, on these links); it has also been claimed that Livnat influenced Ginsburgh’s thought, in a sort of student–rebbe feedback cycle (Garb 2009, 67).

The media firestorms have continued into the new millennium. The IDF’s withdrawal from Joseph’s Tomb in 2000 prompted Ginsburgh to call publicly, not for the last time, for “a revolution” to replace the Israeli government with a Halakhic theocracy ruled by a Sanhedrin: “The secular basis of Israel must be changed, he

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27 The pamphlet was later incorporated as a chapter in the book of the same name memorializing Goldstein. Regarding dissociation from and criticism of Goldstein’s act (to varying degrees) by most of the religious right, see, e.g., Rosenak (2013, 66 note 11). A limited translation is available online as “Baruch podeh u-matzil. A Translation. Blessed Be the Rescuer and Redeemer”: www.angelfire.com/anime5/danilin/PodeUmatzil.htm (last accessed February 15, 2012).

28 Although it addressed rather the context of a murder of Arabs, rather than a Jew.
emphasized, calling for a “new Jewish country” under which Halakhah\(^{29}\) would replace Israeli civil law.”\(^{30}\) Although Ginsburgh’s teachings on secular Zionism are not a focus of these chapters, this call is anchored in Ginsburgh’s association of the secular Israeli establishment with the demonic \textit{kelipot} of lurianic Kabbalah (see R. Sagi 2009, 273–5).

In 2003, Israeli Attorney-General Elyakim Rubinstein indicted Ginsburgh for incitement to racism in his 2001 book \textit{Tzav Ha-Sha’ah: Tipul Shoresh} (Order of the Hour: Root Treatment), which stated that Arab citizens of Israel had no right to live there, shared the “licentious and unbridled character” of Ishmael, and were a “cancer” within the Jewish state.\(^{31}\) The matter was settled by a plea bargain requiring Ginsburgh to issue a written apology.\(^{32}\)

A fresh controversy\(^{33}\) erupted after the publication of \textit{Torat Ha-Melekh} (The King’s Torah)\(^{34}\) in 2009 by two of Ginsburgh’s student–colleagues, rabbis Yitzchak Shapira\(^{35}\) and Yosef Elitzur, both senior teachers at \textit{Od Yosef Chai} (Shapira & Elitzur 2009). It discussed circumstances under which the Halakhah may permit or even mandate the pre-emptive killing of Gentiles, including women and children. As paraphrased by one disgusted reporter, “The prohibition ‘Thou Shalt Not Murder’ applies only ‘to a Jew who kills a Jew’. ... Non-Jews are ‘uncompassionate by nature’ and attacks on them ‘curb their evil inclination’ while babies and children of Israel’s enemies may be killed since ‘it is clear that they will grow to harm us.’”\(^{36}\) Shapira later explained this stance in a radio interview: “Let’s assume that to win a war I have to kill children, otherwise my

\(^{29}\) Specifically, the \textit{Hoshen Mishpat} of the \textit{Shulchan Arukh}.


\(^{33}\) E.g., \textit{Jerusalem Post}, June 27 and July 4, 2011; \textit{Haaretz}, November 17, 2009, and January 22 and July 29, 2010; \textit{Arutz Sheva}, July 26, 2010, and June 30 and July 4, 2011; and \textit{Yedioth Achronoth}, July 26 and August 1, 2010.


\(^{35}\) In contrast to Ginsburgh’s background in Hasidism, Shapira trained in classic religious Zionism at \textit{Merkaz Ha-Rav}.

\(^{36}\) \textit{The Forward} and Daniel Estrin, “The King’s Torah: A Rabbinic Text or a Call to Terror?” \textit{Haaretz}, January 22, 2010. Similarly harsh halakhic opinions can be found from prominent hard-line religious Zionist rabbis: see, e.g., Haim Lewinson, “Ha-rav ha-tzeva’i le-she-avar: Lirot et chashudim be-terror be-mitoteihem,” \textit{Haaretz}, October 17, 2011 (referring to Rabbi Avichai Ronsky’s opinion); Efrat Weiss, “Ha-rav Dov Lior: Mutar lirot be-chafim me-pesha,” \textit{Yedioth Achronoth}, May 19, 2004. This thesis does not explore the details of the ongoing halakhic debate about limits to the appropriate use of force.
soldiers will die, then surely killing the enemies’ children is more correct than having my soldiers killed.”37 This is essentially an objection to the IDF protocol of “purity of arms” (forbidding pre-emptive use of live fire), seen by Ginsburgh and his disciples as being based on “perverse ideas and would-be ethical doctrines” imported from the (Gentile) West rather than on the Torah (Rectifying, 91), and as criminally endangering Jewish soldiers’ lives (see too R. Sagi 2009, 308).38

Police raided Shapira’s home and arrested him in July 2010 “on suspicion of incitement to racial violence, possession of racist text, and and [sic] possession of material that incites to violence.”39 He was released within hours.40 They also raided Od Yosef Chai, confiscating about 30 copies of Torat Ha-Melekh. Days later, Ginsburgh was detained by the Unit of International Crime Investigation and questioned over his haskamah41 for the book, but was released promptly.42

The scandal touched the larger settler rabbinical community: Rabbi Dov Lior of Kiryat Arba (and head of the Yesha Rabbinical Council and long-time ideological opponent of Tau and Aviner’s brand of mamlakhtiyut) for months refused to cooperate with police, whose calls for him to appear for questioning were condemned by prominent religious Zionist rabbis and triggered mass public protest by settlers.43 Lior was finally arrested and questioned in June 2011 over his own haskamah for the book “on suspicion of publishing material that incites racism.”44 Hundreds protested outside Israel’s Supreme Court, calling this an obstruction of rabbinical free speech.45 The affair triggered an outpouring of rage from Israel’s religious right, including Rabbi Aviner—less, I think, for the sake of defending the book’s content than defending in principle the right of rabbis to discuss Halakhah unshackled by political correctness.46

38 Ginsburgh’s halakhic opinion is that if Jewish “soldiers and civilians are ordered not to shoot [Arabs] first in self-defence, the order must be disobeyed” (Rectifying, 53).
41 An endorsement of its Halakhic coherence and accuracy, though not necessarily expressing agreement with the book’s conclusions.
46 E.g., Nahshoni, “Rabbi Condemns,” Yedioth Achronoth. Defenders of Shapira’s right to publish a halakhic
Once Shapria and Elitzur’s halakhic interpretations came under careful scrutiny, however, leading rabbis denounced their conclusions as halakhically fallacious and morally blind—and the criticism was especially caustic from the mamlakhti sector (see Rosenak 2013, 166–173). Rabbi Aviner declared that the cheapening of Gentile blood implied in the book had no basis in Halakhah, and Joel Bin-Nun, a more distant associate, declared that all the wrong assumptions in the book stemmed from Ginsburgh’s false “alternative” to the teachings of Avraham Kook (p. 172). Head of the (relatively liberal) Har Etzion yeshiva, Rabbi Yaakov Meidan, said that although the book did not incite murder, it should still “be burned … from a fear that someone will read the book and do something”; he worried that Shapira’s teachings would lead some fools among the Hilltop Youth to spend their lives in jail (p. 169).47

This is a powerful indication that, notwithstanding dualistic elements in Tau’s articulation of the Jewish–Gentile relationship (see Chapter 4), the ethic of respect for all life that was expressed forcefully in the early texts by Avraham Kook (rooted in the paradigm of divine immanence) remains operative and persuasive. Moreover, it did so even in the context of a Jewish–Gentile war (the book’s focus of study) and prevailing communal anger about legal interference in rabbinical freedom of expression.

Od Yosef Chai has more recently caused controversy with its alleged sponsorship of price tag activism. Rabbi Elitzur, in conjunction with Groner and other yeshiva graduates, has been credited by some with authoring the so-called “price tag manifesto”48 in the form of a newsletter article49 that outlines a program of vigilante retaliation for policies curbing settlement expansion. The article was published on December 4, 2009, in response to the 10-month building freeze announced that

47 There were many more such criticisms (see Rosenak 2013, 170–2).
49 It appeared in a Yitzhar-based newsletter and website associated with Od Yosef Chai, edited by Groner.
November. He called the strategy “mutual guarantee” or *arevut hadadit* (the term also preferred by Groner to describe price tag operations). Its three prongs were as follows.

First, *indiscriminate attacks against Arabs in response to anti-settlement government policies*: if the Arabs are “winning” the war for *Eretz Yisrael* by their aggression and violence, they’ll get the same treatment every time Jewish settlements are blocked. Moreover, this would also deter the government. Elitzur boasted that Yitzhar was “safe” from the officials enforcing the building freeze because no one dared to come near except with significant armed back-up, and because the IDF knew the visit would end with damage to army property—and even more damage to Arab property “and bodies,” in an “inflammation” that would last for days. Second, *focused attacks on Israeli political leaders who directly implemented the policies (including settler leaders)*: those who truly cared for Jews, *Eretz Yisrael*, and Torah had to disrupt the safe and comfortable lives of people like state prosecutor Shai Nitzan (who has been at the forefront of legal action against incitement and settler violence) as well as their families behind the green line. Collaborators within the mainstream settler movement should also be targeted—especially, Elitzur underlined, those who were Torah observant but who still cooperated with vile policies to limit the settlements. He suggested targeting the Yesha Council offices in Beit El: if they bulldoze our homes, we’ll bulldoze their office. That corrupt body, he said, must be revealed for what it is: an aggressive, conquering force.

The third tactic proposed was to *encourage IDF soldiers to hurt Arabs, tip off settlers about planned army movements, and damage any army property used to damage settler property*.

Beyond this strategic guidance, yeshiva staff have also been apprehended on suspicion—though never convicted—of personal involvement in revenge attacks. In 2008, Shapira “was suspected of involvement in a crude rocket attack directed at a Palestinian village. Israeli police investigated but made no arrests.” Claims have been made that he authorized and participated in revenge attacks on Palestinian villages by Yitzhar settlers, including one conducted on the Sabbath during which the participants

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52 NB: he means it is aggressive toward the outposts, not Palestinians.

53 *The Forward* and Estrin, “The King’s Torah.”
are said to have set fire to a house and stabbed a child.\textsuperscript{54} In January 2010, more than 100 Israeli security officials raided \textit{Od Yosef Chai}, arresting 10 settlers, among them Shapira and his students, on suspicion of involvement in the December 2009 arson attack and vandalizing of the Yasuf mosque; he was released days later.\textsuperscript{55}

The wider yeshiva and Yitzhar community have also been associated with vigilante violence. Ariel Groner was among 19 settlers banned from the territories in late 2006, on the grounds of Shin Bet recommendations that they had the means and intention to perpetrate anti-Arab attacks. Among the other four \textit{Od Yosef Chai} students in this group was Yehuda Meir, son-in-law of the Kahanist politician Baruch Marzel.\textsuperscript{56} In October 2009, three Yitzhar residents (including Ariel Groner again) received a six-month ban from entering the territories on suspicion of involvement in illegal violence against Arabs.\textsuperscript{57} On Israel’s Independence Day in April 2010, Yitzhar settlers rioted and threw stones at IDF soldiers blocking the route of their march to the neighboring Palestinian village of Madama to “protest” the 10-month building freeze.\textsuperscript{58} And later that month, police raided Yitzhar, arresting seven residents suspected of participating in price tag attacks on Palestinians. The arrests provoked residents to march on the neighboring Palestinian village of Hawara and throw rocks at a private home.\textsuperscript{59} In November 2010, two \textit{Od Yosef Chai} students were caught in possession of a knife and a mask,\textsuperscript{60} and in August 2011, police acted on a Shin Bet recommendation to issue restraining orders against 12 Yitzhar (and nearby) settlers, one of whom was an \textit{Od Yosef Chai} student, plus another student who was not himself a settler. They were barred from entering the Yitzhar area on suspicion of attacking Palestinians.\textsuperscript{61} The latter student, Efi Haikin, had previously been arrested “for allegedly torching the car of the [Israeli] Binyamin police chief during the evacuation of the outpost of Alei Ayin.”\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{54} The National Religious Party organ \textit{Ha-Tzofeh} was deeply critical of Shapira, suggesting that he had forfeited his right to be considered a rabbi. See Shmuel Kopper, “‘Ha-rav’ Yitzik Shapira—me-manhigei no’ar ha-geva’ot,” \textit{Ha-Tzofeh}, July 26, 2010.


\textsuperscript{56} See Roie Sharon, “Al ha-kavenet shel Sherut ha-Bitachon ha-Klali,” \textit{Maariv}, November 2, 2006. There are close social connections and cooperation between the Kahanist and \textit{Od Yosef Chai} circles, but elucidating the relationship fully merits separate analysis.

\textsuperscript{57} Roie Sharon, “Le-regel ha-mask: Pe’ilei yamin hurchaku me-ha-shetachim,” \textit{Maariv}, October 12, 2009.

\textsuperscript{58} “Yitzhar Settlers Clash with Soldiers,” \textit{Jerusalem Post}, April 20, 2010.


\textsuperscript{60} Yair Altman, “Government Closes Down Yitzhar Yeshiva,” \textit{Yedioth Achronoth}, November 1, 2011.

\textsuperscript{61} Yaakov Lappin, “‘Extreme Right-wing Activists’ Banned from Yitzhar,” \textit{Jerusalem Post}, August 2, 2011.

\textsuperscript{62} Chaim Levinson, “13 People Ordered Out of Yitzhar Settlement for Allegedly Attacking Palestinians,”
Such tensions with the Israeli authorities passed a tipping point of sorts in late 2011, when the Shin Bet recommended that the education ministry should cut *Od Yosef Chai*’s state funding. It claimed to hold “a lot of information about the involvement of students at *Od Yosef Hai* and *Dorshei Yehudcha* [the yeshiva high school] in illegal, subversive and violent activities against Arabs and the security forces. The information indicates that the yeshiva’s rabbis and leaders are aware of some of these activities, but do not prevent them, and even enable students to take part in them.”

In November 2011, the director general of the education ministry, Dr Shimon Shoshani, axed *Od Yosef Chai*’s government funds and ordered that *Doreshei Yechudkha* be shut down. Such censure of a yeshiva was an exceptional step in the context of normal Israeli educational politics, in which yeshivas traditionally enjoy full government funding, autonomy in setting the curriculum, and minimal oversight. Shoshani’s rationale was that “students are involved in many violent acts against Palestinian residents and security forces, including during yeshiva study hours. Prominent rabbis in the yeshiva support and/or are involved in this violent activity and go as far as to incite the students to this sort of activity.” Furthermore, Shoshani held that “*Torat Hamelech* and other such publications cannot be consistent with educational principles and with the influence that an educator in general and specifically a rabbi has on his students.” However, *Od Yosef Chai* continues to operate (without the yeshiva ketanah), thanks to private donors.

Finally, in April 2014:

> “…vandals slashed the tires of IDF Colonel Yoav Yarom, commander of the Samaria Brigade, while he was visiting the settlement [of Yitzhar]. When

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*Haaretz*, August 3, 2011. Note that spokesmen of the Israeli far right claim that the police, Shin Bet, and mainstream media misrepresent the nature of such events and engage in provocation and distortion. MK Michael Ben-Ari (affiliated with the Kahanist movement) described the eviction orders of October 2009 as evidence of “discrimination” on the part of the Shin Bet; Itamar Ben-Gvir called it a “witch hunt”; and others described it as a brutal violation of the settlers’ democratic and human rights. See Roie Sharon, “Le-regel hamasik.” Others have claimed the authorities and media exaggerate settlers’ aggression in order to sway public opinion, and that some price tag incidents are staged by the security forces. See, e.g., the comments by Yehuda Liebman and Ariel Groner in Aral Segel, “Mi yachol lehalot al ha-da’at.”


Border Police forces entered the settlement to demolish illegal structures, settlers reacted by throwing stones, torching tires and blocking the road, resulting in clashes with security forces. Six Border Patrol officers sustained light wounds and settlers said four residents were injured as well. After the incident, dozens of settlers raided a military outpost outside Yitzhar, manned by reserve soldiers there for the settlement's protection. According an initial report, the settlers destroyed military equipment, including tents, portable toilets, heaters and mattresses, while the soldiers stood by.66

The IDF immediately stationed a border police unit in the yeshiva itself, stating: “Due to the violent events towards security forces that occurred in recent days, and in order to give a response to security needs, it was decided by the IDF to place a border police unit in Yitzhar immediately for security needs, to maintain a presence in coordination with local residents.”67 Moreover, an “army source” was quoted as saying that Od Yosef Chai was chosen for the deployment because it was a “front base for violent operations against the nearby Palestinian villages and the security services.”68 Students were been barred entry, except for brief periods, for an entire year, with classes being moved elsewhere. Only in May 2015 did the IDF decide not to extend the seizure.69

Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the charged history of the Od Yosef Chai yeshiva, explored its links to the Hilltop Youth milieu and the price tag phenomenon, and explained how price-tagging fits within existing academic models of settler vigilantism. The historical analysis has revealed a track record of friction between the yeshiva and state authorities over violent books and operations alike. This raises questions about the links between violent politics and the theo-political worldview of the yeshiva’s spiritual leader, Rabbi Ginsburgh—the focus of my analysis in the next chapter.

69 Shlomo Pitrikovsky, “Police Seizure to Be Lifted on Yitzhar’s Od Yosef Chai Yeshiva,” Arutz Sheva, May 26, 2015.
The foregoing survey is, to my knowledge, the first comprehensive exploration of linkages between *Od Yosef Chai* and vigilante violence, in terms of historical–political analysis rather than analysis of Ginsburgh’s theosophy (and such analyses often assume the connection with violent practice is self-evident). However, I wish to reemphasize here some insights from this exercise that have special relevance for the thesis.

First, this chapter established that the Hilltop Youth milieu is somewhat anti-intellectual and includes a disproportionate number of yeshiva drop-outs. Thus, Tau’s emphasis on learning and education has little appeal. Moreover, this demographic carries particularly strong resentment toward the government, the “materialist” mainstream settler movement, and indeed *mamlakhti* rabbis. Thus, the *mamlakhti* worldview and discursive style are unlikely to be useful resources when pitching messages for this sector. However, it is crucial to consider what other discursive frames might work, because although they are demographically insignificant, their willingness to apply taboo-shattering tactics makes them disproportionately significant.

Second, Ginsburgh and *Od Yosef Chai* have a substantial influence in shaping the worldview of some Hilltop Youth, although the youths do not necessarily accept them as halakhic authorities. This distinction is important, because as the next chapter shows, Ginsburgh’s teachings praise unreflective, impulsive violence, without excessive halakhic ruminations, as a sublime theurgic practice and form of advanced mystical experience. Thus, the elements of his worldview that turn violence into a spiritual value are in turn shaping the worldview of a milieu that has weak halakhic restraints already, because of its rejection of rabbinical authority. We shall see that Ginsburgh amplifies the danger by also devaluing personal halakhic reflection before acting on impulse.

Third, the ability of goal-rational vigilante models from political science to capture the essential strategy behind the price tag movement should be borne in mind during the following analysis of Ginsburgh’s theosophy. The content of this theosophy—particularly the subhuman status of Gentiles and the metaphysical corruption that Ginsburgh claims results from their ongoing physical presence in *Eretz Yisrael*—will create an immediate, strong impression as an intuitive explanation for the violence described herein. However, as I argue, the demographic peculiarities of the Hilltop Youth milieu make the nature of the causal connection more complex than can be captured by a unidimensional ‘religious violence’ frame.
Chapter 7
Ginsburgh’s political Kabbalah and violence as theurgy

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the kabbalistic framework used by Ginsburgh to articulate his teachings on Gentile inferiority, the illegitimacy of Gentile presence in *Eretz Yisrael,*¹ and the positive value of revenge—especially the virtue of hot-blooded revenge by “the simple Jew” who is not overburdened by halakhic reflection. By exploring the kabbalistic underpinnings of Ginsburgh’s political and halakhic opinions, the analysis hopes to build on the work by Seeman (2005)² and Inbari (2009a)³ on this subject.

This analysis also shows that Ginsburgh shares Tau’s Kookian conception of contemporary political events as a narrative of redemption and his worldview’s theosophical roots in Kabbalah and Chabad Hasidism, though his rhetoric draws directly and predominantly from kabbalistic texts. However, if Kook and Tau represent a serious intellectual extension of Chabad Hasidism’s radically monistic theosophy of good and evil,⁴ Ginsburgh emphasizes a predominantly dualistic interpretation of lurianic Kabbalah, found especially in Chabad teachings on Jewish/Gentile distinctions, according to which Gentiles are associated with demonic forces and have questionable status as humans. These elements were hinted at in Tau’s Kookian worldview, as

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¹ The relationship between Ginsburgh’s ideas and mainstream Hasidism is a fascinating question in its own right. However, a detailed treatment is beyond the scope of the PhD. Appendix 1 points to some areas of overlap and divergence.

² The paper presents an analysis of Ginsburgh’s use of the concepts of “divine honor” and “sanctification of the divine name” in justifying the 1994 massacre in Hebron (and compares their interpretation with those of Abraham Kook and Emmanuel Levinas).

³ The chapter on Ginsburgh focuses on his teachings calling for restoration of the Sanhedrin and building of the Third Temple. It also includes discussion of Ginsburgh’s thought on the halakhic status of zealotry in contemporary times. In contrast to both Seeman (2005) and Inbari (2009a), the textual analysis in this chapter grounds Ginsburgh’s permissive approach to anti-Arab violence rather in an analysis of his kabbalistic theosophy, articulated through zoharic and lurianic concepts.

⁴ See Appendix 1.
described in Chapter 4. However, the overwhelming contrast in emphasis when one turns to Ginsburgh’s corpus serves as evidence for Rosenak’s (2013) thesis: namely, that Kook’s students’ profound commitment to the monistic “unity of opposites” paradigm imposes tensions and balances that keep these elements in check, as suggested by the mamalakti rabbis’ critique of Torat Ha-Melekh.⁵

There is already considerable literature on Ginsburgh’s theosophical ideas.⁶ The main contribution of this chapter is to focus on their kabbalistic roots and to elucidate his teachings on impulsive violence specifically. However, I note that in Ginsburgh’s case it is rarely obvious whether his political adaptations of Kabbalah are primarily rhetorical (the thesis of Hararai 2005) or reflect a coherent theo-political worldview (the thesis of R. Sagi 2009). In the main, I support the former view: while Ginsburgh’s alignment of Chabad Hasidism or Kabbalah and contemporary politics is sometimes plausible,⁷ many such theo-political fusions simply strain credulity too far in terms of an inconsistent or contrived linkage to kabbalistic metaphysics.⁸ Therefore, in the following summary, individual kabbalistic interpretations of specific contemporary events or acts should a priori be taken as nominal, or as examples of Ginsburgh’s preferred symbolic language, rather than reflecting a fully coherent theo-political worldview (in contrast to Tau). However, some kabbalistic dimensions are extremely consistent across the writings analyzed for this chapter, and should be taken as indicative of his worldview; these are summarized in the chapter’s conclusion.

The chapter proceeds by first presenting an analysis of Ginsburgh’s kabbalistic teachings on relations between Jews and Gentiles, grounded in the corpus of zoharic and lurianic Kabbalah and Chabad doctrine. It then briefly addresses Ginsburgh’s political

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⁵ See Chapter 6.
⁶ In particular, the doctoral thesis of Raphael Sagi (2009) already presents a comprehensive analysis of Ginsburgh’s theosophy, while that of Yehiel Harari (2005) discusses Ginsburgh’s elaborate use of Kabbalah as a rhetorical system for persuading audiences to accept the messianic idea. Further, there are fairly substantial analyses in English: that is, Seeman (2005) and Inbari (2009a), discussed shortly. Limited aspects of Ginsburgh’s theosophy are also covered passim by Garb (2009), while Schwartzmann’s (2013) paper argues that Ginsburgh’s mysticism is anti-rationalist and that his narrative of redemption is “overwhelmingly feminine,” as against the traditional “masculine” narrative of religious Zionism (also discussed in R. Sagi 2009, 245, 250–1). The works by Seeman and Inbari were most relevant to this chapter, as both addressed Ginsburgh’s political teachings.
⁷ E.g., adapting four core teachings of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the context of Orthodox–secular relations in modern Israel (Malkhut Yisrael 1, 77–127).
⁸ An example is his numerical analysis of the name “Peace Now” (Shalom Achshav, the peace movement) combined with the phrase “Peace, friend” to deduce—via numerical equivalence to the second verse of the Shema—that the peace movement is antithetical to “the revelation of God’s Kingdom on Earth” (Rectifying, 164–5).
application of the messianism of the late Chabad leader, Rebbe Schneerson. Ginsburgh’s interpretation shows a logic whereby physical and material events have a decisive effect on the redemptive process. The chapter then turns to the mystical meaning of settlement, and the positive character of revenge, with a view to elucidating the yeshiva’s sympathy for price tag-style vigilantism against Arabs. The conclusion summarizes Ginsburgh’s theosophical worldview in a format aligned with my previous analysis of Tau, and delimits its usefulness for understanding the price tag phenomenon. It also identifies synergies between Ginsburgh’s political Kabbalah (especially his spiritualization of impulsive revenge), the sociological profile of price taggers, and the patterns of settler vigilantism. The conclusion also reflects on which discursive resources (arguments, metaphors, values frames, etc.) identified in the analysis of Tau also have traction in this discourse, on the rightmost fringe of the settler community.9

Kabbalah, Chabad, & Jews’ ontological superiority

Ginsburgh’s writings emphasize Jews’ “supernatural” (Inbari 2009a, 133–5) character vis-à-vis Gentiles—an essential, ontological superiority that stems from the anchoring of the Jewish soul in a higher kabbalistic plane.10 This metaphysical ontology underpins his halakhic opinions, such as the permissibility of killing Gentiles: in his own words, the halakhic definition of Jewishness (and, as we shall see, humanity) requires both Jews and Gentiles to feel the “essential/innate difference” between Jew and goy (Malkhut Yisrael 1, מַלְכֻּת יוֹסֵרְאֵל), which stems from Jews’ status as God’s chosen people (p. שָׁכָא). This distinction partly rests with Jews’ total interclusion vs. Gentile individualism (as per Tau; Malkhut Yisrael 1, מלכruit; see too Inbari 2009a, 135) but extends well beyond this.

9 Two caveats are in order. Firstly, I do not attempt a full and nuanced discussion of Ginsburgh’s halakhic opinions but rather to elucidate the dualistic kabbalistic framework that underpins them, and to explore how it may operate to normalize and even sanctify indiscriminate anti-Arab violence. Secondly, the task of contextualizing Ginsburgh relative to mainstream Chabad Hasidism and the Kahanist movement is pointed to in the footnotes, but a full analysis was beyond the scope of the thesis. This is a subtle issue that merits its own dedicated analysis, as it cannot be assumed a priori that the diverse mystical speculations, political prescriptions, halakhic opinions, and violent acts associated with each of these quite distinct ideological streams are part of a common thought system and lead to similar ethical stances.

10 Though this chapter does not undertake a systematic comparison with rabbinical thought on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in religious Zionism (mainstream and fringe), it should be noted that similarly exclusivist pronouncements (although not articulated based on kabbalistic “truths”) can be found in some religious Zionist teachings as well, as attested by the quotations scattered through Rosenak (2013, e.g., 95–8, 100, 105, 113). Examples include calls for “separation” from Gentiles not dissimilar to those made by Ginsburgh (discussed below).
To elaborate on the content of this scheme: while Gentiles occupy the highest of four ranks of nature in Kabbalah (these being inanimate objects, plants, animals, and speaking creatures), claims Ginsburgh, Jews transcend this hierarchy entirely, as they contain a spark of true divinity that is completely above nature (Malkhut Yisrael 2, יר). This divine aspect of the Jews stems from Atzilut (אצילות), he writes, the highest of four metaphysical “worlds” or planes of reality according to Kabbalah. In the realm of Atzilut, no separation from divinity is experienced. The metaphysical origin of Gentiles is only in Beria’ah (בריאה—the next-lowest of the four worlds, where separation of the divine and earthly begins. Strictly, he places only righteous Gentiles in the framework of ger toshav (גר תושב—a resident alien in Eretz Yisrael who accepts the yoke of Jewish rule) at this rank; followers of the seven Noachide commandments correspond to a rank one step down, Yetzirah (יצירה, the basest of the four worlds (Malkhut Yisrael 1, שעה-שם). Thus, while Jews are identified with the refined plane of pure divinity, Gentiles are identified with increasingly dense and coarse layers of existence, associated with the material and animalistic. (For a more comprehensive overview, see R. Sagi 2009, 218–236.)

This spiritual (and, for Ginsburgh, physical) hierarchy can be traced to zoharic and lurianic Kabbalah (see Hallamish 1998; Scholem 1961[1941], 205–43, 244–86). The Zohar describes Am Yisrael as occupying a higher metaphysical plane than Gentiles, often framing the purpose of creation itself as the making of the Chosen People, not of humanity as a whole (Goodman 2004, 459, 469–70). Some analysts argue that the Zohar restricts the functional definition of a “human being” to Jews only, as mentioned in Chapter 4 (Wolfson 2006, 5 note 15, 46–57). For example, the Zohar states: “as it is

11 Asiyyah, Beri’ah, Yetzirah, and Atzilut; see, e.g., Scholem (1961[1941], 272–3).
12 This conditions Ginsburgh’s opinion that Gentile culture is the source of sin and separation from divinity, and that it is therefore halakhically forbidden for Jews to praise or even enjoy the smallest element thereof (Malkhut Yisrael 1, שעה-שם). This is based on his kabbalistic reading of Deut. 7:2 (לא תنصفם; see Halbertal (1998, 165). Ginsburgh allows some caveats pertaining to the messianic age, in which “Gentile wisdom” (e.g., the natural sciences) will be purified and refined through the light of the Torah (see Malkhut Yisrael 2, יר; Malkhut Yisrael 1, שעה-שם; and Rectifying, 111–6). However, Jews must not be unduly influenced by Gentile ideas during this process: the Jew must strictly give insight and the Gentile receive it, in adherence to their respective creative and passive metaphysical natures. No reciprocal relationship of equals is envisaged (Malkhut Yisrael 2, יר; see too the discussion in Inbari 2009a, 148). This is not dissimilar to the models of Kook and Tau, though it is more harshly phrased. See Chapter 4.
13 For a detailed exposition, see especially Wolfson (2006, 17–185).
14 Note that ontological distinctions between Jew and Gentile are not an innovation of the kabbalists. Antecedents can be found in talmudic and mishnaic, and indeed biblical, tradition (see generally Wolfson 2006, 28–41). Various rabbinic texts claim that the term adam applies only to Jews (ibid., 42–44), and Stern asserts
written, ‘for you are *adam* [man]’ (Ezekiel 34:31), you [Jews] are called men but not the rest of the nations, for they are idolaters. ... The spirit that emanates upon the rest of the idolatrous nations, which derives from the side that is not holy, is not considered *adam* [man]’ (Zohar I:20b; trans. Wolfson 2006, 53; see further Wolfson 2009, 235). Zoharic literature also abounds in rhetoric deeply unflattering to Christians and Muslims (Wolfson 2006, 25; 90–107; 130–65). Depicting the creation of man (for it was still only man, not woman), the *Zohar* identifies Israel as the *zar’ah kaddishah* (Holy Seed), descended from the semen of Abraham and Isaac and thus innately, essentially holy (*Zohar* I:95a, 99b; II:6a, 78b, 88b, 124a, 125a; and III:152b, 237a). Gentiles, by contrast, are said to derive from the *sitra achra* (Other Side), a realm of 10 impure, demonic potencies of the “left” side that are counterparts of the 10 divine *sefirot* of the “right” side (Katz 1975, 24; Wolfson 2006, 27; see *Zohar* I:28b, 79b; II:25b, 86a, 120a, 275b; III:125a, 219a, 238b). Various tracts describe the impurity of the Gentiles, for example: “With respect to the other idolatrous nations, they are impure when they are alive, for their souls are from the side of impurity... Therefore, he who is conjoined to a woman from the other idolatrous nations is impure, and the child born to him will receive upon himself the spirit of impurity” (*Zohar* I:131b).15

The Arizal (Rabbi Isaac Luria) and his followers further developed and complexified these ideas of an ontological hierarchy, claiming that only Jews are created in the image of God. Moreover, the lurianic doctrine of transmigration of souls (*gilgul*) mapped a hierarchy of beings from the primordial Adam—who “contained” all souls—to Luria’s generation, in which Jewish sages exclusively occupied the top rungs of the ontological hierarchy, with Gentiles at the bottom (Fine 2003, 306–313).16

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15 On the context of Christian persecution, see generally Katz (1975); also Wolfson (2006, 45–6).
16 See Appendix 1.
The above corpus thus presents an essentialist, hierarchical view of Jewish holiness that starkly contrasts with, e.g., Maimonides’ universalist philosophy, in which the fundamentally sacred or human quality shared by all ‘Adamites’ (both Jewish and Gentile) is their universal faculty for reason and moral judgment—the implicit meaning for Maimonides of humanity’s creation in God’s image (see, e.g., Guide for the Perplexed I:2; see generally Fox 1990, 152–198). Holiness within the worldly realm according to Maimonides lay in human striving toward moral and especially intellectual perfection (Fox 1990, 190); it was through this striving that humans could attain near-angelic status (p. 187). This human holiness is a learned, rather than essential or innate, quality. For Luria, by contrast, Jewish superiority is ontological.

Chabad Hasidism inherited—via its founder Shneur Zalman’s opus, the Tanya—this ontological hierarchy of lurianic Kabbalah. As summarized in Novak’s accessible short article on Hasidism, “Jews are taken to be a distinct species, with a superior relationship with God” not merely because they received the Torah, but “because Jews, in both soul and body, were created to be more elevated than the rest of creation and humankind” (Novak 2011b, 35). Chabad doctrine holds that the essence of Jewishness lies in “the divine nature of the Jewish soul,” and not in “ethnic, cultural, mental, or historical factors” or in halakhic observance (Ravitzky 1996, 191). An analysis by Aviezer Ravitzky quotes Schneerson as saying that each Jew has no importance as an isolated individual; “rather, all of his existence is the existence of the Holy One, blessed be He!,” and Ravitzky notes that “this monistic view ... erects an ontological barrier between Jews and non-Jews, interpreting the singularity of the Jewish people as a metaphysical, innate trait of chosenness” (ibid.).

This is not an incidental element of Chabad theosophy. Supported by an exhaustive analysis, Wolfson argues that this “presumed ontological difference in the constitution of the Jew and the non-Jew” lies at the core of Chabad theosophy, asserting that “textual evidence to support this assertion is overwhelming and it would be impractical to offer even a small percentage of the sources that substantiate the point,” notwithstanding the existence of apologetics defending Hasidism from the implied accusation of racism (Wolfson 2009, 231). He catalogues Chabad dogmas expounding the divinity of the Jewish soul (by virtue of an extra layer, termed the yechidah) versus the animalistic,

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17 On Maimonides’ doctrine of the four perfections—of which he considered intellectual perfection highest, trumping even moral perfection—see Rudavsky (2010, 184–97) and Altman (1972).
demonic Gentile soul (pp. 231–2). According to Wolfson’s analysis, the late Rebbe Schneerson himself appears to have held to the dogma that the term *adam* applied only to Jews, not to the Gentile nations; similarly, only Jews were held to be created in God’s image (pp. 234–5, 239).

Ginsburgh is a Chabad rabbi, formally affiliated with the Hasidic movement (though *Od Yosef Chai* itself is not). Schneerson’s writings are cited extensively in Ginsburgh’s books, each of which commences with an “endorsement” from the Lubvitcher Rebbe, whom Ginsburgh names as “the greatest inspiration” (*Rectifying*, 2) behind his so-called “political platform based on Kabbalah”—a set of prescriptions for “rectifying” Israeli politics in line with Ginsburgh’s own eschatological vision, according to the order of the 10 *sefirot* or divine emanations of Kabbalah. Along with Chabad Hasidism, lurianic Kabbalah is an important thread among Ginsburgh’s influences. He sees the two pillars as intertwined: Hasidism is known to its devotees as the Kabbalah of the Ba’al Shem Tov, he notes, the original 18th century Hasidic master (*Rectifying*, 5–6).

The ontological hierarchy described in this corpus thus informs Ginsburgh’s unequivocal axiological and ethical devaluation of Gentiles, as captured evocatively in his teaching that “Israel’s blood is redder” (*Malkhut Yisrael* 3, עט). In his analysis of the Halakhah concerning the killing of a Gentile vs. Jewish fetus, for instance, Ginsburgh argues that Gentiles are merely a “means” to God’s end, whereas Jews represent the purpose of creation (p. עח). Thus, Jewish life takes priority over Gentile life. Even when the Gentiles in question wish Israel no harm, it is permissible to harm them in order to preserve Jewish life, and conversely, forbidden to sacrifice Jewish life in order to save a Gentile (p. עט). When there is suspicion—even remote—that a Gentile may harm a Jew, it is good to kill them, he asserts, however benign the Gentile may seem at the time (pp. עט–עח; *Rectifying*, 89). When the Gentile has harmed Jews in the past, the matter is one of vengeance (עח; *Malkhut Yisrael* 3, עט). This is the background to the publication of *Torat Ha-Melekh*.

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18 See Appendix 1 for several examples.
19 Not a formal *haskamah*, but presumably intended to confer the impression of Schneerson’s approval.
20 See Appendix 1 on the *sefirot*.
21 Interestingly, the content of this book overlaps substantially with that of his *Tsav ha-asha’ah* (2003).
22 Citing, inter alia, Rashi (on Sanhedrin 340) and Maimonides’ *Halachot Yesodei Ha-Torah* 5:7.
23 This replicates one of Schneerson’s teachings; see Appendix 1.
The above intellectual genealogy also explains why Ginsburgh’s political teachings often refer to lurianic ideas, including those establishing Jews’ special status. He also often poses and resolves political dilemmas in the language of the lurianic doctrine *shevirat ha-keilim* and the need for *tikkun*, as shown shortly.  

Recall from Chapter 3 that this creation narrative explained the existence of evil in the world by a rupture in the metaphysical order, by which the light of the divine emanations (*sefirot*) shattered the immature vessels (*keilim*) that had been prepared to give them material form. The lost sparks of the *Shekhinah* (the divine feminine, identified with the supernal *Knesset Yisrael*) became trapped in the impure “shells” (*kelipot*) of the broken vessels, identified with the evil *sitra achra*, and must be freed and elevated theurgically by the Jews (to return purified to their divine source) as part of *tikkun*. Though some kabbalistic interpretations posit a constructive role for the *kelipot*, Ginsburgh generally associates them with evil and with the Gentile world, and—as discussed below—uses this frame to justify revenge attacks on Gentiles and the expulsion of Arabs from Israel as theurgic practices to separate the holy lights from the impure *kelipot*. This would represent, in most Jews’ eyes, an inversion of the normative understanding of *tikkun*, according to which creation can be rectified through the performance of good deeds such as Torah study, following *mitzvot* (commandments), meditation, and prayer (certainly not by aggressive violence).

Thus, Ginsburgh’s lurianic paradigm of good and evil, as applied to the Jewish/Gentile distinction, is predominantly dualistic: while the “Gentile” *kelipot* have value because of the trapped sparks of divinity within, that value is not inherent, as their own substance represents the dark counterpart to divinity. This worldview supposes the evil associated with the *kelipot* to be ontologically real, and the metaphysical origin of Gentiles, rather than explaining evil as a dialectic tool of divine providence. *Tikkun* is understood in this reading to involve the cleansing of the divine sparks of the impurity of the evil *kelipot* though the separation of pure and impure; the *kelipot* oppose and inhibit the redemptive process and must be dealt with, rather than being conceived as an

\[\text{25} \text{ On these concepts, see Appendix 1. For a systematic discussion of Ginsburgh’s conception of *tikkun*, see R. Sagi (2009, 16–25).}\]

\[\text{26} \text{ See, e.g., Rosenthal (2005, 214–40); Hallamish (1999, 234–41); Idel (2002, 130–1); Scholem (1961[1941], 233).}\]
inherent part of God’s dialectic architecture of creation.\textsuperscript{27} The consequences of this dualistic ontology and logic permeate through Ginsburgh’s axiology and ethics.

Kabbalah also supposes that correct earthly conduct by Jews has metaphysical, sefirotic effects; in particular, by raising the lowest sefirah, Malkhut (identified with the Shekhinah), to unite with her male counterpart, the sefirah of Tiferet. This conjugal union on the metaphysical plane ensures the purity of the ongoing emanation of creation, and is a key component of tikkun. As we shall see, Ginsburgh uses both these concepts to articulate his ethic of Jewish settlement and correct relations between Jews and Gentiles.

\textbf{Ginsburgh’s redemption narrative: Primacy of the political and physical}

In the golden age of lurianic Kabbalah, attempts to hasten redemption through earthly acts in the framework of \textit{tikkun} “not rarely took on a social or even quasi-political character” (Scholem 1961[1941], 250; see too 244–251; and Fine 2003, 41–77). This tendency was inherited by Chabad Hasidism under the leadership of the charismatic Schneerson in the 20th century: “There is no conceptual ground to distinguish in Schneerson’s mind between social reality and its imaginal counterpart. On the contrary, given the impact on his way of thinking of the traditional kabbalistic perception of the physical world as a mirror image of the sefirotic Pleroma, which, in turn, is a mirror image of the Infinite that is beyond image, why should one assume that … mundane matters could be understood without their symbolic double?” (Wolfson 2009, 29).\textsuperscript{28} Ginsburgh inherits this particular focus on physical and active forms of spiritual service (see Garb 2009, 67; R. Sagi 2009, 37–9).

In another parallel of Luria’s milieu, the Chabad movement under Schneerson became overtly and acutely messianic, departing from centuries of (relative) eschatological normalcy (during which time the movement had concentrated on individual, spiritual \textit{tikkun} rather than collective social, national, or historical \textit{tikkun} as

\textsuperscript{27} See further Appendix 1.

\textsuperscript{28} This builds on Hasidism’s understanding of “the close relation between the physical and the spiritual worlds” (see Dein 2011, 30–31).
the path to redemption). Under Schneerson, the movement came to consider “absolute certainty of the imminent coming of the Messiah ... [to be] the supreme and decisive test of Jewish faith” (Ravitzky 1996, 193). The mid-80s saw Schneerson start a very public Moshiach (messiah) campaign: “From now on, every act and sermon, every ‘campaign’ and every call, was accompanied by clear messianic intentions” (p. 195).

Ginsburgh inherits this overtly activist approach to messianic redemption (see especially Malkhut Yisrael 1, קָנֵי עֲבוֹדָה; Inbari 2009a, 135, 151–2), frequently deploiring the ‘hands-off,’ incrementalist approach to the redemptive process followed by other segments of ultra-Orthodox Jewry (e.g., Malkhut Yisrael 1, הַיָּכֶה, קָנֵי; Malkhut Yisrael 2, קָנֵי ההגנה). He writes: “Kabbalah teaches that in order to effect a positive change in the world around us, the divine plan... must meet and mate with reality—with human consciousness, expressed in the opinions and value systems of the times” (Rectifying, 34). The only way the divine presence can manifest on earth is through human (read Jewish) actions here below: “mundane acts awaken complementary divine action” (Inbari 2009a, 152).

However, rather than the more traditional formula whereby Jewish repentance through individual tikkun will eventually lead to full, material redemption (i.e., God’s kingdom on earth), Ginsburgh adopts the basic logic of Avraham Kook, positing that material redemption will precede the fulfillment of the messianic vision. Moreover, he asserts that repentance will be an outcome of prior, material redemption, including the physical construction of the Third Temple (p. 153). Turning traditional Jewish messianic passivity on its head (see p. 135, pp. 151–2), Ginsburgh argues that it’s forbidden to leave to God anything at all regarding the stages leading to the coming of the messiah, the building of the Third Temple, and tikkun ha-olam (Malkhut Yisrael 1, תikkun ויהלום). With regard to his own political program based on Kabbalah, Ginsburgh writes, “it is hoped that by its formulation, contemplation, and implementation, we will actually be paving the way for the imminent arrival of the Messiah” (Rectifying, 122). Such notions lead Ginsburgh to impose eschatological demands on contemporary Israeli politics and to interpret contemporary politics and history (e.g., the Oslo Accords or Gaza

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29 See Dein (2011, 45–6) for a summary of controversy in the scholarship on early Hasidic messianism.
30 I do not discuss Ginsburg’s position on the Temple here; see, e.g., Inbari (2009a, 153–9) for an excellent analysis. Note that this stance is subtly different from Kook’s and Tau’s; see Appendix 2 on the roles of inner and outer teshuvah (repentance) in the messianic process.
withdrawal) in eschatological terms, as events in an End Times narrative. They also lead to strict insistence on the letter of the Halakhah regarding mitzvot to conquer and settle Eretz Yisrael. For example, he concludes that the Nachmanidean mitzvah of conquering Eretz Yisrael does not depend on prior appointment of a messiah–king; but rather precedes it (Malkhut Yisrael 3, קיע). Thus, he sees an active duty to confront all Gentiles living in the Land and to expel them all—not merely the idol worshippers (p. רפ).

**Settlement in Ginsburgh’s metaphysics**

As noted, the Hilltop Youth milieu in which Ginsburgh’s ideas have taken root was already opposed to territorial concessions. Ginsburgh bases this stance in Gush Emunim tradition (the emphasis on the mitzvah of settlement as a supreme commandment and the understanding that settlement facilitates messianic redemption). However, he articulates the redemptive, messianist dimension of settlement through an explicitly sefirotic logic or metaphor, in which settlement becomes a form of divine intercourse between male and female archetypes within the Godhead.

Ginsburgh thus attaches a two-pronged importance to Jewish settlement of the territories: halakhic and metaphysical. The halakhic dimension is shared with mainstream religious Zionism (of the Merkaz Ha-Rav school; see Rosenak 2013, 111–8), which, as seen in Chapter 2, embraces Nachmanides’ elevation of settlement of the Promised Land to a “positive commandment” and, indeed, one equal to all others. Moreover, for Ginsburgh, like Nachmanides, the physical Land of Israel is intrinsically and eternally holy (Malkhut Yisrael 1, טכ; Malkhut Yisrael 2, וו); that is, the soil itself is divine, irrespective of who inhabits it. However, he holds that only Jews can reveal this innate holiness, through settlement and Temple services (Malkhut Yisrael 2, זס). The overtly metaphysical dimension is expressed in terms of the sefirotic effects of the physical Jewish–Eretz Yisrael relationship—cosmic alignments and harmonizations necessary for metaphysical tikkun.

In contrast to Tau, it is challenging to differentiate Ginsburgh’s metaphorical vs. conceptual uses of such kabbalistic ideas. Tau’s systematic intellectual consistency

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31 Cf. Maimonides’ halakhic stance on the mitzvah of settling the land (Malkhut Yisrael 1, טכ). On the Nachmanides–Maimonides debate, see Appendix 1.

32 See Nachmanides’ Mishneh Torah on Deuteronomy 1:8 and Numbers 33:53 and Appendix 1.
renders the distinction between essential elements of his worldview and primarily rhetorical metaphors almost self-evident. Ginsburgh’s case is more subtle. On one hand, as seen below, his political writings frequently present ontological and logical assertions about the supernal consequences or parallels of earthly political situations, and these are described using the technical zoharic and lurianic architecture of Kabbalah (sfirot and the relations between them, the breaking of the vessels, zoharic demonology, etc.). Moreover, his articulation of that architecture does reflect a consistently dualistic ontology as regards binaries such as good/evil and Jewish/Gentile. 33 However, Ginsburgh does not seem to articulate the operational details of the Kabbalah–politics interrelationship as a unified and coherent logical system. His political objections or prescriptions are the starting point, not the end point, of his kabbalistic argumentation. On any given political topic, Ginsburgh will typically extract from kabbalistic and talmudic texts a potpourri of ideas, quotations, or analytic models that justify post hoc his political interpretation, rather than building up a comprehensive and self-coherent theo-political logic from kabbalistic concepts ab initio, from which the specific elements of a political ethic emerged organically, as in Tau’s case. The worldview analysis herein should therefore be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. I have extracted and reorganized elements of Ginsburgh’s frequently wide-ranging theo-political discussions into patterns, for the sake of analytic tractability. However, doing so may create the impression of a tighter and more self-consistent logical system than the primary sources articulate.36

In terms of the kabbalistic dimension of settlements’ value, Ginsburgh writes that settling the land on the material plane effects a cosmic union between divine archetypes of husband and wife on the metaphysical plane, and union of the upper sfirot with the lowest, Malkhut/the Shekhinah/Knesset Yisrael, which touches the earthly plane via the channel of Klal Yisrael. This alignment and sexual harmonization promotes cosmic harmony and tikkun (see Malkhut Yisrael 1, רמד-רכז).37 For Ginsburgh, every point of

33 The concluding chapter addresses the paradoxical root of this dualism in Chabad Hasidism—which in most respects follows a radically and famously monistic theosophy; see too Appendix 1.
34 Both halakhic and midrashic.
35 E.g., numerological analysis of words and names, geometrical concepts.
36 For a contrasting view, see R. Sagi (2009).
37 This contrasts with Tau’s understanding that consciousness mediated the supernal effects of settlements, thus downplaying their inherent ability to effect metaphysical tikkun by themselves.
Jewish settlement in *Eretz Yisrael* is a point of such conjugal love (pp. 86-7),\(^{38}\) in which the Jewish People are the groom and the Land of Israel is the bride (pp. 78, 80). Similarly, all forms of working the land are, “mystically, an act of marital union, of sowing seeds in the fertile soil of Israel for the sake of bearing fruit” (*Rectifying*, 81). This, he claims, is the esoteric meaning of *Song* 3:10,\(^{39}\) which he reads as a direct mandate “to populate the country with numerous contiguous points of settlement” (p. 80).\(^{40}\)

This exclusive marital—and, in a cosmic sense, conjugal—relationship delegitimizes existing Palestinian communities. Ginsburgh writes: “the taking of possession of any part of the Land of Israel by a foreigner is a betrayal of one’s beloved” (*Rectifying*, 77; see too 83, 178–9ff). He uses numerology in support of this claim, arguing that the numerical equivalence of *lo tin’af* (לֹּּתָנָא), “thou shalt not commit adultery,” and *tzionut* (צוּּינָוְת), “Zionism,” teaches that Torah-oriented Zionism cannot allow “adultery” on the level of the land by “allowing foreign elements to breach our bond of love” (pp. 175–6ff). Ginsburgh argues that the sacred coupling between the Jewish people and the Land, via settlement, is akin to that between Jews and the Sabbath (*Malkhut Yisrael 1*, מַלְכּוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל; *Rectifying*, 80)\(^{41}\); just as a Gentile deserves death for Sabbath observance,\(^{42}\) he asserts, so too is it forbidden for Gentiles to settle the Land. Arab towns and villages in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), as well as those behind the green line, are thus an adulterous desecration of a cosmic marriage (*Malkhut Yisrael 1*, מַלְכּוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל), promoting chaos in the heavenly spheres.\(^{43}\) This metaphysical notion leads Ginsburgh to assert that “we must walk together with God, in total commitment to fulfil His will—that His chosen people inherit His chosen land and allow no adulterer to defile the holy marriage of the [Jewish] people to the land” (*Rectifying*, 188).

Further, based on the Kabbalistic notion that earthly circumstances reflect and influence the state of the heavens, he argues that since the Land of Israel represents an indivisible, divine “whole” on the metaphysical plane—being directly connected to God

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\(^{38}\) "אהבה בתענוגים" (from the Shabbat song מַה יִּפְתָּח).  
\(^{39}\) "His interior is inlaid with the love of the daughters of Jerusalem.”  
\(^{40}\) He adds in parentheses: “Just as marital relations must be conducted in privacy, so did the Rebbe advise the Israeli government, in the years following the Six-Day War, to settle all of the redeemed territories as soon as possible and as quietly as possible”—*ibid*. See Schneerson’s *Karati*, p. 148.  
\(^{41}\) As Shabbat is sacred in time, he writes, *Eretz Yisrael is sacred in space*.  
\(^{42}\) Ginsburgh’s sources: *Bavli* Sanhedrin 28:2, Deuteronomy Raba 1:21.  
\(^{43}\) This parallels the classic metaphor of a spiritual marriage between God and Israel.
and suffused with His essence—its territories must likewise be united under Jewish rule on the earthly (political) plane to effect *tikkun*. True Jewish leaders, he writes, must rally the people to devote themselves to the truth of the supernal and physical wholeness of *Eretz Yisrael*, and to see that it is impossible to compromise such a unity by ceding any of the Land to Palestinians (*Malkhut Yisrael* 2, מַלְכַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל). 44

There is also a theurgic motivation for removing the Gentile presence. Redemption can arise, in Ginsburgh’s view, only with the “true’, full settlement of the Land, which he defines as contiguous Jewish settlement and the Land’s purification from all elements of *avodah zarah* (עבודה זרה), idolatry, 45 Gentile culture, sins, and defects. Only then will Israel merit the expansion of the kingdom’s borders to those promised in the Torah—and beyond, to encompass the whole earth in a realization of global redemption (*Malkhut Yisrael* 1, מַלְכַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל). As the Land of Israel is innately holy, it mandates an exceptional level of purity among its residents, thus excluding Gentiles. He writes (of Jews), “if we do not live in our land in accordance with the precepts of the Torah, the land will vomit us out of it. ... How much more is this the case with regard to foreign, hostile elements; these are totally ‘indigestible’ to the land” (*Rectifying*, 107). 46

Ginsburgh thus decries the fact that “strangers” dwell among Israeli Jews (referring to the Arab citizens of Israel) and are given welfare and civic rights by the state, based on Western (i.e., Gentile) notions of equality that “injure and distort the truth” (*Malkhut Yisrael* 1, מַלְכַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל; *Rectifying*, 107–8, 189ff; see too Schneerson’s *Karati*, 30). “When non-Jews purchase land and live in Israel, they claim rights to the possession of the land, and by so blemishing the integral wholeness of the land, they become a spiritual as well as a physical menace to the Jewish people” (e.g., by tempting assimilation or adoption of Gentile rituals; *Rectifying*, 59–60). 47 He finds it particularly offensive that Gentiles are permitted to live in Jerusalem and even, “God preserve us,” on the Temple Mount (p. 173ff), which he argues violates a commandment laid upon Jews when they entered the Land to refuse Gentiles residence therein (*Malkhut Yisrael* 1, מַלְכַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל), 48 and to refuse them

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44 Somewhat similar statements, also drawing on the image of the land as the Shekhinah, have been made by the notable hardal rabbi Moshe Tzuriel (n. Weiss); see Rosenak (2013, 130–1).
45 For an analysis of tractate *Avodah Zarah* sensitive to historical context, see Halbertal, where it is interpreted as encouraging “an introversion of aggression from waging an open war to avoiding benefit” (Halbertal 1998, 165).
46 He cites *Leviticus* 8:28 and 20:22 in support; see too, e.g., 2 *Kings* 17:24–41.
47 See too Halbertal (1998, 162) on Bavli *Avodah Zarah*.
48 See too Inbari (2009a, 149); “לא תכרת להם ברית ולא תנחם” (*Deuteronomy* 7:2). Ginsburgh cites Rashi, among
He sees support for Jewish immigration and the expulsion of Gentiles as twin necessities: “two legs, in walking, must function together. Just as the right leg encourages mass Jewish immigration to Israel, the left leg expels undesirable elements from the land” (Rectifying, 105).

The above metaphysical picture, and the complementary halakhic stance, together imply an ethic of territorial maximalism. The eternal bond between Jews and the Land of Israel, Ginsburgh holds, imposes a duty on the State of Israel to cleave resolutely to any conquered territories and exercise all its might in their defense from Gentiles within and without. Similarly, it behooves Jews to disallow non-Jewish settlement in Israeli-held territory. This leads us to Ginsburgh’s critique of the land-for-peace formula at the core of past and present Israeli–Palestinian negotiations.

**Ginsburgh’s “peace process”**

Here too Ginsburgh’s approach is built on twin halakhic and kabbalistic pillars. Speaking of the evacuation of the Chavat Ma’on settlement in 2004, Ginsburgh stated that any peace agreement that compromised the territorial integrity of Eretz Yisrael by returning biblical lands to Arabs would be disallowed by the Torah, even if it were to be endorsed by a popular referendum (in which, he protested, the Arab citizens of Israel could also participate; Inbari 2009a, 147). Based on Schneerson’s teachings, Ginsburgh states that “God has given the chosen land to the chosen people as an eternal inheritance. … [T]he Land of Israel belongs to all the Nation of Israel, to each and every Jew, … and no one has the authority to give it away” (Rectifying, 67; see too Schneerson, Karati, 22)—including the Knesset and indeed Israel’s citizens themselves, via a referendum, tainted as they are by Arab MKs and Arab votes, respectively. Thus, the starting point in his rhetorical opposition to such a negotiated peace is Halakhah, the
normative Jewish understanding that *Eretz Yisrael* was promised to the Jews by God, and Schneerson as an authority figure.\(^5\)

He sees the Arab–Israeli peace process as a dangerous delusion: “The very dream of living in peace and harmony in the Land of Israel with our Arab neighbours, not envisioned in the context of the coming of the Messiah, is in itself an illusion” (*Rectifying*, 139–40). He thus laments that the “custodians of the state daily surrender the Jewish people’s rights to the land, relinquishing vital, strategic areas to sworn enemies” (p. 10). Not unlike Tau, he identifies the root of the peace process in Israeli leaders’ and the secular public’s arrogance, atheism, ingratitude for God’s repeated deliverance of Israel from its enemies, and prioritization of material greed over spiritual duty. However, unlike Tau, he sees this as the operation of their core “inner darkness” rather than an external negativity masking an inner light (pp. 30–32). He does not, therefore, perceive any *essential* divine content in the apparatus of the state (although it has value because of its ability to exert Jewish military power; see below) or in elected leaders, and he seems to view leftist policies as a reflection of an ontologically true “inner darkness” rather than mere confusion. He writes: “Often, the inner darkness, seeking to attain public acclaim, will appear in the garb of some positive, universal value. The most significant example of this in our times is the so-called ‘peace process’” (p. 31). Of this peace, Ginsburgh cites *Jer.* 6:14: “They say “peace, peace,” but there is no peace”—the peace process’s outcome, he says, will merely be “a peace that leads to war and bloodshed” (i.e., a goal-rational argument; *ibid.*, see too p. 61). Further, promoters of peace do an injustice to their fellows: “expressing mercy to enemies and making peace treaties with them, believing them to be friends, they [Israeli leaders] become cruel to their own people [settlers], their true friends” (i.e., an argument based on the higher value of Jewish loyalty than Jewish–Gentile cooperation in his axiology; p. 69; see too Schneerson’s *Karati*, 1–23). The content of this criticism of the secular state and territorial compromises resonates powerfully with the complaints of the Hilltop Youth about the *Hitnatkut*.

\(^5\) Schneerson was adamantly opposed to territorial concessions (see generally Schneerson & Touger 2001; Mezvinsky & Kolb 2013); see Appendix 1. Note that I do not discuss herein Ginsburgh’s identification of Schneerson as the Messiah of his generation, who will return when the political program Ginsburgh describes is fully implemented; on this, see Garb (2009, 67–8). On the identification of Schneerson as the messiah in Chabad, see, e.g., Dein (2011, 46–53), Szubin (2000, 218–9), and generally Kraus (2007).
A further prerequisite for peace, he opines, is contiguity of the biblical territories under Jewish sovereignty. Ginsburgh places great stock in the etymological link between the Hebrew words for “peace” (shalom) and “whole” (shalem), linking the goal of peace with the demand to implement three “sacred wholenesses” (e.g., Rectifying, 24, 49–50, 55–63; see too Schneerson’s Karati, 47): bringing the whole Jewish people to Israel (mass immigration and maximal settlement of the Land), uniting the whole biblical Land of Israel under Jewish rule (holding to all the occupied territories, settling every hill with Jews, and purging the Land of “aliens”), and implementing the whole of the Torah as the Israeli legal and political system (theocratic government under the king-messiah). He decries the fact that Israeli policymakers “do not understand the simple implication of the language, that peace depends on wholeness. ... Peace will never come by relinquishing wholeness. Peace will come when we learn to recognize the value of wholeness” (Rectifying, 61). He sees no scope for compromise (“chalila!”) in the Torah’s precepts for the sake of the “fictitious” reality; no compromise on the wholeness of the Jewish people, Land, or Torah can lead to peace (Malkhut Yisrael 2, 12).

This is an intriguing divergence from the way the wholeness concept operated in Tau’s monistic worldview—which also posited the metaphysical interclusion of Am Yisrael, and its innate and interconstitutive links with both the Torah and Eretz Yisrael. Similarly, though both thinkers share an understanding that the supernal reality is more ontologically fundamental than mundane reality, this understanding leads to different axiological and ethical consequences. For Tau, the interclusion led to identification with the state, even if it pursued misguided policies, and a sense of paternalistic responsibility to nurture and guide it. Trust in the supreme reality led to acceptance that compromises to ideals such as full control over Eretz Yisrael or a Torah state were mere temporary stages in the inevitable redemptive process, steered primarily by divine providence. For Ginsburgh, by contrast, the higher ontological reality must be replicated politically (following a direct translation of the metaphysical unities into political structures), entirely through human agency, immediately, and without compromise.51

Ginsburgh’s ethics therefore require civil disobedience and nonviolent protest by observant Jews when the government takes steps he considers in conflict with Halakhah and with the correct political embodiment of messianic reality—such as ceding territory.

51 There is a parallel here with the divergence within Kookian thought mapped by Fischer (2009).
to Arabs or limiting the expansion of settlements. Moreover, this is explicitly articulated as a means to overthrow democracy and replace it with a Torah state (see generally R. Sagi 2009, 276–81; Inbari 2009a). He writes, “it is the Torah itself that demands, in cases of conflict, that one disobey the law of the land in order to obey the law of God. If soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces are commanded to uproot Jewish settlements in the Land of Israel, the order must be disobeyed” (Rectifying, 53). This is consistent with his ideal of Torah-based government and perception of the current Israeli government as blasphemous because of its secularism and inclusion of non-Jews (see Malkhut Yisrael 1, סב–סא; Inbari 2009a, 145–6).52

Ginsburgh has an alternative conception of how “true” peace can be achieved—one informed by his reading of Kabbalah and given halakhic sanction under the rubric of a war to eradicate evil, as he defines it. Ginsburgh’s conception of metaphysical peace, or tikkun, rests on Gentile subjugation. He holds that the real tikkun for Gentiles is complete surrender to the yoke of the Torah’s commandments, which will proceed in the following order: hakhna’ah (הכננה), “surrender” to Israel and their Torah (understood as a metaphysical conquest by which the Gentiles will discover the Torah’s goodness and light); havdalah (הבדלה), “differentiation/separation” between Israel and the Gentiles, including the removal of Gentiles from the Holy Land; and only lastly hamtakah (המתקה),53 “sweetening’, when the entire world will praise the one God in one language (Malkhut Yisrael 2, וב; see too Rectifying, 66–7; R. Sagi 2009, 48–50).

With arguments reminiscent of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane (who also ascribed positive values to Jewish violence against Gentiles over and above the issue of mere Halakhic legitimacy; e.g., demonstrating the power of God’s might on earth through the Jews, as His earthly proxy),54 Ginsburgh reasons that the Gentiles will be inspired to submit to this not by chesed (חסד), the sefirah corresponding to loving kindness, but by gevurah (גבורה), which corresponds to stern divine judgment: “With affirmativeness and boldness, the Jew will win the respect of the non-Jew” (Rectifying, 3), he says. This

52 Note that he does share Tau’s notion of total individual–government–klal interclusion; however, he believes this will become reality only in the messianic future, and does not see the present government as embodying the national will or essence (Malkhut Yisrael 1, כז–כז; Malkhut Yisrael 2, כז, כז, כז–כז, כז, כז). 53 These terms are chosen to correspond to three steps in “God’s work” (עבודת ה) according to the Hasidic master the Ba’al Shem Tov (see, e.g., Rectifying, 192ff). They are given different interpretations elsewhere (passim in Malkhut Yisrael 1, כז–כז; Malkhut Yisrael 2, כז–כז). 54 E.g., Kahane (1987, 1974). See too Sprinzak (1999, 180–216; 1991b, 51–54, 211–45).
boldness implies being “continuously on guard and ready to fight, physically, for our right to inherit our land” (p. 167ff).

He argues that peace among the nations depends on Jewish rulership and Gentiles’ fear of Jewish strength. Through the crushing of Israel’s surrounding enemies the power of the “king of kings, the kadosh barukh hu,” is revealed, inspiring fear and awe among the nations; he states that through such a revelation of God’s name (via the martial prowess of His earthly proxy, the Jews), Israel will achieve true peace—as indeed “peace is God’s name” (Malkhut Yisrael 2, קמא-קמ).55 Accordingly, he reads Eccles. 3:8 (in which King Solomon says, “There is a time for war, and [then] a time for peace” (the “[then]” is Ginsburgh’s addition) as teaching a “general rule that war... is a necessary prerequisite for peace. ... The war must be fought to the end, not ceased in the middle. Only with the total victory of good over evil can true peace ensue” (Rectifying, 31; see too p. 109). This is expanded in Ginsburgh’s kabbalistic argument of the need for the separation of Jews and Gentiles before messianic unification and harmony can reign.56

In view of the above, all political discourse that admits the possibility of a two-state solution is misguided: “Implied in gevurah is the power to break evil at its source. In our context, this means to break the very hope in the psyche of our Arab neighbours that the Land of Israel belongs or will ever belong to them. It must be made clear to them (and to the nations of the earth) that ‘Palestine’ is a fiction. By using words such as ‘autonomy,’ we build their hopes instead of destroying them” (Rectifying, 31). In this, his ethical conclusion agrees with Tau’s, although his ascription of “evil” to Israel’s Arab enemies reflects his dualistic ontology, in contrast to Tau’s notion that they must serve a dialectic role in the hands of divine providence.

Such views are buttressed by Ginsburgh’s adaptation of the lurianic doctrine of shevirat hakelim to the contemporary political context, identifying Jews with the divine lights trapped among the broken shards or kelipot, which in turn are identified with the Gentiles. The lights can be liberated and purified—and global redemption achieved—only by the separation (havdalah) of the sacred and sinful, of Israel and the nations (Malkhut Yisrael 2, ד). Ginsburgh does acknowledge that God ultimately intends the

55 This is based on a reading of Job 25:2, והמשל ופחד עמו עשה שלום במרומיו; and Esther 8:17, ורבים מעמי הארץ מתיהדים כי נפל פחד היהודים עליהם.
56 This had a parallel in Tau’s thought, as seen in Chapter 4, but the distinction arises with Ginsburgh’s argument that physical and politically enforced separation is required, consistent with the logic of his worldview whereby physical acts and events (rather than consciousness) advance the process of tikkun.
harmonious merging of light and dark to become one: “His desire, in the creation of humanity, [is] that the non-Jewish world and the Jewish world ultimately join together to serve God in unison”57; however, “Just as with regard to light and darkness, union is predicated on separation,58 so it is with regard to Jews and non-Jews,” who must dwell apart until redemption (Recitfying, 143ff). 59 Ginsburgh holds that metaphysical separation must also be implemented politically: the building of the Third Temple depends on the removal of Gentiles from Israel’s borders as the physical reflection or embodiment of this spiritual Havdalah (Malkhut Yisrael 1, תשועה-תשעיה).

These dualistic ideas explain why Ginsburgh’s disciples would view conciliatory gestures toward Arabs—especially ceding the “sacred” lands of Eretz Yisrael and uprooting Jewish settlements—not merely as gross affronts to Jewish law, but also a form of cosmic adultery that furthermore represents a deplorable set-back in the process of earthly and heavenly tikun. They may also help to explain the readiness of Hilltop Youth to target neighboring Palestinians, even when the Israeli government is the ultimate address for the tag mechir message. The next section shows how these suggestive links continue in Ginsburgh’s teachings on vengeance, which drape a kabbalistic mantle over impulsive revenge attacks against Gentiles—especially when perpetrated by an ill-educated and frustrated youth, or “simple Jew.”

The “simple Jew” & the virtue of vengeance

Ginsburgh claims that Jews need to be reconciled with the concept of vengeance against Gentiles, which the Talmud60—so he says—teaches is a positive practice “in its proper context” (Rectifying, 92). Vengeance, in contrast to violence intended to save Jewish life under the halakhic framework of pikuach nefesh (פיקוח נפש), is considered by Ginsburgh to be an assertion of one’s self-identity and uprightness and that of one’s family61

57 Based on Zephaniah 3:9.
58 This is an elaboration of lurianic creation mythology: “The act of creation consists in [sic] the separation and reunification of the opposed polarities” (Freedman 2008, 393). See Appendix 1.
59 Based on Numbers 23:9.
60 He cites the Bavli Brachot 33a.
61 Ginsburgh’s linkage of vigilant revenge to familial love and, as we shall see below, ‘higher’ forms of spiritual consciousness may reflect a strange application of Chabad Hasidism’s teachings on the distinctions between love of the divine based on free choice and the superior, involuntary love based on family attachment (see, e.g., Steinsaltz 1988, 296–7, 301–4, on the root of ahavah rabah vs. ahavat olam, in which the former is ecstatic, stems from from Atzilut, and is associated with familial love of God).
(Malkhut Yisrael 3, ᵅ), without giving much thought to the enemy or his motivations. Allowing an insult or injury to stand undermines the basis of one’s inner confidence and strength, leading to a collapse into the “abyss” (p. אס). The motive for vengeance is the uprightness of the “I”/“I am”; it stems not from the criticism or punishment of evil (p. אט) or the enemy’s active hatred of Israel, but rather from a need to redress the cheapening of Israel’s blood in his eyes (p. צז). He also sees revenge as raising morale (Rectifying, 93) and fulfilling a societal need (R. Sagi 2009, 309–10).

Thus, Ginsburgh praises the actions of Shimon and Levi in murdering every male in the town in which their sister Dinah was raped. They acted, he says, from an urge of the heart to restore family honor, a natural impulse of “blessed wrath” (Malkhut Yisrael 3, גט-פת). The biblical passage in question makes no reference to God, nor is it suggested that the entire town was guilty. The focus is the honor of, and devotion to, the Jewish family (pp. לשת-יהב). Ginsburgh’s interpretation is not anchored in the mainstream halakhic discourse, i.e., the frame of legitimate retaliation in the context of wars; rather, he emphasizes the virtue of Shimon and Levi’s willingness to allow an unconstrained outpouring of indignation and rage—an unstudied and instinctive reaction that arises from an intact sense of family pride. Similarly, in Barukh Ha-Gever, Goldstein’s Palestinian victims are incidental to the main drama of arousing within the extended Jewish audience of the massacre (via media) a “remembrance” of the honor of the Jewish people and of God, in a perverse echo of Halevi’s notion that Jewish history reveals God to the world (Seeman 2005, 1023). The motive of redressing some prior injury, associated with typical conceptions of vengeance, need not be salient (Karpin & Friedman 1998, 44–5; Sprinzak 1999, 217–43).

Ginsburgh’s thought on vengeance has several kabbalistic dimensions. For instance, he cites Rashi’s teaching concerning the “upper” and “lower” aspects of vengeance,

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62 There are strong resonances here with Kahane’s thought on vengeance, which saw active retaliation as a form of therapy for the national Jewish psyche, needed to repair millennia of psycho-spiritual damage caused by Jewish passivity and helplessness in galut; see, e.g., Sprinzak (1999, 183).

63 See farther Inbari (2009a, 138).

64 It is possible to discern the echoes of this thought in Ginsburgh’s call for collective punishment of Palestinian villages in response to terrorism: after the brutal murder of the Fogel family in Itamar, he called for houses in the nearby Palestinian village to be demolished every half hour until the town handed over the murderers, who should then be killed on the spot; Yehoshua Briner, “Rabanim kor’im: Laharos beitim ad she-ha-rotzechim yusgeru,” Walla!, March 13, 2011.

65 For a very brief introduction to halakhic interpretations of the Shimon and Levi episode (e.g., by the Maharal, Rambam, and Ramban and contemporary Halakhic commentators on Israeli military conduct) see, e.g., Jachter (2008, 212–5). See further Blau (2006).
which he interprets as follows. While the lower is crudely physical, the upper aspect is the liberation of the sparks of divinity trapped in the *kelipot* represented by the Gentile nations, and liberation of the natural vital force from their corpses, both of which can then return to the divine source (*Malkhut Yisrael* 3, קכז–קכח). Thus, while he remains attached to the paradigm of divine immanence of Chabad (in which divinity suffuses all), his logic understands that immanence as somehow an imperfect one, in terms of the divine essence being “trapped” in impure forms (such as Gentile bodies, apparently) and hence requiring liberation by the removal or destruction of those forms. He thus posits a positive function served by vengeance in metaphysical *tikkun* as understood by the lurianic doctrine of *shevirat ha-keilim*, which informs his description of the inner, kabbalistic character of Jewish vengeance against Gentiles as sweetness and happiness (*Malkhut Yisrael* 3,chers)—a “unity of opposites” that rests on underlying dualistic assumptions.

Ginsburgh also utilizes Kabbalah’s framework of the *sefirot* to justify metaphysically a free license for violent revenge that may cross into antinomianism. The kabbalistic source of the revenge urge, Ginsburgh writes, lies in the *sefirah* of *Binah* (בינה—understanding)\(^\text{66}\)\—an innate understanding of the heart that is above ordinary rational understanding, a sort of supra-conscious holy impulse outside and above measured assessment (*Malkhut Yisrael* 3, פ–עט).\(^\text{67}\) Recall from Chapter 4 that Jews’ unique capacity for divine, prophetic, or supra-rational consciousness is also understood as conferring distinction and superiority in the Kookian corpus; what is remarkable here is Ginsburgh’s identification of an emotional reaction based in anger with that ‘consciousness.’ Elsewhere, he describes a direct connection between vengeance, which explodes without reflection upon its future consequences, and *Keter* (כתר—crown), the highest *sefirah*, whose divine light can emanate without the “permission” of the lower *sefirah* of *Chokhmah* (חוכמה—wisdom).\(^\text{68}\)

The contrast between this conception of ideal mystical consciousness and that presented by Tau is dramatic and follows the intellectual/anti-intellectual divergence that partly characterizes the Hilltop Youths’ split from the *mamlakhti* yeshiva world. It

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\(^\text{66}\) See too *Malkhut Yisrael* 3, p. צג. Also under the framework of this *sefirotic* connotation, vengeance is further associated with the beginning of the “world to come.”

\(^\text{67}\) On Ginsburgh’s teachings on supra-consciousness, see further R. Sagi (2009, 85, 90–1, 139).

\(^\text{68}\) One can thus infer that Ginsburgh’s utilization of the *sefirot* to articulate his views on violence is not a scheme derived coherently and unambiguously from first principles of Kabbalah.
can also be traced, albeit in perverted form, to a paradox embedded in the ethical system of the early hasidim. Scholem, for instance, described Hasidism’s “novel conception of the devout, the Hasid, as a religious ideal which transcended all values derived from the intellectual sphere and the realization of which was considered more desirable than any intellectual accomplishment… a scale of values completely independent of the traditional Jewish veneration for the learned student of the Torah” (Scholem 1961[1941], 91). Hasidism’s relationship with Halakhah shares this paradox: in advocating “an altruism grounded in principle and driven to extremes,” early hasidim subjected themselves to the “‘heavenly law,’ din shamayim, as conceived by the Hasid, i.e. the call to self-abnegation and altruism, [which] in many instances goes far beyond the common law of the Torah as interpreted by the Halakhah,” and there exists a “latent antagonism between the two conceptions … [as the] higher law, … is considered binding only for the Hasid and … is set up in somewhat veiled opposition to the Halakhah” (pp. 92–4).

Ginsburgh also describes how this mystical process is experienced in the psyche. The divine revenge urge, he writes, arises from the deepest place in the psyche (Malkhut Yisrael 2, רפוי-רפע) and represents a “fluttering of holiness” in the hearts of Jews (Malkhut Yisrael 3, סב), rousing them from slumbering passivity into action. Seeman describes this psychomorphic mysticism as “terror as a mystical technique … a tool for the attainment and expression of divine intimacy” (Seeman 2005, 1017). In this conception, the “essential goal [of vengeance] is to arouse an ecstasy of holiness [התפעלות קודש] in Israelite hearts” (ibid.). Again, there are echoes of early Chabad thought, which supposed that “the pinnacles of true fear and love of God” were supra-intellectual: “In its sublimest manifestations, pure fear of God is identical with love and devotion for Him… because in this mystical state a flood of joy enters the soul and sweeps away every trace of mundane and egotistical feeling” (Scholem 1961[1941], 95).

Ginsburgh delegitimizes the self-restraint associated with the intellect and the moral revulsion aroused generally in a healthy psyche by perpetration of violence (Seeman 2005, 1022): these reservations must be overcome in order to achieve true divine service. Whereas traditional Jewish thought views violent impulses as a base, animal
instinct that one should learn to transcend, Ginsburgh casts it instead as a means of channeling the divine, and casts moral self-restraint vis-à-vis Gentiles as an obstacle.\(^{69}\)

These notions are buttressed by a novel interpretation of *kevod shamayim* (כבוד השמים), divine honor, and in particular *kiddush hashem* (קידוש המ שם), sanctification of God’s name, which *Barukh Ha-Gever* describes as “the crown that sits atop the deed” of the Goldstein massacre.\(^{70}\) Echoing the late Kahane,\(^{71}\) Ginsburgh argues that the spilling of Jewish blood desecrates God’s name (“which abides in His people Israel”), and that Jews have a “duty to sanctify His Name by taking vengeance” (*Rectifying*, 92). Paradoxically, acts of vengeance that sanctify God’s name need not explicitly call upon or even mention God (see Seeman 2005, 1024–5); the sanctification part of the equation is satisfied automatically through Jews’ status as God’s earthly proxies (following Halevi). As Jews possess a spark of pure divinity,\(^{72}\) Ginsburgh asserts that Israel’s honor is God’s honor, and Israel’s vengeance takes on a deeper meaning as God’s vengeance (*Malkhut Yisrael 3*, פב).\(^{73}\) All of Israel, he writes, are kings and the sons of kings, and vengeance reveals the true majesty of Israel and thus of God to the world (*Malkhut Yisrael 3*, ותפ; Ginsburgh, *Malkhut Yisrael 1*, רוט). Inbari and Seeman present excellent analyses of Ginsburgh’s unusual projection of the concept of *kiddush ha-shem*, traditionally applied to Jewish martyrs (e.g., those who chose execution rather than conversion to another faith), onto acts of vengeance against Gentiles that burst forth from the innermost recesses of the Jewish soul. Seeman explains that the major danger lies in their decoupling from the objective criterion of halakhic obedience, because “it is precisely the ‘spontaneity’ of emotional arousal that

\(^{69}\) Ginsburgh is aware of how jarring this sounds to most religious thinkers, since the observance of *mitzvot* is traditionally held to assist in training people to *shake off* “natural” evil inclinations, not to give in to them (*Malkhut Yisrael 3*, פב). However, Ginsburgh sees his doctrine of vengeance as the imposition of a supreme authority on humans that *stops* them from following the evil inclination. This paradox is one of many examples of the delicate line between hyper- and antinomianism in Ginsburgh’s thought.


\(^{71}\) In a 1976 essay, Kahane wrote: “Do you want to know how the Name of God is desecrated in the eyes of the mocking and sneering nations? It is when the Jew, His people, His chosen, is desecrated! When the Jew is beaten, God is profaned! When the Jew is humiliated God is shamed! When the Jew is attacked it is an assault upon the Name of God!” (trans. Sprinzak 1999, 182). The quotation from Kahane’s essay continues: “A Jewish fist in the face of an astonished Gentile world that had not seen it for two millennia, this is Kiddush Hashem” (*ibid.*).

\(^{72}\) See further Appendix 1.

\(^{73}\) This element is shared in Kahane’s thought (though the latter presents it in a less theosophically complicated format): e.g., “victory over the defeated Gentile on the battlefield... is Kiddush Hashem. It is the reassertion, the proof, the testimony for the existence of God and his government” (private letter to Kach activists, 1976; trans. Sprinzak 1999, 181). Sprinzak notes that for Kahane, “the vengeance the Jews are expected to take is, according to him, not simply a personal act but God’s revenge” (p. 182). The quotation from Kahane’s essay continues: “A Jewish fist in the face of an astonished Gentile world that had not seen it for two millennia, this is Kiddush Hashem” (*ibid.*).
sanctifies God’s name through violence” (Seeman 2005, 1021). While Ginsburgh also proffered justifications for the Hebron massacre on the basis of Halakhah, in Seeman’s view, these were tangential to the “real weight and depth of his argument,” which was founded on a conception of sanctification of divine honor as a matter of “extreme innerness” (p. 4 of the 1994 pamphlet, trans. Seeman 2005, 1021). He identifies the danger in this “subtle transformation, from objective and socially defined to subjective and introspective criteria... [which] means that sanctification and honoring God no longer rely on the fulfillment of Jewish legal or ethical demands but may actually be aided by the disjuncture between quotidian religious or ethical obligations and the ecstatic perception of divinity that lifts a person ecstatically beyond normative boundaries” (ibid.). Inbari concurs that these ideas amount to a de facto blanket endorsement of zealotry that can “lead individuals to commit acts of terror in the name of ‘Divine truth’ on the basis of personal considerations” (Inbari 2009a, 145). He places Ginsburgh’s approach “on the seam between hypernomism and antinomianism,” observing that although Jewish conduct must nominally still be constrained by Halakhah, nonetheless “actions ... contrary to Halacha may be considered the sublime manifestation of religious faith” (p. 140).

Ginsburgh’s teachings about “the simple Jew” greatly compound such concerns. When Seeman described an “unacknowledged devaluation of Jewish legal authority” (Seeman 2005, 1026–7), he was writing about Barukh Ha-Gever; I submit that the devaluation is explicit in Ginsburgh’s later publication, Malkhut Yisrael. A great many passages therein laud the “simple Jew” and his aggressive “natural reaction” to insult or threat (Malkhut Yisrael 3, סב עט-פא). Such passages also privilege impulsive physical action over Torah study or obedience to rabbinical authority as Jewish virtues: when the name of God has been “desecrated” (e.g., by a Gentile insulting a Jew), it must be redeemed, and the emotional urge to sanctify God’s name through vengeance supersedes the duty to honor and obey one’s rabbi or to study Torah. Studying Torah,

74 However, Ginsburgh allows that there may be exceptions even to this rule in the form of “temporary provisions” (Rectifying, 156); see the lengthy analysis in Inbari (2009a, 140–5) and the briefer treatment in Garb (2009, 80–1).
75 However, as much of the content of Barukh Ha-Gever appears to be repeated in the later publication (and thus my sources and Seeman’s overlap considerably), it is possible that I simply read a greater weight into Ginsburgh’s devaluation of rabbinical authority than does Seeman.
76 There is a discernible continuity here (albeit twisted) with the original project of Hasidism to revitalize what the early hasidim saw as an excessively intellectual Orthodox Judaism.
Ginsburgh opines, is not synonymous with honoring Torah, and a learned student of Halakhah could be selfish relative to the ignorant but spirited activist or the ba’al teshuvah (בעל תשובה), one who returns to his faith after being “lost.” Learning is a form of personal enrichment, he says, and honors Torah less than does the physical self-sacrifice of “the simple Jew” willing to act on his spontaneous, God-given revenge impulses to uphold Jewish honor in Gentile eyes, rather than scurrying to his bookshelf to check whether the Halakhah allows it (Malkhut Yisrael 3, כא–סה).77

Ginsburgh discusses a similar distinction between the tzadik (צדיק), i.e., the righteous Jew, and the ba’al teshuvah. The tzadik progresses toward redemption in an orderly way, while the ba’al teshuvah does so in “fits and starts, impetuously alternating between symmetric order and asymmetric divergences from logical order” and so is able to contribute to redemption in the following special way: “Before the beginning of a rectification [tikkun] process, an explosive, asymmetric phenomenon is often necessary in order to set things in motion” (Rectifying, 24). The chaotic, impulsive trajectory followed by the simple Jew who follows his instincts can serve the redemptive process by providing these explosive disruptions, because he is unencumbered by crippling misgivings about his acts’ legal implications or future consequences.

Such thinking is reminiscent of the kabbalistic mysticism that informed the plot of the Jewish Underground to detonate a bomb under the Dome of the Rock, in just such a spectacular “jolt” to spur on messianic redemption (believed to have stalled because of the return of Sinai to the Egyptians under the Camp David Accords).78 The possibility of a copy-cat attempt from among the Hilltop Youth has been an ongoing concern of the Shin Bet and Israeli police.79 Naftali Werzberger is an Israeli lawyer who has for many years represented hilltop activists, Kach figures, and members of the Jewish Underground. He has said that the idea of striking at the Temple Mount “has been floating in the air, with ups and downs, for decades. … These are not people whom you look for under the street lamp. … The potential for this activity is lurking in the less political religious extreme: newly religious people, kabbalists, the hilltop eccentrics, or someone who will be exposed for the first time to prophecies and books of apocalyptic

77 See further Seeman (2005, 1026–8).
Ginsburgh and his colleagues are “a magnet for ‘born-again’ Jews (nonpracticing Jews who have returned to religion and become radically pious)” (Karpin & Friedman 1998, 11), and his teachings could be interpreted as sanctioning the independent pursuit of such plans, without rabbinical consultation.

Ginsburgh’s position on violence against fellow Jews, however, is harder to pin down. His extremely negative views of the secular Israeli administration may be counterbalanced by a positive ethical theme rooted in the supreme, divine value of Jews in his worldview: love and mutual responsibility for all Jews (Malkhut Yisrael 1, הָנֵם, הֶנֵּשָׁם). This doctrine of unconditional love for all Jews for Ginsburgh (p. קכח, קמה—allegedly “the principle of principles” for Ginsburgh—is inherited from Hasidism, in which it is a core teaching of the Ba’al Shem Tov (pp. קצת, קצת). Notwithstanding the many defects of the current secular establishment, believers in Torah must identify with the national community that elected this establishment: one cannot divorce oneself from the Jewish Israeli public, even in thought. Ginsburgh quotes: “although Israel sins, he is still Israel”—God’s chosen, and thus holy. He stresses the need for faith in the hidden good inside every Jew, and for a covenant of utter loyalty above reason or knowledge (Malkhut Yisrael 3, לַד). The English version of Rectifying the State of Israel states explicitly in the publisher’s preface: “however critical the author [Ginsburgh] is of secular Zionism... he should in no way be misconstrued as advocating the pitting of Jews against Jews (God forbid). The very opposite is true. It is the love for all Jews... that has motivated him” (Rectifying, 3). Furthermore, his Kabbalistic world-view frames Jews as divine. Killing fellow Jews would thus likely be a red line—even if the IDF were ordered to evacuate outlying West Bank settlements such as Yitzhar. A Yesha Council security officer interviewed in 2009 concurred: “We’ll protest all we can, and maybe not every soldier will accept orders, but we won’t shoot. Even Ginsburgh will not give the order to open fire” (International Crisis Group 2009, 26 note 245).

With respect to members of the Hilltop Youth, already heavily involved in vigilante acts and highly skeptical of authority figures, including rabbis (see Chapter 6), Ginsburgh’s teachings sanctioning and sanctifying impulsiveness have clear incendiary potential. Werzberger told the newspaper Israel Hayom that “many of them [price tag

80 Ibid.
81 Ginsburgh adds the caveat: after halakhic clarification of who is a Jew.
82 “ישראל אף על פי שחטאת, ישראל הוא” (Bavli Sanhedrin 44:1).
operatives] were either kicked out of school or disowned by their families ... They have never learned in an organized setting, and if I describe some of them as thugs, I would not be off the mark.”

Ginsburgh’s praise of revenge attacks by the “simple Jew” is a dangerous ingredient in this mix. As noted by Aran, “Past confrontations have already highlighted the gray areas in which ideological delinquency partially overlaps with criminal delinquency or sheer hooliganism” (in Susskind et al. 2005, 183). The matrix of ideological and criminological characteristics in which price tagging has arisen should thus give pause.

Even if one concludes that Ginsburgh does not endorse outright violations of Halakhah, it is clear that deeds arising from antinomian reasoning, or even naked anger, can quite easily be given a halakhic fig leaf. Barukh Ha-Gever lauded the massacre of unarmed civilians during worship as an example of mesirat nefesh (מסירת נפש), devotion, and self-sacrifice born out of love and concern for the Jewish nation. Ginsburgh also argued the massacre was a case of pikuach nefesh, based on claims that Hebron Arabs were in fact planning a pogrom, making Goldstein’s act defensive. In sum, Ginsburgh sees anti-Gentile violence as permissible based on an exceptionally generous application of the Halakhah, which demands no hard evidence that people targeted have committed or planned some actual crime against Jews (consistently with the halakhic interpretations in Torat Ha-Melekh). Somewhat similar thought processes are in evidence in justifications of contemporary settler vigilantism: for example, a spokesman for the Kida outpost (near Shiloh) justified violent clashes with Palestinian olive harvesters and left-wing activists on the grounds that the former were really Hamas terrorists, and the latter, knowing collaborators.

Likewise, although it seems Ginsburgh does not advocate actual physical violence against fellow Jews, it is prudent to recall the lessons of the Rabin assassination. While the same rabbis who had accused Rabin of being a rodef or moser subsequently condemned the assassination and claimed their views had been misconstrued, Yigal Amir (the assassin) nonetheless inferred from the public airing of those views that

83 Quoted in Shragai, “The Rising Cost.” (His description of Groner could not be more different: Groner, he says, is studious and spiritual, attached to the land but also to “spiritual literature”—quoted in “Ha-acheen.”) See too Gideon Aran’s contribution to Susskind et al. (2005, 181–4).
85 See Sharon, “Le-regel ha-masik.”
murdering Rabin was a halakhic imperative. And as noted in Chapter 6, Stern claimed Amir extrapolated from Barukh Ha-Gever a license to attack Rabin, even though Ginsburgh only discussed violence against non-Jews (Stern 2004, 91). Ginsburgh may not intend to endorse Jews killing Jews; however, his teachings are sufficiently abstruse that followers—particularly once unshackled from the need to consult their rabbis before following their private impulses—may reach their own conclusions. Furthermore, the rabbinic accusations that Rabin was a rodef or moser generally lacked the added gunpowder of Ginsburgh’s borderline antinomian praise of impulsive violence or the profound mystical framework. Thus, there are some grounds for speculation that Ginsburgh’s doctrines could facilitate intra-Jewish violence at least by suitably “primed” individuals. Disgruntled Hilltop Youth dabbling in Ginsburgh’s works but without formal halakhic training may fit this mold.

Arab targets, by contrast, do not appear to enjoy any substantive theosophical or moral shield in this ideology that could serve as a counterbalance to vigilante tendencies. Given the existence of an explicit program of vigilantism (authored by a rabbi, no less) that legitimizes targeting Arabs in order to disrupt Israeli policies—i.e., Elitzur’s “mutual guarantee” strategy—there may be more cause to fear spectacular anti-Arab violence than intra-Jewish bloodshed if this subcommunity of the religious right is ever confronted by a peace deal with the Palestinian Authority or a unilateral withdrawal from parts of Judea and Samaria. This path would entail substantially less cognitive dissonance than directing violence against Jewish leaders themselves.

**Conclusion**

The following summary of Ginsburgh’s worldview, based on the above, should be taken as more tentative and partial than was the case for Tau. This is firstly because Ginsburgh’s approach to communicating theosophical principles in the publications I consulted is less systematic than Tau’s, and secondly because I have not analyzed the pertinent teachings by Rebbe Schneerson (as an immediate spiritual authority) or Schneur Zalman (as the founding spiritual authority of Chabad) in any great detail. I have also neglected herein any serious discussion of their intellectual heritage in the
teachings of the Ba’al Shem Tov.\footnote{See Appendix 1.} Nonetheless, the worldview map helps elucidate distinctions from the monistic, mamlakhti approach of Tau, which \textit{a priori} lends weight to Rosenak’s (2013) argument that rabbis’ theosophical position between the poles of monism and dualism leads to either (relatively) pacifist or violent ethics vis-à-vis the secular state and Gentiles.

- Ontology: Like Tau, Ginsburgh identifies reality as comprising mundane and supernal planes. The latter is understood as a more fundamental layer of reality, and its structure is articulated through kabbalistic concepts such as the sefirot, the sitra achra and the kelipot, and the lurianic creation narrative of shevirat ha-keilim to explain the origin of evil. Both understand the mundane and supernal realms as mutually influencing one another. However, in contrast to Tau, who subscribed to the idea that “evil” is part of a divine dialectic, Ginsburgh follows a dualistic interpretation of lurianic Kabbalah whereby the evil sitra achra is ontologically real (see too “Logic” below). Also in contrast to Tau, Ginsburgh’s ontology does not seem to emphasize human consciousness as having direct supernal agency or effect (see too “Logic”). Both thinkers subscribe to the monistic understanding of Jews’ total interclusion (with one another, and with the Torah and Eretz Yisrael). Both concur that reality is flawed and requires tikkun (metaphysically and in the mundane realm); however, their logics diverge regarding the operation of this process.

- Logic: \textit{Am Yisrael} is connected to and identified with the divine sefirotic system, through its collective supernal existence as the sefirah of Malkhut (the Shekhinah, Knesset Yisrael). This innate divine connection is the source of Israel’s unique segulah and status as the chosen people. It is also the source of impulses to take revenge against Gentiles if they undermine Jewish honor. The Gentile nations, by contrast, are connected to and identified with the demonic sitra achra. However, consistently with the paradigm of divine immanence
at the heart of Chabad Hasidism, Ginsburgh does not deny that there are sparks of divinity hidden in Gentiles. However, in contrast to Tau’s teachings, he sees the process of liberating, purifying, and elevating these sparks from the evil *kelipot* as requiring physical–political separation of Jews and Gentiles, and even Gentiles’ death. This is consistent with his logical understanding of the processes of *tikkun* and messianic redemption, which he sees as driven primarily by Jews’ physical–political acts rather than repentance or states of consciousness. 87 His logic supposes that Jews’ full physical implementation of the prophetic vision of the messianic age is the criterion for bringing the messiah, not the other way around. This means Jewish immigration, Arab out-migration or expulsion, and theocratic rule.

- **Axiology:** Ginsburgh’s ontological understanding of the essential nature of Jews vs. Gentiles entails an equally clear hierarchy of values. Jewish life is more valuable; Jews are fully human (*adam*, created in the image of God), whereas Gentiles are not; and killing a Gentile is thus no great crime if there is even a remote possibility that she or he will harm a Jew. The state, government, and army of Israel are valuable only insofar as they promote the above agenda. Accordingly, Halakhah is overwhelmingly more important than secular law or obedience to state authority. Loyalty to the Jewish family is obviously valued, though aggressive internal politics are considered acceptable. The impulsive revenge urge of the “simple Jew” has more mystical and religious value than the traditional intellectual modes of religiosity, and rabbinical authority is less valuable and important than taking direct action in response to Gentile “insults” to Jewish honor. Family loyalty and willingness to lash out in response to insults against the family are more valuable than intellectual religious service.

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87 See further Appendix 1.
- Epistemology: Ginsburgh subscribes to the Halevian notion that Jews are God’s proxy on earth and reveal him through their history, and builds from this an argument that Jewish martial prowess and subjugation of Gentiles are positive forms of divine revelation. Conversely, allowing Gentiles to “insult” Israel or extract concessions is *chilul ha-shem*, desecration of God’s name.

- Ethic: Government or army acts seen as contrary to Halakhah or the redemptive political program must be aggressively protested—but without *physically* harming fellow Jews. Paradoxically, however, we find too assertions that division must not be fomented within the nation. Any Arab “provocation” should meet immediate vigilante retribution. Arabs are also an appropriate target for violent protest against *the government*’s policies, since their lives are worth less and the disruption will still indirectly influence the government’s cost–benefit equation. Moreover, they are the real enemies in the ongoing war for *Eretz Yisrael*, and in a war it is permissible to kill Gentile civilians (even women and babies) since it is possible they’ll harm Jews. Impulsive revenge urges against Gentiles should be followed unthinkingly, since spontaneous revenge is more valuable than intellectual contemplation, study, or concern for Halakhah as a form of theurgic–mystical practice.

On the face of it, the preceding analysis considerably aids in understanding dimensions of the theosophical worldview of *Od Yosef Chai* and how it may normalize and sanctify vigilante practices like price tagging, vindicating Rosenak (2013). However, while this research elucidates the intellectual context of the *Od Yosef Chai* circle, one should be cautious in extending the findings herein to all price tag incidents and their perpetrators. Werzberger has claimed, “These are people that have no god, ... [a]nd they certainly have no rabbis. ... The people that give them support are other guys who may have studied a bit more, but it doesn’t get to the rabbis. Even Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira, who is always the subject of rumors and is surrounded by agent provocateurs and undercover operatives, does not justify harming innocents, to the best of my
knowledge.” Further, as noted, the price tagger milieu is not especially marked by bookishness or scholastic interest, whereas much of Ginsburgh’s theosophy is woven from and expressed in the language of the talmudic sages, the great halakhists of the Middle Ages, and Kabbalah. It is not light reading.

On the other hand, not all his texts are so erudite; some target a popular audience and are written in accessible prose. Further, the yeshiva’s extensive pastoral outreach among Hilltop Youth is unlikely to be conducted in the abstract and citation-heavy style of the essays in *Malkhut Yisrael*. Finally, reading Ginsburgh’s writings on “the simple Jew” leaves one with a disquieting impression that every disaffected young settler could (quite reasonably) declare himself a “Pinchas” based on these texts, without ever opening the Gemara. The youth need not grasp the Halakhic nuances nominally constraining the virtue of impulsive revenge in order to be impressed by the overall positive picture painted in Ginsburgh’s (and Kahane’s) works. These ideas could encourage inappropriate action without any endorsement from Ginsburgh himself of the “harming of innocents” (to quote Werzberger), since his own teachings praise impulsive action taken without prior consultation with a rabbi. Ginsburgh’s teachings may therefore function as a catalyst to lower the threshold of youths’ self-restraint—already regularly strained by tense and unpleasant contacts with Arabs and the security forces.

However, this is not to depict a unidirectional causal thread running from the yeshiva’s teachings to the reported violence. Unravelling the exact nature of the relationship is confounded by the old statistician’s adage: correlation does not imply causation. Spokesmen of the religious right laugh off the media trop of “the rabbinic butterfly effect”—i.e., the notion that every time a rabbi flaps his hands, he automatically becomes responsible for the independent actions of anyone watching. There is a suggestive *correlation* between the content of Ginsburgh’s teachings and phenomena like indiscriminate revenge attacks against Arab civilians; however, it is important to delimit the extent to which a textual and historical analysis alone can yield sound inferences about causal mechanisms, without further contributions from quantitative and ethnographic approaches. Some possible reservations are as follows.

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88 Quoted in Shragai, “The Rising Cost.”
89 E.g., Racheli Melek-Bodeh, “Ha-rabanim lo acharai’im le-no’ar ha-geva’ot,” *Yedioth Achronoth*, 15 December 2011. The article criticized politicians’ calls in the immediate wake of the attack on the IDF base for settler rabbis and the Yesha Council to censure the youths. She rejects the “automatic” projection of links between the hand-flapping of a rabbi in *his beit midrash* and the acts of delinquent youngsters.
None of the media comments by price tag sympathizers (including those associated with *Od Yosef Chai*) surveyed for this research framed either anti-Arab revenge attacks or symbolic violence against Israeli institutions in mystical terms. The proffered legitimations were drawn straight from a classic vigilante vocabulary: self-defense, failure of the state/army/police to protect Jews, weakness and confusion of the ruling regime, etc.\(^90\) For instance, Groner decried the military response to the murder of the Fogel family in Itamar in March 2011 as laughable, and said it is no coincidence that people call “us” for help when Arabs attack any outpost in the area. “If the army stands to the side and doesn’t know what to do, we’ll help Jews whom Arabs attack.”\(^91\) Statements about how Arabs only understand force were common, and while they especially resonate with Ginsburgh’s dualistic descriptions of Gentiles’ animalistic nature, they are not exceptional in the context even of Israel’s secular far right.

Similarly, the “manifesto” penned by Elitzur does not posit any mystical frame for the “mutual guarantee” (price tag) strategy. He criticizes the ruling regime as hopelessly corrupted, affirms that Jews and Arabs are in a lethal war for the fate of *Eretz Yisrael*, and lays out the anticipated benefits of the model for discouraging settlement freezes, demolitions, etc. Nothing in the vocabulary or argumentation suggests a road map to metaphysical redemption or other mystical–theurgic dimensions. And each component of Elitzur’s strategy can be matched with coordinates in Rosenbaum and Sederberg’s typology of classic vigilantism, outlined in Chapter 6, and justified by reference to the standard Gush Emunim value of the sanctity of *Eretz Yisrael* (albeit without the counterbalancing *mamlakhti* value of the sanctity of the state).

However, the conceptualization of revenge attacks against a *rival* ethno-national-religious group as a means of affecting decisions by leaders of one’s *own* ethno-national-religious group cannot be classified quite so simply. The strategy outlined by Elitzur ties “regime control vigilantism” to “social group control vigilantism.” It must be admitted that the manoeuvre can be explained rationally: activists pay a much lower price for slashing tires and breaking windows in an Arab village or even inflicting

\(^90\) Cf., however, Dalsheim (2011, 73–4), who notes that Gaza settlers articulated their case against the Hitnatkut using secular arguments as a form of “disciplined” communication, since these arguments were expected to have the most traction with the general public.

\(^91\) See Sharon, “Le-regel ha-masik.”
bodily harm than they would for similarly vandalizing the Knesset and injuring ministers.\footnote{Indeed, during most of Gush Emunim’s history, the state turned a blind eye to settler vigilantism, although the Karp Report prompted a brief crack-down; see Weisburd (1989, 79–85, 91).}

However, this tactic also emerges from the logic of Ginsburgh’s kabbalistic worldview as the path of ‘least cognitive resistance.’ In this worldview, every Jew is divine. This presents a basic problem when one wishes to intimidate or persuade fellow Jews. Simply attacking them violently would challenge the cognitive commitment to Jewish holiness, whereas \textit{threatening} them or applying low-level symbolic violence, while attacking Arabs more severely (in order to cause trouble for policy-makers indirectly), achieves the same disruptive goal without compromising the fundamental tenet of the sanctity of Jewish life. Even if one concludes that price tagging has far more in common with classic vigilantism than mystically inspired religious violence—and on the present evidence, I believe this is so—it is possible to discern the influence of the religious framework on the choice of tactics. Ginsburgh’s worldview operates to increase restraint toward Jewish targets, so that only ‘focused’ attacks and threats are encouraged (without explicitly planning to injure people). It decreases restraint toward Arab targets, so that it is considered acceptable to launch indiscriminate attacks against civilians with no part in the government policy being protested (and with explicit approval for inflicting bodily harm).

Weisburd’s much earlier study hints at other problems with placing an analytical \textit{mechitza} between the theosophical teachings and vigilante practices. His survey and statistical analysis identified “socialization to vigilante norms” as the single highest predictor of settler participation in vigilante acts (Weisburd 1989, 89). In conjunction, socio-psychological analyses of the Hilltop Youth have identified rabbis like Ginsburgh as key agents of the socialization process in the outposts, helping to crystallize the youths’ religious ideology—and as discussed, a key norm of this religious ideology is that revenge attacks against Arabs are spiritually healthy. On the hilltops, Ginsburgh’s worldview intimately co-exists with the complementary ideology of Kahanism, which also applauds revenge attacks. Together, they reinforce outpost youths’ socialization into vigilante norms, which are justified by a robust matrix of mystical, halakhic, and political arguments.
Moreover, there is a concerning synergy between the devolution of moral authority to the private, individual Jew in Ginsburgh’s revenge teachings and the individualistic, spontaneous modes of religious and socio-political affiliation, organization, and action noted among the Hilltop Youth by sociologists. If Ginsburgh’s teachings praising the spontaneous revenge of the simple Jew are indeed being disseminated in this milieu, thus relaxing the moral–halakhic ‘brakes’ on militant activism in an arena where respect for the rule of secular law has been eroded, Chonenu will have its hands full.

Finally, I note the implications for the limits of adopting religious symbolic language for peace discourse. The elements of Tau’s mamlakhti worldview that attached supreme value to the state are not operative here. Neither is the dialectic model of history, nor the monistic understanding of Arab “evil” as a mechanism of the greater good, or even the uneasy tension between Avraham Kook’s declared “love” for all the nations as part of God’s creation and the ontological hierarchy of Jews and Gentiles. Tau’s logical, axiological, and ethical focus on consciousness as the engine-room at the center of tikkun and redemption is inverted: this worldview values independent, unreflective action based on impulsive urges, and devalues study, intellectual contemplation, rabbinic authority, and concern for halakhic constraints. So what’s left?

Three discursive resources are left, all resting on Hasidism and/or the supreme value of Jewish life and familial loyalty. The first is resort to Chabad’s history of a profound and sophisticated appreciation for the sort of humility and dedicated contemplative practice, grounded in deep study, that Ginsburgh appears to reject. However, while this may be a persuasive line of religious argumentation, it is unlikely to resonate among the Hilltop Youth involved in violent activism. The second resource is the overriding emphasis in Chabad teachings and practice under Rebbe Schneerson of loving-kindness toward all Jews, religious and secular alike, and the supreme value of loving, inclusive outreach to bring the faithless back to Torah observance. The third is the declaration by Schneerson that if returning territories to Arabs improved Jews’ safety, it would be a moral imperative to do so, overriding the halakhic value of settlement and conquest of Eretz Yisrael and the value of its wholeness (Rectifying, 59; Schneerson’s Karati, 483). Ginsburgh notes, for instance, that the Rebbe’s opposition to the return of territories under the 1979 Camp David accords with Egypt was based on the argument that doing

93 On Ginsburgh’s psychological teachings on humility, see R. Sagi (2009, 155).
94 Note that the relationship is more subtle than straightforward rejection (see the next chapter).
so would reduce Jewish security (see Karati, 348–9). This last prong returns us to the comfortable domain of the secular security paradigm. Ginsburgh explicitly endorses the Rebbe’s reasoning as valid, though he assumes it will never apply since control over Eretz Yisrael enhances Jewish security. Nonetheless, it points to a line of ‘rational’ argumentation for a negotiated peace that already has an acknowledged hekhsher from the very spiritual authority Ginsburgh is so at pains to attach to his own books. The next and final chapter discusses the possible utility and limitations of these insights for peace discourse in more detail.

95 On Schneerson’s overriding emphasis on Jewish security in articulating his opposition to territorial concessions, via the frame of pikuach nefesh (the overriding imperative to save Jewish life) see Mezvinsky and Kolb (2013, 13–5), Schneerson and Touger (2001), and see too Ravitzky (1996, 200). See too Appendix 1.
96 I.e., through the inevitable preface featuring the Rebbe’s single letter.
Chapter 8
General discussion

Summary of findings

Chapter 1 presented justifications for worldview analysis as a conflict resolution tool. “To identify potential solutions to the conflict, we need to understand the parties’ respective symbolic worlds because the actions they will or will not employ to escalate or resolve the conflict will be determined, as Pearce and Littlejohn suggest, by their symbolically constructed patterns of compulsions and permissions” (Docherty 2001, 30). This thesis yielded insights into the symbolic worlds of mamakhti religious Zionism (under Tau’s intellectual leadership) and the anti-establishment Hilltop Youth around Yizhar settlement (under Ginsburgh’s intellectual leadership), and how they define these groups’ patterns of political–historical interpretation. It also showed how they shape the ethical boundaries of political tactics.

Chapter 2 illustrated how Tau used the narratives, authority sources, metaphors, and other symbolic language of classic Kookian discourse to argue that settlements were a mere detail in the project of supporting redemption and to identify Jewish unity as a higher value, in contradiction to traditional scholarly understandings of Gush Emunim messianism. However, it was not yet clear whether the argumentation primarily comprised rhetorical uses of these resources, or stemmed from a coherent worldview. The following chapters provided compelling evidence for the latter explanation.

Chapter 3 explained Tau’s monistic historiosophy, in which “evil” performs a dialectic role as an essential component of the divine technique of creation. It also introduced his Halevian epistemology (i.e., perceiving the will of God in historical events, if these are perceived from the appropriate perspective) and his narrative of geulah (redemption) as a slow, natural process that included temporary setbacks and

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1 Pearce and Littlejohn (1997, 54).
reversals (with dialectic roles). Lastly, it explained the theurgic role of Jews’ earthly deeds in facilitating the metaphysical process of tikkun (rectification) and thus geulah.

Chapter 4 presented Tau’s teachings on Am Yisrael and the nations, including the kabbalistic understanding of Israel as a unified collective entity, whose metaphysical counterpart was Knesset Yisrael or the sefirah of Malkhut. In this monistic paradigm, “wicked” and righteous Jews were intertwined as a unified whole, implying that even wicked, leftist Jews had supreme value. This chapter also presented a monistic logic whereby the universal was at least nominally included in the particular on two levels: the Israeli government was held to concentrate and embody the wider spirit of Am Yisrael, while the latter was held to concentrate and embody the divine essence diffused through all the nations of the world. Tau’s teachings on this topic also included dualistic elements (traceable to the rabbis Kook), e.g., a clear axiological hierarchy between Jews and Gentiles, and a near-total devaluation of Palestinian nationalism as a temporary perversion of the natural order of the world—notwithstanding that he sees this perversion, monistically, as a dialectical tool designed by God to strengthen Israeli rule over Eretz Yisrael. These elements contribute to his ethics of opposing Palestinian sovereignty over any part of Eretz Yisrael, and rejecting the peace process as working against the divine purpose of the Palestinians. In the private domain, they informed Tau’s advocacy of insulation from the corrupting influences of Gentile culture.

Chapter 5 explained a final, vital component of Tau’s worldview: his identification of Jewish consciousness as the chief medium through which Jews can theurgically advance tikkun and geulah in the present generation. This led to Tau’s hallmark ethical stance: rejection of settlers’ “negative” intra-Jewish politics of protests and “insults,” and advocacy of public education campaigns to raise the nation’s consciousness. This was based in his understanding that the true root of “wicked,” leftist policies was the degraded spiritual state of the nation at large (because of the government–klal interclusion), in turn caused by the legacy of galut and the influence of Gentile ideas from the U.S. and Europe. Chapter 5 also showed Tau’s worldview and rhetorical resources in operation, through his response to the Hitnatkut and Amona clashes.

It became clear how Tau’s monistic ontology (rooted in a paradigm of divine immanence) and dialectic logic (rooted in his extension of Avraham Kook’s response to
the crises of his time) operated to soften reactions to violations of Gush Emunim norms and/or the redemptive trend by the government, as suggested by Rosenak (2013).

We also observed the patterns in his rhetorical style, from which we may infer discursive resources and rhetorical strategies that would plausibly have traction within at least the mamlakhti sector of the settler community. The guiding rule for Tau is strict adherence to the ontology, logic, axiology, and epistemology of the classic Kookian worldview to articulate his ethics. His rhetorical devices are drawn from the authority figures and texts of the religious Zionist corpus. Moreover, Tau debates the rigid ethical prescriptions of Halakhah, or widespread understandings of Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s overriding commitment to settlement of the Greater Eretz Yisrael, on their own terms. He presents halakhic reasoning that renders the full force of Nachmanides’ mitzvat a’aseh inoperative, and he quotes Tzvi Yehuda Kook to argue against those who also quote Tzvi Yehuda Kook to justify aggressive anti-government politics. Rather than dismissing core religious Zionist values (e.g., settlement of Eretz Yisrael), he frames his acceptance of anti-settlement government decisions as prioritizing other sacred values, e.g., the unity of Am Yisrael, or Avraham Kook’s mission of forming yechidei segulah to perceive the divine dialectic behind events, in order to imbue Zionism and the nation with the missing Torah consciousness. This is consistent with the recommendation by Atran and Axelrod (2008) to reframe compromises to sacred values as prioritizing a different sacred value. Biblical and talmudic metaphors are common, unsurprisingly, but so are biological, psychological, and medical ones.

A priori, the (briefer) analysis of Ginsburgh as a counterpart to Tau further vindicated Rosenak’s (2013) line of argument. Chapter 6 discussed the historical background to the emergence of the Hilltop Youth, among whom Ginsburgh has won influence. We saw that the bitterness raised by the Hitnatkut contributed to the collapse of rabbinical authority in this milieu—particularly that of the mamlakhti rabbis such as Tau. The sociological portrait of the Hilltop Youth also pointed to its anti-intellectual flavor, a further reason for the lack of traction of Tau’s message among them. This chapter also described the history of Ginsburgh’s Od Yosef Chai yeshiva in the public eye, including frictions with the Israeli Attorney-General for incitement to racism and violence, and the alleged involvement of yeshiva staff and students in anti-Arab

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2 Which admittedly could not, of course, be translated directly into recommendations for some non-religious government spokesperson.
violence and anti-IDF vandalism, including the *tag mehir* phenomenon of recent years. The chapter also contextualized *tag mehir* operations in the history of settler vigilantism and existing goal-rational explanations of vigilante violence.

Chapter 7 presented an exploration of dimensions of Ginsburgh’s worldview relevant to the phenomenon of religio-political violence, commencing with a basic divergence from Tau regarding the ontological status of evil. We saw that Ginsburgh, following the dualistic interpretation of Luria’s *shevirat ha-keilim* creation narrative, understands evil as active forces of impurity in the cosmos, expressed on the earthly plane through the Gentile nations. This reading implies that the evil *kelipot* must be pushed away from the pure lights therein and conquered for the realization of *tikkun* and thence *geulah*, and leads to a profound devaluation of Gentile life in his axiology. We also saw that the axis of the mundane-supernal interrelationship in his logic is the physical and political reality in *Eretz Yisrael*, leading to arguments that the full practical content of his version of the messianic vision must be implemented in the here and now as a requirement for *geulah*. This implied that the State of Israel had value only insofar as it could contribute to this vision, e.g., through military ascendancy over the Arabs. This logic also implied a devaluation of intellectual contemplation and concerns with Halakhah in his ethics, which applauded impulsive revenge attacks by “simple Jews” to defend Jewish honor from perceived Gentile offenses as a form of mystical experience and theurgic practice.

However, as Chapter 7 also showed, challenges are involved in causally linking Ginsburgh’s teachings to vigilante violence such as *tag mehir* operations. The causal link is there, but I argued that Ginsburgh’s teachings operated more to lower restraint among those already ‘primed’ for violence rather than inspiring political violence as part of a coherent program aimed at theurgically promoting *geulah*. However, in the absence of complementary fieldwork studies specifically exploring the self-concept of young outpost Jews involved in vigilantism, I cannot assert that with confidence.

This points to the methodological limitations of this thesis’s project overall. As a textually driven analysis focused on publications by intellectual elites (albeit elites who stress, in dramatically different ways, the virtue of the common man), it cannot answer quantitative questions, such as the precise reach of these ideas among different sectors within the settler community. I sketched estimates based on the secondary literature.
To recap: Roth’s 2014 study of the Hitnatkut, for example, implied that the basic elements of mamlakhti theosophy were an ideological bedrock across the mainstream settler leadership—including the opponents of Tau and Aviner. Her 2015 study of the political direction taken by the religious Zionist political coalition, the Jewish Home, found that a focus on public education and inclusivity (the main features of Tau’s intra-Jewish ethics) had become the distinguishing feature of post-Hitnatkut settler politics. Regarding Ginsburgh’s influence, sociological studies of the Hilltop Youth and the history of accusations against Od Yosef Chai by the Israeli security and intelligence services, are the basis for my estimate that Ginsburgh’s ideas hold sway in precisely that sector of the community that most completely rejects Tau’s approach. It thus seems safe to say both rabbis’ ideas have tangible political ramifications: Tau’s via the wide subscription at least to the basic contours of mamlakhtiyut, and Ginsburgh’s via his few followers’ willingness to apply violent political tactics, certainly against Arabs and to a lesser degree against Jews. The latter are also politically significant because of the context of the emergent alliance with the Kahanist community. However, without analysis of settler media discourse and ‘unscripted’ conversations, these remain merely estimates gleaned indirectly from studies whose main focus was on other questions.

Nonetheless, by inspecting the worldview and rhetoric of leading ideologues in two reasonably well-defined slices of the settler political landscape, this study has identified both the resources offered by religious discourse and their limits, as follows.

**Negotiating a two-level game with worldview divergence**

The introduction contextualized the above investigation as a means of mining religious symbolic language (narratives, arguments, metaphors, values statements, authority sources, etc.) for resources to support a rhetorical strategy for peace advocacy in the context of a two-level negotiations game.

This can be understood as an exercise in what Docherty (2001, 299–300) refers to as the construction of negotiation processes that accommodate worldview divergence. Consistently with the present case, she noted that among secular intellectuals, the challenge of negotiating specific issues when worldviews misalign is typically framed as getting all parties to “be rational—i.e., to engage in a goal-rational process” (pp. 170–71). Thus, one recommendation in the literature for dealing with sacred values is to
replace existing sacred, symbolic frames with cost–benefit ones, and try to persuade the parties of the inevitability of trade-offs, even on sacred values (Thompson & Gonzales 1997, 96). This approach has been favored by American mediators in the Israeli–Palestinian context; e.g., U.S. negotiator Dennis Ross has been described as using a technique of “disaggregating issues and symbols” (Bebchic 2002; 120–121).

However, as both Tau and Ginsburgh have explicitly declared, the appropriateness of a goal-rational paradigm for bargaining over the future of Eretz Yisrael, the Halakhah, etc., is rejected at both poles of settler religious discourse. This is because they represent sacred values rather than instrumental sources of higher utility. As Docherty noted: “If the parties in a worldview conflict recognized the same categories of objects but valued them differently, ... at least they could determine the overlapping categories of objects that both parties considered commodities and bargain within that shared set of objects,” but unfortunately these categorizations diverge between the two levels of the game (Docherty 2001, 173–4).

This leaves two avenues of approach. The first, and more plausible to my mind, is a rhetorical strategy of limited ambition that does not aim to persuade the religious community to accept the goal-rational paradigm or support the principle of a negotiated two-state solution. The intellectual and spiritual compromises that would be involved are too great to make this realistic—particularly if the voices leading the campaign lack authority in religious discourse, which they unequivocally do. What can be achieved, however, is mitigation of the backlash and specifically the risk of violent opposition (at least against the state) by preferentially emphasizing those arguments broadly compatible with a secular, liberal-democratic outlook but which (in contrast to many of the usual arguments) do not have negative resonances in settler religious discourse. Moreover, I argue that it is possible to align the argument’s heart with a core value shared across the community: Jewish unity and the overriding value of Jewish life. Much as Palestinian self-determination, international law, human rights, democracy, etc., are valued on the Left, these arguments are vastly less effective (and with the exception of the latter two, actually counterproductive) as rhetorical resources in an intra-Jewish debate in which the religious community are key players.

The second, less plausible, avenue is theosophical argumentation. Analysis of Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s intellectual legacy shows the possibility of arguing
authentically for either one position or its opposite. Even in Ginsburgh’s case, the political statements of the late Rabbi Schneerson and the deeper legacy of Chabad theosophy offer possibilities for theosophical argumentation in favor of a robust, negotiated peace and a contemplative rather than violent mode of religious service. However, this approach could not be pursued by liberal, secular intellectuals with any authenticity; it is more appropriately a project for the liberal edge of modern Orthodoxy in Israel—where, in fact, that work has already started.

The first of these strategies responds to the suggestion by Docherty that “there are cases where it is not necessary to ‘resolve’ all differences among moral orders or worldviews, but simply to work with or ‘manage’ those differences so that parties can address other pressing issues” (Docherty 2001, 25). We can first identify from the thesis’s analysis some consistently weak and consistently strong discursive frames, in order to avoid the former and emphasize the latter. Weak frames, in the sense of having negative resonance across both Tau’s discourse and Ginsburgh’s, include the following.

First is the argument that peace will benefit Israel’s economy. Both Tau and Ginsburgh warn of the evils of Gentile culture’s materialism and greed. Thus, utilizing this frame identifies the speaker as an assimilated Jew influenced by U.S./European worship of money and comfort. It also implies a willingness to barter the sacred Jewish inheritance for money. This frame is thus ethically offensive in the worldviews under analysis, and my recommendation is that it should not be used explicitly in the context of a two-level game.

Second is the argument that a peace deal will lead to Israel’s full acceptance and integration in the community of nations. As we saw, both Tau and Ginsburgh advocate Jewish insulation from Gentile culture—Ginsburgh because he identifies it with evil and impurity, and Tau in the context of a separation necessary for the dialectic operation of the unity of opposites. Moreover, both already frame the willingness of leftists to consider a negotiated two-state solution as a perverse result of pressure from the Gentile nations and the corrupting influence of their culture. Thus, utilizing this argument immediately identifies the speaker as willing to “appease” the nations, “bowing to the goyim.” This frame is thus perceived as a symptom of misguided thinking that cannot be taken very seriously by ‘rational’ (religious) people, and it should be downplayed. A
related problematic frame is that of international law. As we have seen, non-Jewish ethical systems such as this are treated with disdain across the board.

Third is the frame wherein a peace deal is necessary to guarantee Palestinian human rights. Now, a human rights frame was adopted to a limited extent in settler rhetoric opposing evacuations as violations of their human rights. However, I would suggest this represents an effort by the minority to usurp the symbolic frame of the majority to craft a more persuasive argument. However, in the context of the elite religious discourse surveyed herein, we see that this frame faces logical hurdles.

The first is the challenge of reconciling its assumption of fundamental human equality with prescriptions in Halakhah for unequal treatment, particularly in the context of Jewish government in Eretz Yisrael (see generally Novak 2011a). The second is the prevalence of ontological hierarchies supposing that Jews are a superior form of human (as seems to be the case for Tau) or that only Jews are human in the full, adamic sense (the case for Ginsburgh). The study of price tagging and the Hilltop Youth shows, I believe, that the second challenge compromises the tenability of this line of argument on the far right of the settler movement. However, without the fieldwork I alluded to above, it is impossible to assert with confidence whether this is also the case among the mainstream. Either way, however, there remains the problem of the extreme devaluation of Gentiles, and specifically Palestinians, across the discourse analyzed herein. Even Tau’s neo-Philistines argument—identified by scholars as the only religious Zionist intellectual effort to integrate the Palestinians into the Kookian logical framework—reduces their value in the world order to being conquered by Israel; that is, merely an instrument to provoke the full extension of Israeli military control over Eretz Yisrael. In Ginsburgh’s milieu, they are simply a force of evil that pollutes Eretz Yisrael by its very existence.

I would treat this frame as mildly ineffective in the first instance, but I believe it has potential to be mildly effective if articulated in specific ways: firstly, if it is applied

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3 A parallel to the effort by the Branch Davidians in Docherty’s (2001) case to frame their struggle with the FBI as grounded in their constitutional rights as citizens, after finding that their religious arguments had no traction. See further Dalsheim (2011, 73–4).

4 My instinct is that it is not: because of the latter’s willingness to selectively apply the human rights frame when it suits them; because I feel the unequivocally racist implications would be anathema to a community that sees itself as morally superior to Gentiles’ antisemitic hate; and because it rests on exposure to zoharic and Hasidic texts beyond what would usually be covered in the course of a religious Zionist yeshiva education. However, I have not investigated the issue.
symmetrically to Palestinian and Jewish human rights; secondly, if its common ground with halakhic protections for the (admittedly unequal) basic rights of Noachide Gentiles was emphasized; and thirdly, if it was implicitly tied to the paradigm of divine immanence (whereby all created beings contain some divine force), if not that of the creation of all humans in the image of God. However, it can never serve as a strong resource for advocating Palestinians’ right to self-determination, as the validity of Palestinian nationalism and/or right to sovereign rule over even part of Eretz Yisrael is uniformly rejected across the discourse analyzed herein.

Lastly, we have the argument that a two-state peace deal is necessary to preserve Israel’s character as a Jewish and democratic state. In Ginsburgh’s milieu, democracy is not valued; he openly advocates theocracy and is associated with the Kahanist leaders of the would-be secessionist “State of Judea” movement. In the mamlakhti fold, the challenge is more subtle.

The notion of Jewish interclusion implies that the government’s embodiment of the will of the people has value (whether by democratic vote or divinely ordained appointment of a theocratic king through providence). Moreover, Tau and Aviner have both defended the minimal liberal-democratic protections enjoyed by minority groups as private citizens rather than as a collective. And settler laymen have used democracy as a frame to argue against the Hitnatkut (though this was predominantly tactical).

This frame loses traction for reasons not unique to the religious settler community: a large proportion of the general Jewish public, though nominally approving of democratic government, nonetheless do not believe that Arab citizens should be given quite the same power as Jews in the ‘democratic’ framework, e.g., on decisions affecting the future of Judea and Samaria/the occupied territories. If the democratic principle is circumscribed this way, it becomes plausible to talk about retaining Judea and Samaria under Israeli control, and giving individual legal protections to Arab

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5 Speculatively, it may also make this frame more persuasive if the roots of international human rights discourse in the reaction to the Holocaust were stressed. However, this is a dangerous strategy. It would be easy to reframe this as an attempt by Gentiles and their internal “sympathizers” to use Jews’ experience of genocide to manipulate them into accepting ongoing danger/coercion from Gentiles, via an insecure peace. I would discourage it.

6 See, e.g., Dalsheim (2011, 73–4).

7 E.g., the 2013 Israeli Democracy Index poll found that among Israeli Jews, a plurality (30.6%) feel that “the authority for such a decision should rest with Jewish citizens alone, via referendum, followed by—in almost equal measures—the Knesset (24.9%) and all citizens of Israel (24.7%)” (Hermann et al. 2013, 68). See too Mazie (2006, 215).
citizens, while denying them a vote in matters concerning the national fate.\(^8\) The fact that democracy only has contingent value in this discourse renders this, at best, a neutral frame. In the context of promoting Gentile (Palestinian) rights under what is perceived as external Gentile (E.U./U.S./U.N.) pressure and coercion, “democracy” becomes an ineffective or even mildly counterproductive frame, especially if it is explicitly identified as a Western, enlightened, modern paradigm as opposed to one that has coordinates in Jewish thought.\(^9\)

By contrast, the discourse analyzed yielded one consistently strong discursive frame, and several additional frames that have traction at least within the \textit{mamlakhti} sector.

A common touchstone for both Tau and Ginsburgh is the supreme value attached to \textit{Am Yisrael}. This has several dimensions: the overriding priority of saving Jewish lives (as acknowledged even by Ginsburgh, citing Schneerson), which can override all other halakhic considerations,\(^10\) including the \textit{mitzvot} of settlement and conquest of \textit{Eretz Yisrael}; the crucial importance of preserving and promoting internal Jewish unity; and the value of love for one’s fellow Jews, \textit{ahavat Yisrael}.\(^11\) If we suspend all alternative value judgments for the moment, the prevalence of these Judeo-centric values across the settler community—and their profound roots in both the Kookian corpus and Chabad tradition\(^12\)—represents a compelling pragmatic argument for using this as a primary rhetorical frame.

Peace must be argued to save Jewish lives, not endanger them.\(^13\) Moreover, this has the advantage of already being broadly consistent with the secular “security” frame. The security frame should thus be emphasized—but explicitly tied to the symbolic language of the value of Jewish life as the primary argument for peace.

Provided that negotiations or concessions enjoy majority support among the Jewish public, as indicated by polls, etc., another strong rhetorical frame would be the overriding importance of Jewish unity. To use the sort of language that appears in Tau’s teachings, one could argue that infighting makes Israel appear weak and divided in the

\(^8\) This would represent a more extreme version of the prevailing ethno-republican model described by Peled (1992) and discussed in Chapter 4.

\(^9\) See Fischer (2007).

\(^10\) Under the traditional \textit{pikuach nefesh} halakhic argument.

\(^11\) The prevalence of the \textit{erev rav} frame among the Kahanists with whom Ginsburgh associates, however, dilutes the force of this value as it might apply to left-wing “Hellenized” intellectuals such as peace advocates.

\(^12\) And arguably even in the writings of Meir Kahane.

\(^13\) This represents a limitation of the discourse’s ability to support negotiations, as a measure of risk is unavoidable and the historical track-record of terrorism post-Oslo and post-\textit{Hitanakut} is not favorable.
eyes of the world, including its immediate neighbors—disintegrating under the centrifugal force of fraternal hate. Analogies between Jewish infighting and the Palestinian civil war between Fatah and Hamas would add sting to this argument, given the prevalent disdain for Gentile and Arab culture. It is less important (and unwise) to stress the ‘correctness’ of public support for a policy of concessions than to affirm the need for national unity and cohesion in light of a collective decision.

This line of argumentation will only be effective in the context of wider patterns of rhetoric that accord respect to, if not agreement with, the settlers’ position and affirm their value as part of the national ‘family.’ In the absence of such affirmations, rhetoric anchored in national/Jewish unity will be viewed as hypocritical. By contrast, if spokespeople express empathy for the settlers’ position and respectfully acknowledge the disagreement about how best to protect Jewish lives and the flourishing of the national community that already exists in the form of the Jewish State, it enables the widespread commitment to ahavat Yisrael to operate, rather than undermining it. This frame may also reduce the likelihood of violent retaliation even on the fringe. It is more difficult to advocate attacking “misguided” Jews with good intentions than Jews who appear to reject core Jewish values (as these are understood in religious Zionist discourse), including loyalty to their fellows.

Further frames can be drawn from mamlakhti discourse specifically, although they will not enjoy the same near-universal traction. As these have been discussed extensively in the end-of-chapter summaries of Tau’s worldview, I will simply list them again: the nature of geulah as a very gradual, dialectical process that may require short-term compromises; the government’s embodiment of the state of the people as a whole; and the sanctity of the state. The last is the most widely applicable. Stressing the role of the state as the representative of the Jewish people and its defender (in the context of respectful rhetoric and assurances that Jewish life is being safeguarded), coupled with appeals to the value of internal unity in the face of the world, will have at least some traction. Civil disobedience, and limited conscientious objections by religious soldiers, can be expected—and should be respected, provided protest remains nonviolent.

The symbolic language of religious discourse offers further resources: selective quotations from Avraham or Tzvi Yehuda Kook, or Schneerson, as authority figures; alternative halakhic arguments that mitigate the force of Nachmanides’ stance on
settlement; biblical or talmudic analogy; and other devices. However, utilizing such resources would backfire in the hands of a liberal, secular political figure or spokesperson. The risk of appearing disingenuous is substantial (because it would be disingenuous), and even if the use of religious language was accepted as sincere, it would be unpersuasive because of the speaker’s lack of authority or even education in the discourse in question. As we have seen, Jewish liberal-humanists are thought to be misguided, ignorant, and out of touch with ideal Jewish religious consciousness. Rather than trying to argue on religious terms, it makes more sense to follow a strategy of adjusting the emphasis on different secular arguments: downplaying those that ‘translate’ into negative values in settler religious discourse, and stressing those that translate into positive values.

However, both Tau’s discourse and Ginsburgh’s discourses offer at least the possibility of theosophical arguments supporting Israeli–Palestinian negotiation. Intra-Jewish dialogue groups based explicitly on Avraham Kook’s “unity of opposites,” drawing together leading liberal intellectuals and religious Zionist rabbis, have already been pioneered by Rosenak in collaboration with other modern Orthodox scholars. The dialogues are guided by a conceptual model whereby the position of one’s “other” or “opposite” helps dialectically consolidate and affirm oneself. It is not inconceivable that such a dialogue format could be extended to Arab–Jewish dialogue—the more so because achieving agreement or homogenizing difference are not, in fact, goals of the meeting; rather, the differentiated dyad itself is the object of value.

Creative theosophical extensions of Tau’s arguments are also possible. For example, if the Palestinians as neo-Philistines have zero inherent footing in the cosmic order besides their dialectic relationship with Israel, being entirely defined by and for Am Yisrael and intended to catalyze the latter’s consolidation, they become in a peculiar ontological sense constituted by Am Yisrael. If it is not an interclusion of the soul, it is nonetheless an intimate connection that could be the basis for a loving, respectful

15 Wolfson discussed similar theosophical possibilities latent in Chabad Hasidism’s quasi-racial dualism in view of its overriding monistic worldview (a monism whose truth the Jew could apprehend through self-annihilation in God’s infinite unity through contemplation; i.e., bitul). This “blatant contradiction” meant that “on the one hand, the intrinsic nature of the Jew, in contrast to the non-Jew, is tagged as the ability to be integrated in the essence, but, on the other hand, in that essence, opposites are no longer distinguishable, whence it should follow that the division between Jew and non-Jew should itself be subject to subversion” (Wolfson 2006, 233).
battle—much as Jewish interclusion dictates an ethic of loving, respectful “cultural war” in the intra-Jewish arena. As another example: Avraham Kook argued that Israel’s *geulah* was delayed until the present era because extending Jewish dominion in the past would have required the sort of brutal and oppressive political style that is anathema to the Jewish soul’s superior morality. Leftists’ discomfort with the need for Jewish soldiers to police recalcitrant Palestinian civilians and face dramatic moral challenges could be reframed as a quintessentially Jewish revulsion to oppression, even when if it is ‘justified,’ halakhically and otherwise. In the context of a gradualist narrative of *geulah*, a peace process could therefore be explained as a temporary delay in the expansion of the third Jewish commonwealth because of the impossibility of maintaining Jewish rule over all *Eretz Yisrael* without use of means experienced as immoral by the ‘uniquely’ morally sensitive Jewish soul. Similarly, Halevian epistemology could be used to argue for Israel to remain unequivocally above accusations of immoral politics in the eyes of the nations. If Israel is degraded in the eyes of the world as pursuing the same “chauvinistic” nationalism as any other nation, it could be argued that God’s name and the ‘superior’ morality of Judaism’s ‘uncorrupted’ original monotheism are also degraded.

Even Ginsburgh’s position presents limited possibilities through his link to Chabad Hasidism, notwithstanding the latter’s dualistic conception of Gentiles in the world order. Hasidism has a rich tradition of intellectual contemplation grounded in humility (Scholem 1961[1941], 98–99), the ‘not-I,’ that could be applied to counter Ginsburgh’s devaluation of the intellectual in favor of uncritical emotional impulses grounded in ego, the uprightness of the “I”/”I am.” 16 However, utilizing this strand to combat Ginsburgh’s mystical–theurgic conception of violence is not straightforward, however, for two main reasons.

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16 See Appendix 1. This is not to say that Ginsburgh’s approach is opposed to that of Chabad. Rather, I am pointing to a potentially constructive tension between parallel tendencies it encompasses: “Habad combines the two contradictory tendencies of quietistic spiritualism that responds to the divine will to nullify and annihilate itself (ascent) and aspiritual activism, which responds to the divine will to materialize itself (descent). Hence, along with the broad expression of the contemplative tendency that seeks the ‘nullification of being’ and ‘stripping away corporeality’ in mystic contemplation, in abandoning the matters of this world, in cleaving to God, there is also an active tendency that desires ‘to draw the divinity down from on high,’ which accords great value to religious and material life and requires involvement in the world of action from the point of view of practical commandments and the study of Torah, as well as through participation in social obligations of public service” (Elior 1992, 31).
The first, as noted, is the paradox whereby Chabad presents at once “a mystical discipline predicated on a nonegocentrist philosophy that is at the same time culturally [and racially] ethnocentric” (Wolfson 2009, 237), positing ontological Jewish superiority. Thus, Ginsburgh’s extreme devaluation of non-Jewish life also has deep roots in Chabad thought. Secondly, it is possible to understand his praise of impulsive violence by the “simple Jew” as a perverse form of precisely that ego-annulment or bitul advocated by Schneur Zalman and Dov Ber. Chabad masters described bitul as an “inner movement of selfless dedication to the Commandments” achievable to all regardless of intellectual or spiritual prowess (Loewenthal 1990, 186), and an ultimate ecstatic connection with God available exclusively to Jews (Wolfson 2009, 232–3). R. Sagi (2009, 99), for instance, argues that Ginsburgh framed Barukh Goldstein’s massacre of civilians as a form of bitul. Moreover, Schneerson identified the possibility of a level of love for the divine above mere contemplation—an essential love that depended on Jewish–divine interclusion: “The intention of the heart is illustrated by the image of the love of the father for a son, an ‘essential love’ that does not come by way of contemplation, a love that is an ‘essential bond from the side of the essence to the soul’” (Wolfson 2009, 50–51, citing Torat Menachem: Sefer ha-Ma’amarim 5729, 62–3). Ginsburgh arguably sees the un-intellectual reflexes of simple Jews to defend Jewish familial and thence divine honor in this light. Nonetheless, the fact that such paradoxes exist in mainstream Chabad discourse represents an opportunity to debate at least some of Ginsburgh’s approach on what is, nominally, his theosophical turf. 

Lastly, the monistic stream of Kabbalah (e.g., the Geroneese school under Nachmanides) presents a more genuinely universalistic metaphysical anthropology (see Appendix 1), and this could potentially be drawn on in the present day as a counter-balance to dualistic, anti-Gentile interpretations of the Zohar and lurianic Kabbalah. Given Nachmanides’ status as perhaps the most revered halakhist for the settler community, and the deep roots of both Kookian and Chabad thought in such monistic mysticism, this may prove a fruitful avenue.

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17 This idea appears in Ginsburgh’s psychological teachings, disconnected from discussions of vengeance (see Garb 2009, 55).

18 A further problem is that the shift away from contemplation toward messianic activism had already began to affect Chabad under Schneerson’s leadership (Garb 2009, 48); i.e., it is widespread.
The above suggestions have limitations, even if the religious debates are eschewed in favor of the limited rhetorical strategy suggested. For one, as noted by Mnookin, the conflict over the settlements and the Jewish State’s relationship with the Palestinians “also poses identity issues for those secular and ‘cosmopolitan’ Israelis who vehemently oppose the settlement movement because, in their view, it requires continuing occupation and domination of another people. This threatens their core commitments to making Israel a secure, liberal democracy committed to tolerance and human rights” (Mnookin 2005, 260). Thus, pursuing the proposed approach entails downplaying what are arguably core values held sincerely by much of Israel’s liberal Left, anchored as much in their understanding of the Jewish Zionist mission as in ‘international’ ideas.

Another dilemma is that building a rhetorical strategy around the commitment to protect Jewish life means a negotiated agreement would have to be able to guarantee this. This is unlikely to be straightforward, given the fragmented character of Palestinian politics. Many argue that Israeli military control of Judea and Samaria/the West Bank is what saves Jewish lives. By contrast, the lesson drawn from the frequent Gazan rocket attacks, post-Hitnatkut, is that ceding territory simply empowers Palestinian terrorists.19

**Conclusion**

In sum, this thesis has generally found support for Rosenak’s (2013) argument that an underlying monism–dualism spectrum influences rabbis’ acceptance of aggressive and even violent politics, with Tau standing at the relatively monistic edge of the spectrum and Ginsburgh on the relatively dualistic edge. It was possible to trace the divergence in axiology and ethics vis-à-vis the ‘misguided’ secular state/government and the Palestinians to their subscription to monistic vs. dualistic interpretations of Kabbalah’s key creation narrative to explain the origin of evil.

Tau’s *mamlakhti* discourse anchored in the Kookian corpus was found to offer a rich suite of discursive resources with potential to support a constructive intra-Jewish discourse around peace, with much more limited possibilities regarding interfaith and international discourse. Ginsburgh’s discourse offered fewer such resources, but was not barren of them. The stress on Jewish loyalty and essential unity for both thinkers, and

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19 E.g., Schneerson argued that making concessions had merely empowered Israel’s enemies, placing Jewish lives in more danger (see Mezvinsky & Kolb 2013, 17–20).
the profound devaluation of Gentiles and of Palestinian nationalism, points to the utility of the security argument as the primary frame in a domestic rhetorical strategy or secular–religious discourse about a negotiated peace.

Throughout, the thesis has shown the utility of deep engagement with religious actors’ worldviews for understanding the rationalities that inform their politics and ethics. The judgment-neutral analysis also revealed some of the peaceful possibilities embedded in a discourse that has often been dismissed as irrational, messianic, fundamentalist, totalitarian, etc. I do not argue that liberal-humanist criticism of the worldviews described herein is unmerited. As “rationalities,” I consider these worldviews compromised by racist elements—most particularly with respect to the devaluation of non-Jews—incompatible with what I understand as morality and moreover incompatible with serious commitment to the ontology of divine immanence (theoretically “fundamental” for Tau and Ginsburgh) or the full force of a monistic logic (fundamental at least for Tau). Further, the paradigms of fundamentalism and religious violence have demonstrated some utility for explaining historical phenomena such as the Jewish Underground, and they continue to be useful as one of the explanations of anti-Arab violence by youth influenced by Ginsburgh’s teachings.

However, it has been shown that stepping outside these paradigms reveals a more complex picture, and this picture opens discursive possibilities that would otherwise be invisible. The full range of these possibilities should be considered even if one considers the worldviews flawed (as I do), for the pragmatic reason that doing so is necessary in order to manage, if not win, the two-level game—and in the interests of constructive, nonviolent politics as an alternative to an ever-escalating spiral of slurs.
Appendix 1

Deep roots of settler discourses: Kabbalah, Halevi, the Ramban, and Hasidism

A thread to classics of Jewish thought

This appendix contextualizes the teachings of Rabbi Avraham and Tzvi Yehuda Kook in classic Jewish literature, offering a “vocabulary of concepts” necessary to understand their all-encompassing theo-political worldviews. It emphasizes, in particular, zoharic and lurianic Kabbalah, the 11th- and 12th-century philosopher–poet Judah Halevi’s masterwork, the Kuzari, the halakhic ruling of Nachmanides concerning the imperative of settling the Land of Israel, and Hasidism. Much of this deep intellectual heritage is shared by Rabbi Ginsburgh—particularly the discussion of Kabbalah and Hasidism.1

Presenting any authoritative genealogy of Kook’s thought is challenging. His prose is challenging as a rule. Even the author of a major analysis arguing that a coherent philosophy can be extracted, nonetheless notes Kook’s “avoidance of a systematic summary, unique personal idiom, copious allusions, fluent yet fragmented poetic symbolism and obscure style, [and] alternating desire to expose and conceal” (Yaron 1991, 18). He also has a “tendency to exaggerate, to invoke hyperbolic metaphor” (Bokser 1977, 21). Kook often indulges in freewheeling aggregations of concepts and language plucked from separate intellectual domains; he “does not use known philosophical terms or even classical kabbalistic symbolism with any consistency, although he was intimately familiar with both realms” (Ish-Shalom 1993, xi–xii). His radical monism amplifies the already significant challenge of interpretation: “Rav Kook

1 Note that in order to allow the appendix to stand as a self-complete discussion, there is occasional limited repetition of the main text.
had a penchant for dialectical thinking, being fully at ease with paradox and polarity” (Singer 1996, 6). Kook offers no “hermeneutical quick fix” (p. 7).

Moreover, the corpus of Kook’s works is sprawling: “he produced reams of religious writings of all types—theological essays, halakhic responsa, spiritual diaries, poetry, and personal letters” (p. 6). Many of his writings still exist only as unpublished manuscripts. As papers censored by his disciples are released over the decades, scholars must continually revise their assessments (see Rosenak 2007, 114–7). The corpus is also highly fragmented: almost all the published literature comprises compilations of his disconnected journal notes, whose original form was “poems or prose-poems” (Bokser 1978, 3) inspired by “daily visions” (Yaron 1991, 9) and “prophetic experiences” (see especially Rosenak 2007, 118), and his letters and speeches, which the redactors attempt to sift into thematic categories with varying degrees of heavy-handedness.

Some claim his works lack any systematic framework and that Kook rather improvised a virtuosic mosaic of ideas plucked from different domains of Jewish and Western thought ad hoc (see, e.g., Fox 2003); if so, the organizing schemes imposed by redactions are extrinsic. Others claim that, despite the challenges of analysis, Kook’s works do reveal an ultimate philosophical consistency (e.g., Yaron 1991). Given the denseness of Kook’s prose and his lack of citations for (frequent) pickings from other texts, Kook’s consistency is in the eye of the beholder—and her or his library. The fact that Kook’s works are accessible almost exclusively through edited compilations adds to the analyst’s challenge, owing to “the great degree of editing to which the published writings were subjected” by his disciples, who sometimes changed or concealed Kook’s original meaning in order to protect him from public controversies (see especially Rosenak 2007, 123–8). This complexity gives “Rav Kook’s writings … a remarkable plasticity, making it possible for both the modern Orthodox and the messianic Zionists to stake a claim to his mantle” (Singer 1996, 6).²

Tracing Kook’s literary inspirations also confronts challenges. One is the eclecticism of Kook’s personal reading. He was immersed in many “cultural and spiritual worlds,” including Western philosophy (see Ish-Shalom 1993, 4–11). Ish-Shalom warns against presenting Kook’s teachings as the fruits of any single influence:

“the attempt to isolate his sources definitely remains in the domain of speculation, as his writings are rich with associations to the whole treasure house of Jewish creativity, and the direct provenance of ideas from an earlier source usually cannot be traced through any quotation, paraphrase, or use of a particular term” (Ish-Shalom 1993, 9–10; see too Naor 1993, 1–2). Similarly, though Kook’s theology is clearly “undergirded by Kabbalistic metaphysics” (Eisen 2011, 160; also Ish-Shalom 1993, 8; Fine 1995), scholars dispute whether his teachings should be seen as wholly derived from Kabbalah or as original creations dressed in kabbalistic language to confer legitimacy (Ish-Shalom 1993, 6).

Notwithstanding the philological challenges, broad influences can be identified and studied to build ‘literacy’ in the symbolic language through which Kook’s ideas are often articulated—in both his own texts and those of his latter-day disciples. Firstly, Kook’s teachings refer extensively to the metaphysical schema of lurianic Kabbalah (whatever its ultimate importance in the genesis of his thought vis-à-vis other influences), which provides “the building blocks of Rav Kook’s thought—the major metaphysical structures and most of the formulations” (Ish-Shalom 1993, 8). Over the 1990s and 2000s, scholars have further advanced our understanding of the coordinates of Kook’s mystical thought in the historiosophical Kabbalah of Rabbi Haim Luzzato (the Ramchal) and the Vilna Gaon (Avivi 1992, 2000; Etkes 2002; Garb 2004; Shuchat 1998). A key element of this thought system, according to Garb (2004, 81), is a metaphorical/allegorical interpretation of lurianic Kabbalah, and in particular its narratives of intra-divine contraction (tzimtzum) and schism (shevirat ha-keilim). That is, cosmogenic narratives such as shevirat ha-keilim (the breaking of the vessels; see below) are seen as entailing a veiling of the divine truth (with tikkun or “rectification” as the unveiling) rather than ontological reality—a monistic interpretation. However, as I have not followed this debate closely and it is not the focus of the thesis, I restrict the

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3 Another interpreter of Kook has pointed out difficulties this poses with regard to Kook’s citations: “Rabbi Kook’s citation of bibilical or rabbinic references is often troublesome because the citation as a rule is not introduced by the customary formula to indicate that it is a quotation. It is rather integrated and made part of the general flow of the text. Nor is there any suggestion as to the specific sense in which the quotation is used, or in the light of the particular exegete whose interpretation Rabbi Kook has accepted” (Bokser 1977, 21).

4 For example, Orot Ha-Ofel VII.

5 Another scholar pointed out that “with regard to the theological materials … there can be no question of simply picking them up and starting to read. These are books which demand … expert knowledge of the conceptual underpinnings and terminology of Jewish mysticism, Rav Kook’s chosen vehicle of expression” (Singer 1996, 7).

description herein to a fairly basic summary of key concepts that appear in Kook’s and Ginsburgh’s writings, to elucidate their mystical connotations, rather than making any firm claim as to the path travelled by these ideas into modernity.

The starting point for any discussion of Kabbalah must be its most famous text, *Sefer Ha-Zohar* (the Book of Splendor), more commonly just the *Zohar*. It was composed in Castille circa the 13th or 14th century (Wolfson 2006, 13), though it was ascribed to the great tannaitic sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and was composed in a neo-Aramaic in order to endow its ideas with the mantle of antiquity (Fishbane 2011, 49). Its exact authorship is likely to remain controversial, despite modern scholarship.⁷ The *Zohar* stands somewhere between a pseudepigraphic mystical novel, centered on the meanderings of Shimon Bar Yochai and his mystical companions, and homilies on a potpourri of biblical passages purporting to reveal secret truths concealed behind a plain reading of the Torah (Fishbane 2011, 50–1). However, the student must first decipher the *Zohar*’s own dense network of symbolic associations to reveal its metaphysical portrait of the inner workings of the Godhead. The appendix presents a basic summary of zoharic metaphysics, and describes their creative evolution by Rabbi Isaac Luria.

Another focus of this appendix is a medieval literary work by the Spanish philosopher and poet Judah Halevi in the 12th century: *Kitab al Khazari* (the Book of the Khazar King), or just the *Kuzari*, circulated in the Arab world under the title “Book of Refutation and Proof on the Despised Faith.” The *Kuzari* is a literary fiction presenting a defense and proof of Judaism via-à-vis other faiths via a dialogue between a pagan Khazar king and a Jewish “chaber” (friend, clearly an avatar for Halevi; Book I), in which the Jew convinces the king of the truth of Judaism, leading to the king’s conversion (Book II). It is loosely based on historical fact, as there was at some point a Khazari Jewish kingdom in the Black Sea region (see Shear 2008, ix).⁸ I treat this work in depth here because of the special emphasis accorded to it by Tzvi Yehuda Kook. In his formulation of the “correct” way to study and practice Judaism (which profoundly influenced his pedagogic approach at *Merkaz Ha-Rav*), the first step was for the student to internalize the mystical–cosmological–historical–national meta-narrative of Jewish

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⁷ On the question of authorship, see Scholem (1961[1941], 156–204) and Fishbane (2011, 55–8).
⁸ The context behind this scenario: the king had been plagued by dreams of angels instructing him to amend his pagan ways (*Kuzari* I:1), and so in order to discover the right path in God’s eyes, he invited representatives of the philosophers, Christians, Muslims, and Jews to advocate on behalf of their faiths. For a concise summary see, e.g., Frank *et al.* (2000, 201–14), Husik (1916, 150–83), Kogan (2003), or Sirat (1985, 113–30).
existence expressed most perfectly in Halevi’s Kuzari (Samson & Fishman 1991, 38). For Kook, “the Kuzari is Kodesh Kodoshim” (the holy of holies; quoted pp. 10–12). The ideas expressed in this work are not wholly separate from zoharic Kabbalah, as scholars have identified the Kuzari’s influence on the Zohar’s authors (see Wolfson 1994, 294–6, 295 note 92), and the Kuzari itself presents a commentary on Sefer Ha-Yetzirah—a kabbalistic text that predates the Zohar and was the basis for much of its theogenic discussion. However, the Zohar principally describes an abstract mysticism, theogeny, and cosmogeny, while the Kuzari describes worldly, embodied religious experience.

The next section focuses on Halakhah: specifically, Nachmanides’ interpretation of the mitzvot to conquer and settle Eretz Yisrael as positive commandments, binding for all time. The first paragraph of the Gush Emunim action plan published in 1978 includes a direct quote of Nachmanides’ commentary on Maimonides (Afterman 2007, 209), with whom Nachmanides disagreed sharply concerning the supreme importance of settling the Holy Land. Moreover, in contemporary rabbinic discussions about settlement—and the halakhic legitimacy of conceding territory to Arabs—the point of departure is “[i]nvariably… an exposition of the positions of Ramban and Rambam” (Walfish 1981, 312). A full discussion of the ongoing halakhic debate—drawing not just on Nachmanides but also Maimonides, the Maharal of Prague, and indeed the primary literature in the Talmud—would certainly be of benefit; unfortunately, this is a complex and controversial topic in its own right, and beyond the scope of the appendix. My brief sketch of Nachmanides’ thought merely outlines the basic halakhic argument.

Lastly, the appendix surveys Hasidic thought. Its influence on Rabbi Kook is contested; however, the overlap is substantial enough to merit attention (especially in terms of the shared monistic paradigm). Moreover, the discussion has direct relevance for understanding Ginsburgh in the context of Hasidic intellectual tradition.

Kabbalah on metaphysics, Am Yisrael, & Eretz Yisrael

God’s inner structure, & the possibility of affecting the heavens

Kabbalah comprises “medieval Jewish esoteric law and practice” (Wolfson 2006, 12) and its subsequent interpretations. Its literature encompasses mystical orientations ranging from the theosophical to the theurgic to the ecstatic, and various combinations
thereof (pp. 12–13). It made a deep impression on Kook, both personally (see Rosenak 2007) and in terms of his public teachings (as shown in chapters 2–4 of the thesis). This section explains in more detail the kabbalistic concepts that appear in the main body of the thesis, starting with the ten sefirot at the core of theosophical zoharic Kabbalah.

The sefirot corresponded originally to primordial numbers, each “associated with a particular category of creation” (Scholem 1987[1964], 27; 1961[1941], 206). These primordial numbers traversed numerous kabbalistic texts, acquiring rich garments of symbolic associations, including their conception as ten differentiated but interconstitutive divine potencies (see Idel 1988, 136–153; Green 2004, 29–56). The Zohar, engages with the sefirot “as various phases in the manifestation of the Divinity which proceed from and succeed each other… a process which takes place in God” (Scholem 1961[1941], 209).

The highest sefirah is the most transcendent, ineffable totality of God, designated Ein Sof (literally “Without End”). Ein Sof dynamically self-manifests and self-differentiates via the lower sefirot. They are often presented as a hierarchy of proximity to the divine source or essence. They can also be grasped as a web of dynamos of ebb and flow, female and male, at work within the Godhead. The sefirot comprise: i) Keter/Ein Sof (the supreme crown; transcendent, undifferentiated, androgynous divinity); ii) Hochmah (wisdom or primordial idea; the archetypal divine male); iii) Binah (intelligence or understanding; the archetypal divine female); iv) Chesed (love or mercy; lower emanation of the divine male); v) Gevurah or Din (divine power or strict judgment and punishment; lower emanation of the divine female); vi) Rachamim or Tiferet (compassion or beauty, the mediator between Chesed and Gevurah.

With regard to definitions, I am combining typologies offered by Idel (e.g., 1988, 2002) and Scholem (1961[1941], 124). Kabbalistic theosophy was preoccupied with understanding the true nature of the world, especially the divine plane; theurgy, with effecting transformations on the divine plane by human action; and ecstasy, with mystical experiences whereby the initiate could access prophetic states (see generally Sherwin 2006, 135–62).

I rely principally on Scholem 1961[1941] for this overview. Idel (2010) suggests some important revisions to Scholem’s work, but they generally relate to matters of historical subtlety beyond the content of this overview.

The mystical doctrine of sefirot is rather elaborate in full analysis. Basic introductions include Hallamish (1999, 121–166), Scholem (1961[1941], 207–14), and Sherwin (2006, 57–70).

The mystic doctrine of the sefirot is traceable to Sefer Ha-Yezirah (the Book of Creation), a short treatise widely circulated during the Middle Ages and very important in the textual genealogy of Kabbalah (Idel 1988, 112; Scholem 1987[1962], 24–8).

Though Scholem argues that this was far from the intent of their best exponent, the author of the Zohar: “[Although] the Zohar frequently refers to the Sefirot as stages, … they are plainly regarded not as the steps of a ladder between God and the world” (Scholem 1961[1941], 209).
positioned at the center of both the horizontal and vertical axes in diagrammatic maps of the sefirot and seen as the divine male counterpart to the lowest sefirah, Malkhut; vii) Netsach (endurance) and viii) Hod (majesty), both of which play relatively minor roles in the overall scheme as intermediaries of prophetic experiences; ix) Yesod (foundation; the channel that synthesizes and concentrates the essences of the higher sefirot; associated with the circumcised phallus); and x) Malkhut.

Malkhut, the last sefirah, represents the “kingdom” of God, and the Zohar often describes her as the metaphysical archetype or essence of the Jewish people, Knesset Yisrael (Ecclesia Israel), a divine counterpart to earthly Jews, whose cosmic existence mirrors that of the Jews on earth.\(^\text{14}\) Malkhut is also conceived as the divine feminine, the Shekhinah, who represents the immanent aspect of divinity (God-in-the-world as opposed to the transcendent God-beyond-the-world). She functions as the gateway between the upper and lower worlds, a channel of mutual flow between mundane reality and the supernal reality of the upper sefirot, which she receives via the “circumcised phallus” of Yesod and births into our mundane lives below (see Hallamish 1999, 137–9).

More generally, Kabbalah’s “theology of emanation implies a degree of pantheism… a dynamic indwelling God whose presence pulsates through the entire cosmos” (Green 2004, 105). Kabbalah generally perceives the human plane as a microcosm of the divine plane: all layers of creation are parallels of divine reality, from the patterns of nature to the structure of the Jewish soul, and to the Land of Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple (p. 112). This pantheism and the conception of Malkhut as a channel underpin ecstatic and theurgic Kabbalah. The former centers on human experiences of mystical union with the higher divine potencies, while the latter focuses on the possibility of affecting the state of the heavens themselves—even the Godhead—through earthly acts, because of Jews’ innate participation in the Godhead through the intermediary of Malkhut. Kabbalah supposes that energies can flow through Malkhut in both directions, thus allowing the possibility of interpenetration of the divine and mundane planes. The Jewish people play a special role in this process: “In the Community of Israel, whose mundane life reflects the hidden rhythm of the universal law revealed in the Torah, the Shekhinah is immediately present, for the earthly Community of Israel is formed after the archetype of the mystical Community of Israel

\(^{14}\) For an overview of the many connotations of Malkhut, see Ariel (1988, 89–110), Fine (2003, 59), Scholem (1961[1941], 229), and Sherwin (2006, 65).
which is the Shekhinah. Everything that is done by the individual or community in the mundane sphere is magically reflected in the upper region” (Scholem 1961[1941], 233; also Fine 2003, 56–9). The kabbalists thus placed “the human person at the center of a cosmic drama where the disposition of the cosmos, and even of the divine, depended upon that person’s deeds” (Sherwin 2006, 112).

Zoharic kabbalistic theurgy focuses on individual virtue, meditative practices, the fulfillment of mitzvot (Torah commandments), and Torah study as means to influence the heavens (see Hallamish 1999, 178; Scholem 1961[1941], 233). The Zohar “saw Torah and its commandments … as having a cosmos-sustaining role in a view of the universe that made them absolutely essential” (Green 2004, 21). The secret purpose of mitzvot is understood as effecting the harmonization and unification of the differentiated sefirot, especially Malkhut and Tiferet, the supernal bride and groom within the Godhead (see Hallamish 1999, 134–5; Sherwin 2006, 64–5; Lamm 1991, 18–20). According to Kabbalah, Malkhut and Tiferet were brutally separated by human sin, simultaneously separating the divine plane from the human and the Jewish people from God. In sexual imagery, this describes the splitting of God as father–king from His female aspect, the Shekhinah (see, e.g., Sherwin 2006, 65, 67–8). This state of separation is referred to as the “exile of the Shekhinah” (Zohar II:41b, II:216b, III:77b), a term that deliberately echoes the exile of the Jewish people from 70 CE onward.

The intra-Divine breach can be rectified and harmony restored through performance of the mitzvot of the Torah (see Scholem 1961[1941], 230–5), each word of which is held to correspond to one of the sefirot: “every verse [in the Torah] not only describes an event in nature or history but in addition is a symbol of a certain stage in the divine process, an impulse of the divine life” (Scholem 1961[1941], 209–10). Therefore, the

15 Indeed, some interpreters of Lurianic Kabbalah give a highly gendered and sexualized interpretation of the sefirot and creation myth per se; see Fine (2003, 137).

16 The Kabbalah presents an elaborate mystical theosophy on this cosmic meta-drama, which I have explicated only in brief here. See further Hallamish (1999, 176–7; 236) and Sherwin (2006, 109): every human transgression or sin cuts off the flow of divine abundance through the sefirot down through to Malkhut, attempting to assault the Shekhinah and defile her, causing her to give birth to impure issue. Goodman (2004, 462) summarizes it thus:

17 On the correspondence between the Torah and the sefirot, see Henoch (1998, 57–9; 64–79).
Torah’s “commandments were meant not only to improve man on the individual level but [also] to bring the whole of reality to a state of completeness… [and enable] the correct and harmonic functioning of divine powers… they are not merely symbols of divine forces but are a means of ascent to the upper realms, as well as the way the ten Sefirot are revealed in our world” (Hallamish 1999, 229, 232, 235). In the Zohar, Jews’ role in this rectification holds enormous metaphysical importance, shaping even God’s own emergent persona. Thus, the Zohar writes 18 : “Whoever performs the commandments of the Torah and walks in its ways is regarded as if he makes the One above. The Holy One says—it is ‘as if he made Me’” (Zohar III:113a).

The Zohar expounds on how Jewish observance of the commandments effects the mystical union of Malkhut and Tiferet, described (metaphysically) in terms of sacred intercourse and orgasm between the divided masculine and feminine sefirot (see generally Sherwin 2006, 112–6): “human action could bring about an orgasmic interplay between the male and female forces present in all things, including the divine” (Sherwin 2006, 112; see too Green 2004, 130–4). Zohar III:22a states that “the Community of Israel [Malkhut/the Shekhinah] does not come into the King’s [Tiferet’s] presence save with the Torah. So long as Israel studied the Torah, the Community of Israel [the Shekhinah] abode with them, but when they neglected the Torah she could not stay with them an instant” (trans. Hallamish 1999, 224). Hallamish comments: “It is the nation of Israel, then, which prepares the celestial Knesset Israel—the Sefirah of Malkhut—for her union with Tiferet” (ibid.). More explicitly, Zohar III:5a and III:107b describe the practice of Temple sacrifices as serving the purpose of uniting all sefirot to achieve “complete oneness.” As the burnt offering ascends, the Shekhinah joins her husband—king, the male Godhead. Zohar II:133b–134b describes the divine import of Jews’ recitation of the Shema19 in similar terms:

“When the people of Israel concentrate on the mystery of unification as they recite the Shema with a perfect will … all the trees in the Garden of Eden exhale perfumes and praise their master, for then the spouse is adorned for entrance into the wedding canopy with her husband. All the supernal limbs are united together in a single desire and with a single will to be one, without any separation. … Therefore we arouse her and say, ‘Hear, O Israel’; yourself. Your

18 In commentary on Leviticus 26:3.

19 The most important prayer in Jewish liturgy, declaring the Oneness of God.
husband comes to you in all his finery and is ready to be with you” (Zohar II:133b–134b).

The Zohar’s mystical and narrative climax is the Grand Idra, an assembly of Bar Yochai and his companions at which they unveil the Torah’s deepest and most sublime secrets, received directly from Keter without first traversing the usual mediating sefirot (Green 2004, 153). Bar Yochai dies in a sort of ecstatic epiphany, described as an orgasmic release enabling the union of the sefirot through Bar Yochai’s own persona, as he fills the role of Yesod and couples with the Shekhinah (see, e.g., Liebes 1993, 63–4). This sexual imagery reappears in the teachings of Yitzchak Ginsburgh, in describing how every point of Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel effects just such an intra-divine union of the sacred masculine and feminine, whereas Gentile settlements are a cosmic adultery that perverts the ‘birthing’ of creation through Malkhut (see Chapter 7).

To summarize: in the Zohar’s reading of the relationship between the Jews, the Torah, and God, the sefirah of Malkhut represents Ecclesia Israel, the divine counterpart of the Jewish people, whose unification with God (by joining with the male Tiferet) is possible when Jews follow the Torah, thus harmonizing and unifying the Godhead itself. This is the kabbalistic root of the notion of tikkun (the repair or rectification of creation; see generally Hallamish 1999, 234–41; Idel 2002, 130–1; Scholem 1961[1941], 233; Rosenthal 2005): that earthly human acts can repair metaphysical imbalances within the Godhead and thus participate in and perfect His ongoing act of creation. However, only after messianic redemption can full reuniﬁcation occur. The ambit of this sort of kabbalistic theurgy has widened since the Middle Ages: as seen in the main text of the thesis, some religious settlers have come to view secular politics—and settlement—as potent theurgic practices following the same basic model.

The nature of Jews and Gentiles according to Kabbalah

Another arena in which kabbalistic notions have been yoked into service to political programs concerns the status of Gentiles. As discussed in Chapter 4, Kook selected from kabbalistic sources to devise a subtle monistic model of the Jewish–Gentile relationship, whereby Gentiles were accorded sacred status without displacing the

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20 Sabbath observance was understood in similarly erotic terms (see Lamm 1991, 20–5).
21 This section owes much to the extremely thorough analysis by Wolfson (2006).
centrality of the Jewish people; Tau adopted and added to this. Chapter 7 showed that for Ginsburgh, the Zohar’s dualistic portrayal of Gentiles as impure—and even evil—served as an explicit pillar supporting demands for unequal rights for Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel and the expulsion of Arabs from all territory under Israeli control.

The special status of Jews in the above cosmic drama of tikkun is therefore a delicate point. In recent years, Kabbalah has been popularized in the West, especially the United States, in an unprecedented reincarnation as a ‘trendy’ and accessible mystical system that has attracted an audience among liberal Jews and even non-Jews seeking “spiritual” alternatives to mainstream religion. The pop star and self-proclaimed kabbalist Madonna is the iconic example of this phenomenon. The texts of this “Kabbalah of Madonna,” however, and indeed most contemporary books on Kabbalah intended for the general reading public (even if authored by eminent scholars\(^\text{22}\)), present the foregoing mystical framework as a universal teaching about the relationship between humankind and God. They whitewash the Zohar’s highly dualistic description of a rigid ontological hierarchy of quasi-angelic Jews vis-à-vis quasi-demonic Gentiles, and its essentialist view that holiness is constituted by an innate spiritual quality unique to Jews rather than something that can be achieved equally by all humans through virtue and study (Scholem 1974, 81).

It would be incorrect to characterize these dualistic views as an invention of medieval kabbalists influenced by the Gnostics with no authentic root in the foundational Jewish texts (as Scholem at times implies). The ideas described below add an abstract, metaphysical layer to passages within the classic rabbinic corpus contrasting the human or even angelic quality of Jews against the bestial or even demonic quality of Gentiles (see especially Stern 1994, 22–47), though contrary opinions also appear in talmudic debates (see especially Eisen 2011, 65–110).

Texts of zoharic Kabbalah commonly describe Jews as occupying a higher metaphysical level than Gentiles (goyim, “the nations”). They often frame the purpose of creation itself as the making of the Chosen People, not of humanity as a whole (see, e.g., Goodman 2004, 459, 469–70; for a detailed exposition, see especially Wolfson 2006, 17–185). Close reading suggests that the semantics of many kabbalistic texts

\(^{22}\) Indeed, most of the secondary literature I consulted does not differentiate between humanity and Jews. This is not because of positive assertions that these texts are universalistic, but rather because of the choice simply not to mention aspects of Kabbalah that smack of racialism.

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restrict the functional definition of a “human being” to Jews only (see, e.g., Wolfson 2006, 5 note 15; 46–57), as conveyed by the following bald statement:

“These [sfirotic] lights form an image below to establish the image of everything that is contained within Adam [the primordial man], for the inner form of all inner forms is called by this name, and from here [we know that] every form that is contained in this emanation is called adam [mankind generally; adam means “man” in Hebrew], as it is written, “for you are adam” (Ezekiel 34:31), you are called men but not the rest of the nations, for they are idolaters. … The spirit that emanates upon the rest of the idolatrous nations, which derives from the side that is not holy, is not considered adam” (Zohar I:20b; trans. Wolfson 2006, 53).24

In other discussions of the creation of man, the Zohar identifies the Jewish people (also called “Israel”) as the zar’ah kaddisha (holy seed), descended from the semen of Abraham and Isaac (Zohar I:95a, 99b; II:6a, 78b, 88b, 124a, 125a; and III:152b, 237a). Gentiles, in contrast, are said to derive from the sitra achra, a realm of ten impure, demonic potencies of the “left” side that are counterparts of the ten divine sefirot of the “right” side (Katz 1971, 24; Wolfson 2006, 27; see Zohar I:28b, 79b; II:25b, 86a, 120a, 275b; III:125a, 219a, 238b). The Zohar’s references to the sitra achra are orbited by a cluster of symbols (see generally Green 2004, 118–20) including fallen angels, Satan and the female temptress Lilith, the female aspect, impurity, sin, the Serpent that tries to rape/seduce and impregnate the Shekhinah (thus contaminating the non-Jewish souls she births into the world), and the fiery dross or excess of the sefirah of Gevurah, untempered by the balancing power of the male Chesed. Various kabbalistic tracts describe the impurity of Gentiles because of their cosmic root in this demonic world, for example: “With respect to the other idolatrous nations, they are impure when they are alive, for their souls are from the side of impurity… Therefore, he who is conjoined to a woman from the other idolatrous nations is impure, and the child born to him will receive upon himself the spirit of impurity” (Zohar I:131b). Zohar I:55a states that of the sons of Noah, only Seth (father of the Jewish lineage) was truly in the image of

23 See the following discussion on the sitra achra, the “other side.”
24 On the rabbinic roots of this idea, see too Wolfson (2009, 233–5, 356 note 65 and 66).
Adam. Cain and Abel had both been tainted by the slime of the Serpent that copulated with Eve, and the issue of Cain and Abel was thus impure.

The Zohar’s polemics against the idolatrous “other side” are not restricted to non-monotheistic religions. The other Abrahamic faiths are likewise identified with the impure and demonic. Zoharic literature frequently demonizes Christians and Muslims (Wolfson 2006, 25; 90–107; 130–65), through the symbolic proxies of Esau and Ishmael, respectively, to avoid the wrath of the Catholic censors (Green 2004, 86–98). Green characterizes the Zohar as “filled with disdain and sometimes even outright hatred for the Gentile world. … [It] pours endless heaps of wrath and malediction on Israel’s enemies. In the context of biblical commentary, these are always such ancient figures as Esau, Pharaoh, Amalek, Balaam, and the mixed multitude [erev rav] of runaway slaves who left Egypt with Israel, a group treated by the Zohar with special venom... [but] it does not take much imagination to realize that the true addressee of this resentment was the oppressor in whose midst the authors lived” (Green 2004, 88).

In contemporary times, scholars have offered various apologetics explaining, though not condoning, the Zohar's dehumanization of Gentiles. The most common starting point is the historical context of Christian persecution of Jews and its own attendant corpus of polemical literature attacking the Jewish character (see generally Katz 1971; also Wolfson 2006, 45–6). Green points out that “this was also the era when the Christian image of the Jew as magician and devil-worshipper was first becoming rampant” (Green 2004, 88). He attributes the Zohar’s polemical tone regarding Gentiles to the context of the Reconquista of Spain (pp. 86–98): a muscular and proud Christianity was exerting pressure on Spanish Jews to convert—and many Jews found conversion an appealing prospect, given their lowly state in the new regime, to the rabbis’ chagrin. This context produced, Green argues, an elaborate response in the Zohar, comprising a passionate defense of the superiority of the Jewish faith coupled with demonization of the alternative (the Kuzari is a similar instance of this pattern). The Zohar was typical of a “sharpening of the polemical tone” in many European Jewish sources from the 12th and 13th centuries, indicating it was part of the broader communal response to Christian campaigns to dehumanize, convert, or purge Jews at that time (Wolfson 2006, 45–6).
Next, not all passages in the Zohar are so unequivocally negative about Gentiles. Zohar I:13a states that “the right wing of the Shekhinah stretches out over converts [to Judaism] to touch two nations that are close in their unification [of God] to Israel,” presumably the nations of Esau and Ishmael (Wolfson 2006, 135). Hallamish identifies passages in medieval kabbalistic works (including some in the Zohar) that discuss righteous Gentiles positively and speak of a divine reward for them in the afterlife (Hallamish 1998, 298), as well as ethical treatises written by kabbalists that mandate kind treatment of non-Jews (pp. 304–5).

Further, the Zohar was not the only text of Kabbalah, though it has come to dominate the tradition, and one can find more universalistic approaches outside the zoharic corpus. The Castillian kabbalists who produced the Zohar were “attracted to Gnostic traditions… [and] concentrated on the Gnostic and mythological element rather than on the philosophical” (Scholem 1974, 55; see too Liebes 1993, 16–7; Green 2004, 24–6); hence its fascination with the demonology of the sitra achra. By contrast, the pre-zoharic Geronese school had a greater affinity with monistic Neoplatonist ideas and did not describe this sort of angel–demon duality between the souls of Jews and Gentiles: for the Gerona school, all of humanity had a human soul (Hallamish 1999, 267). 25 This school was more philosophically oriented, and adopted a monistic interpretation of evil whereby all things in creation were ultimately devised by God to serve the greater good. The influence of such thinking is profoundly evident in the writings of Rabbi Avraham Kook, as elucidated in Chapter 3.

As one example of such alternative modes of kabbalistic understanding, we can point to the halakhist and kabbalist Moshe ben Nachman (Nachmanides), who was a leading authority of the Gerona school (see Scholem 1964, 365–475; Idel 1995, 535–7; Green 2004, 22) and has been described as “perhaps the most widely respected Jewish intellectual figure of the thirteenth century … [and the] most important personage associated with the early dissemination of kabbalistic secrets” (Green 2004, 22; see too Scholem 1974, 50). His stance on the metaphysical status of Jews and Gentiles is universalistic and egalitarian compared with the attitudes of most zoharic kabbalists

25 Why did the Zohar’s scheme supplant this tradition? One scholar suggests that the “fascination with both the demonic and the sexual that characterizes their work lent to Kabbalah a dangerous and close-to-forbidden edge that undoubtedly served to make it more attractive, both in its own day and throughout later generations” (Green 2004, 26).
(Goodman 2004, 459). He rejects the common talmudic saying that even when Gentiles appear to perform a *mitzvah* or act with grace, they are really sinning and furthering their own interests under the guise of doing good; he argued instead in favor of Gentiles’ genuine moral motives (pp. 465–6). He considered humanity *per se* the purpose of creation, rather than just the Jews, and supposed that God desired all intelligent beings to know their creator (p. 470). The election of Israel (i.e., the status of Jews as the Chosen People) arose, in Nachmanides’ view, not from God’s special love for Israel (or its for Him), but from the rejection of God’s law by the nations: the Chosen People were the only ones left to choose after the other nations rejected the Torah (p. 471; see, e.g., Nachmanides’ *Mishneh Torah on Devarim* 4:32–34 and 32:26).

Nachmanides’ perception of Jewish holiness is contingent on their holy thought and holy practice (see, e.g., Schreiber 2011, 33–4): namely, a focus on divine matters, abstinence from preoccupation with the bog of worldly trivia and/or pleasures of the flesh, and cleaving to God and His Torah. This emphasis on holy thought and deed leads Jews to have a special status; it is not an inborn trait. While for Halevi (see below) and the *Zohar*, Jews’ link to the divine is hereditary and innate, for Nachmanides, it is grounded in holy ritual practice (see especially Goodman 2004, 469–73), resting on the performance of *mitzvot* and the effect of this practice on the divine spheres. “To Ramban, all *mitzvot* have a transcendent effect in the spiritual world, and by performing them, men partake in the divine” (Pinchot 1999, 25; see too Henoch 1998, 23–4). As only Jews fulfill all 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah (as opposed to merely the seven Noachide commandments common to all nations), they enjoy the closest link with the divine. Thus, it is only in their higher level of observance of Torah that Jews are superior to Gentiles (Goodman 2004, 476; Henoch 1998, 25). Nachmanides was not the only kabbalist to espouse this view (see Hallamish 1998, 294, 297–8).

However, this is a minority stream. Eisen (2011, 129–139) engages in an academic exercise of trying to argue that the Kabbalah promotes peace and harmony with Gentiles (before repeating this exercise for the opposing side of the debate), and does find some evidence for this view. However, he concludes: “Negative portrayals of non-Jews are

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26 Even those not expressly forbidden; on this, see generally Schreiber (2011).

27 Note, however, that Nachmanides emphasizes the common root in divine revelation of the Torah and the seven Noachide commandments, and holds the latter in tremendous respect. Further, he argues the distinction will be erased in the fullness of history when divine harmony is restored on earth; see Goodman (2004, 473–6).
too much a part of the fabric of classical Kabbalah to be swept aside” (Eisen 2011, 138). This conclusion is borne out in the exhaustive analysis by Wolfson (2006).

**Eretz Yisrael in Kabbalah**

The ideas herein underpin the issue at the heart of contemporary religious Zionist discourse. The Zohar (III:221b) calls Eretz Yisrael the “heart” of all lands. The kabbalists understood the Holy Land, and Jerusalem at its center, to have both supernal and worldly existence (Idel 1986, 172–3): the Temple above parallels the Temple below (Henoch 1998, 122). Nachmanides views the Land as “corresponding to a supernal divine power and being directly influenced by it” (Idel 1986, 178). He wrote in a Rosh Ha-Shanah sermon:28 “the land of Israel is the nub of the world, the Almighty’s very personal and private estate, that He manages directly [sic]. He appointed over it no heavenly custodian, no officer nor governor when He did bequeath it to the people who proclaim the unity of His Name, His darling seed” (trans. Newman 1968, 21; on God’s direct governorship of Israel, see too Henoch 1998, 123–5). Eretz Yisrael (and its Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the center of the center) is the geographic parallel of Malkhut (just as the Jewish people are its national parallel), and thus it is the physical site of the nexus and channel between the divine emanations and the material plane (Idel 1986, 177–8). Eretz Yisrael thus also represents the divine feminine, the Shekhinah (p. 174). As the Torah is associated in Kabbalah with the masculine Tiferet, fulfilling the Torah’s mitzvot in Eretz Yisrael has theurgic efficacy unparalleled by other lands (e.g., Zohar I:84; see Idel 1986, 176). Nachmanides also attaches special prophetic potential to the Land of Israel, writing that the nations of the earth will be blessed through Jewish prophecy, which can emerge only in the Promised Land (Mishneh Torah on Deuteronomy 11:1).

Medieval Kabbalah’s identification of the Land with the sacred feminine charges the matter of settlement and sovereignty with sexual imagery—a pattern that extends from medieval sources to the present day. For instance, Zohar II:23 and II:26 assert that only the circumcised righteous Jew can inherit the Land. The simple reading is that the Land was promised to Jews (according to the covenant between God and Abraham), and Jews can be identified by the brit (the covenant, also the word for circumcision). However, Idel unpacks the implications of the symbolism for the sexual drama of the sefirot: “The

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28 This sermon serves as a useful condensation of ideas distributed passim throughout his Mishneh Torah.
Land here symbolizes the female power (*Malkhut*) in the divine realm, which is ‘possessed’ by the male power (*Tiferet*) by means of the ‘righteous’ (*Zaddik*) who is at the same time the ‘sign of the covenant’ (*brit*), that is, the phallic principle of *Yesod*’ (Idel 1986, 174). Hence, righteous Jews “dwelling in the Land of Israel imitate the ‘possession’ of the upper Land by the divine male in the Pleroma” (p. 175) and so participate in the inner workings of the Godhead (p. 176). As noted, such ideas are given political interpretations by rabbis such as Ginsburgh (see Chapter 7).

Among kabbalistic discussions of *Eretz Yisrael*, Nachmanides’ thought on the Land and its interdependence with the Jewish people seems to reverberate throughout Avraham Kook’s writings on the subject, although the latter does not explicitly cite Nachmanides as their source. I will therefore describe his views in some detail.

Nachmanides’ teachings blur the uniqueness of *Am Yisrael* (the Jewish People) into that of *Eretz Yisrael*; he taught that the holiness of *Am Yisrael* stemmed from living in *Eretz Yisrael* (Goodman 2004, 471–2), rather than some separate Jewish spiritual essence that stood above or prior to the sanctity conferred by their connection to the Promised Land. For Nachmanides, living in the Land brings any individual, Jew or Gentile, closer to the Divine, conferring great influence over divine providence for either good or ill (p. 460).

Jews’ purpose of harmonizing the *sefirot* can be realized only within the borders of *Eretz Yisrael*, he argues, as only here can the Torah be followed in full (see Idel 1986, 178). As discussed previously, for Nachmanides, Jews’ special status is contingent on their fulfillment of *mitzvot*, and many of the 613 commandments relate specifically to Temple worship, agriculture, and the management of property and government in the Land of Israel under Jewish sovereignty. Furthermore, he claims that all the *mitzvot* embody vital metaphysical energy only when performed in *Eretz Yisrael*. Outside its borders, Jews’ status and supernal function as the Chosen People, a Holy People (*Am Segulah*; see Goodman 2004, 460), remain merely potential, and Jews cannot serve in harmonizing the *sefirot*.30 (This view was taken up by lurianic kabbalists based in Safed.

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29 For example, Nachmanides notes that Gentile kings in the time of the patriarchs such as Malki Tzedek used the Temple as a site of worship (*Mishneh Torah on Genesis* 14:18).

30 This is the dominant reading in scholarship; however, Goodman (2004, 461–78) delivers an alternative reading that attempts to restore Jewish particularism to Nachmanides’ theosophy, e.g., referring to passages in Nachmanides’ *Mishneh Torah* which suggest that Israel’s (prior) specialness was what justified God’s gifting of *Eretz Yisrael* to them (e.g., *Mishneh Torah on Leviticus* 18:25: מפני שהם מיוחדים לשמו, בעבור כן נתן להם את הארץ’.)*
in what was then Ottoman Palestine, who held that Israel’s prayers only effected a supernal union of the sefirot in Eretz Yisrael.)

Thus, Nachmanides perceives the land as imbued with an innate holy quality, and it is the spiritual potency vested in the very soil of Eretz Yisrael that enables the theurgic function of mitzvot. This view runs opposite to the stance of Nachmanides’ contemporary (and, on some halakhic matters, his archrival), Moshe Ben Maimon, or Maimonides. The latter interpreted the commandments as serving rational functions in society rather than mystical processes. He reasoned that living in the Land was important only because it was a prerequisite for a full halakhic lifestyle, as many of the 613 mitzvot related specifically to practices concerning land use and the Temple. The important thing was the mitzvot themselves. Nachmanides’ mysticism presents the contrary “thesis … that none of the laws of Judaism have any intrinsic validity outside Eretz Yisrael… all the mitzvot were tied to the Land!” (Newman 1968, 24). In Nachmanides’ Kabbalah, the special status of the Torah itself depends on Eretz Yisrael, outside of which the entire Torah and its mitzvot are emptied of metaphysical meaning and potency (Goodman 2004, 460; Henoch 1999, 124–5).31 Indeed, observance of commandments in the Diaspora is mere practice for return to the Land—a sort of insurance policy against forgetfulness (Henoch 1998, 124–5).

This has two key implications. First, it drastically increases the normative importance of living in Eretz Yisrael in order to follow an authentic Jewish life in full obedience to God’s commandments. Indeed, the special closeness of Am Yisrael to God, based on this fulfillment of mitzvot, is nullified outside the Land. In a maximalist reading, even the fundamental covenant between God and the Jews is contingent on Eretz Yisrael: “a Jew who lives outside the land of Israel is regarded as living without God. He is no longer under His direct rule. By returning to Israel he returns to the domain of God. This idea is substantiated by the text ‘To give you the land of Canaan, however, despite some indications that in Nachmanides’ thought that the Shekhinah dwells within Am Yisrael as much as Eretz Yisrael, the marriage of the two is required for full realization of the kabbalistic role of both the people and the land in the task of tikkun (p. 465). I think the analysis does not succeed fully in extricating Jews’ role in reuniting the spheres from their fulfillment of mitzvot, which—according to most readings of Nachmanides—appears to be contingent on their presence in Eretz Yisrael.

31 For example, in Mishneh Torah on Genesis 26:5, Nachmanides writes that Abraham’s halakhic “observance was restricted to the confines of the Holy Land. Jacob and likewise Amram married two sisters only outside the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael. The commandments are the laws of the God of the land, and this is the case, in spite of the fact that duties applying to the person (chovot hagui, such as the prohibition of marrying two sisters) are binding everywhere” (see too Henoch 1998, 123).
to be your God’ and the rabbinic comment: ‘So long as you live in the land of Canaan, I shall be your God; when you are no longer there, I am, as it were, no longer your God’” (Newman 1968, 27). Thus, in Nachmanidean metaphysics, outside Eretz Yisrael, Am Yisrael loses not only the theurgical import of its Torah but also its entire covenant with God and its holy chosen status; its segulah (Goodman 2004, 460; Henoch 118).

Even worse, from a metaphysical standpoint, Jewish absence from the Holy Land reduces God’s presence in the worldly plane: “‘so long as [the People of] Israel occupies it [the Land of Israel], the earth is regarded as subject to Him; when they are not in occupation, the earth is not subject to Him.’ Israel’s absence from Eretz Yisrael diminishes or detracts from God’s sovereignty over the world” (Newman 1968, 28; the quote is from Nachmanides’ Mishneh Torah on Genesis 19:5). Newman describes this as unification of the national ideal with the religious ideal—a paradigm that reappears with astonishing vigor and theosophical detail in the teachings of Avraham Kook.³³

**Lurianic Kabbalah: Broken vessels, holy sparks**

Another key strand is the cosmogeny and eschatology of lurianic Kabbalah. Scholem argues that the golden-age Kabbalah of the 12th and 13th centuries in Provence and Spain (to which the Zohar and Nachmanides belonged) was in the main an elite, theosophical pursuit by an obscure minority of esoterics, whose “mystical meditations … on theogony and cosmogony … produced a non-Messianic and individualistic mode of redemption or salvation” (Scholem 1961[1941], 245) grounded in contemplation of the Torah, rather than any sort of collective messianist movement. For instance, Zohar 1:4b–5a and 1:8b–9a describe how the world can be repaired through conducting discourse on the Torah: a “new word” (i.e., insight) of Torah flies to the crown of the everlasting (Keter) and thus becomes part of the cosmic firmament, which then flows down to re-impregnate the mundane world (see Liebes 1993, 56).

This character, Scholem argues, underwent a radical transformation with the Jews’ expulsion from Spain in 1492, which he claimed precipitated a muscularization of the hitherto “mild aspect” of theurgic practice along more apocalyptic lines as a mechanism

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³² יִלְוֹן שָאָמָה מִאָרִי מִנָּנוּ תַדְיָה לְבָבָּם לְעָלָלָם. יֵאָמָה מִאָרִי מִנָּנוּ בֵּכיָּל יֵאָמָה לְעָלָלָם.

³³ This theosophical link between Jewish control over Eretz Yisrael and the manifestation of the divine on earth is taken up and (grossly) amplified in the teachings of rabbis Meir Kahane and Yitzchak Ginsburgh and their followers, with a focus on sanctification of God’s name on earth through Jewish subjugation of Gentiles, particularly the alleged Arab descendants of the ancient Canaanites (see too Carmy 2006, 67).
for hastening the messianic era. This paralleled an increased emphasis on the theurgic (practical) dimension of Kabbalah over the contemplative, with the hastening of messianic redemption as the mystics’ primary goal. The intellectual and spiritual context for this was the post-expulsion publication of a vast apocalyptic literature attempting to cope with an experience seemingly proving Jewish helplessness and the absence of God’s power by reframing such events as evidence of special divine status and the manifestation of God’s power: the “birthpangs” of the messianic era. (A like pattern was noted in the works of religious Zionist thinkers after the Holocaust in the main text.)

The post-expulsion intellectual milieu seeded and molded a “new Kabbalah” via the “Community of the Devout” in Safed (Scholem 1961[1941], 246–7). Among the Safed kabbalists, attempts to hasten redemption through earthly acts “not rarely took on a social or even quasi-political character” (p. 250). They held that full tikkun depended on the complete return of the Jewish People to Eretz Yisrael; without which “the Divine Pleroma fails to reach its supreme and perfect status” (Idel 1986, 176).

The charismatic kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria, “the Ari,” taught in Safed in the 16th century, and is considered the leader of that school. His interpretations and extensions of zoharic Kabbalah have themselves become part of the Jewish esoteric canon. The two revolutionary concepts of lurianic Kabbalah most crucial for this thesis are the doctrines of shevirat ha-keilim and his overtly messianist conceptualization of tikkun.

The term shevirat ha-keilim (the breaking of the vessels; see Fine 2003, 134–8; Sherwin 2006, 71; Scholem 1971, 45–7; 1974, 135–44) refers to a lurianic creation myth. “Vessels” or “bowls” (keilim) were required to contain the lights of divine emanation into the void (which God created within Godself to form space for the creation); these vessels were intended to house the sefirotic lights in order to yield differentiated and finite beings from God’s boundlessness. The vessels for the lowest six sefirot were shattered when they were flooded by the divine self-emanation (see Fine 2003, 134–5). This shattering of the vessels allowed evil to take on a real and separate

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34 Note that Idel (2010, 133–58) presents an alternative thesis regarding the evolution of Kabbalah, rejecting Scholem’s attribution of the messianic shift to the expulsion from Spain.

35 He lived there for only a few years.

36 NB: Despite his prodigious intellectual and mystical thought, he wrote little. Almost all of what we know of his teachings is based on the accounts of disciples (see Fine 2003, 124–5; Scholem 1961[1941], 253–5).

37 This is the doctrine of tzimzum, properly seen as a continuous (rather than one-off) process akin to exhalation and inhalation; see Sherwin (2006, 70); Fine (2003, 128–31).

38 In one interpretation, evil is thought to originate from one aspect of the lingering residue or imprint, reshimu,
existence through the vessels’ broken shells or husks, the *kelipot*, which are associated in Kabbalah with impurity and the *sitra achra*. With this breaking, “[m]uch of the light returns to its source [in the *sefirot*], but some … remains trapped in the shards of the broken vessels. The presence of sparks (*netzotzot*) of the divine influx in the shards, shells, or husks (*kelipot*), sustains them with their divine vitality” (Sherwin 2006, 71; see too Fine 2003, 135). In other words, evil and the impure owe their survival to the divine sparks of the holy imprisoned within them, for all things must ultimately stem from the One God—even evil.

The light trapped within the shells, unable to return to its holy source, is identified with the *Shekhinah*, seeking to return to the higher male essence of God. Many interpreters of lurianic Kabbalah thus trace the root of evil in our world to the *kelipot* of the shattered vessels, and see *shevirat ha-keilim* as the moment of metaphysical unbalancing of both transcendent and existent reality, at the root of all that is unsatisfactory in the created universe: “it is the cause of that inner deficiency which is inherent in everything that exists and which persists as long as the damage is not mended. … Conversely the restoration of the ideal order [*tikkun*], which forms the original aim of creation, is also the secret purpose of existence” (Scholem 1961[1941], 268). Lurianic Kabbalah holds that Adam, the first human, could have completed this *tikkun*, but instead he sinned, causing a new breaking and dispersal of the lights of his own primordial soul throughout the world (Scholem 1971, 45–5).

This mystical theosophy frames Luria’s prescriptions for Jewish conduct in order to realize *tikkun*. In lurianic Kabbalah, sin thickens the *kelipot*, while virtuous acts—most saliently fulfilling *mitzvot* and Torah study, accompanied by appropriate mystical intentions, *kavanot*, which Luria expounded on in intricate technical detail—assist the...
liberation of the Shekhinah by thinning the kelipot (Sherwin 2006, 75). The personal work of the soul is to separate the holy/pure from the unclean/pure (free the sparks from the shells), thus reestablishing the order that was disrupted by the breaking of the vessels and the sin of Adam (Scholem 1971, 46; 1974, 164–8), and reconstituting the primordial soul in purified form (Hallamish 1999, 213–4). As in zoharic Kabbalah, this process is also envisaged symbolically as reuniting the sacred feminine and masculine (Fine 2003, 187; Scholem 1961[1941], 275). The imagery of shevirat ha-keilim and the elevation of the sparks has become ubiquitous in Jewish discourse, and in some interpretations acquires unusual political connotations with regard to the status of settlements and, in particular, the mixing of Jewish and Gentile populations in Eretz Yisrael in the present day, which for thinkers like Ginsburgh represents the mixing of holy sparks and impure shells (see Chapter 7).

In addition to this framework, a key contribution of lurianic Kabbalah was its linking of tikkun with the goal of the physical, worldly manifestation of the messianic era. This is crucial for understanding Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s messianic interpretation of the 1967 War and the religious ideology that gave such powerful impetus to the founders of Gush Emunim. It is also crucial to understanding Ginsburgh’s logic.

The term Moshiach (messiah) first appears in the Hebrew Bible, in association with the anointing of priests. It came to be associated with political and military leadership, and during the exile after the fall of the first Jewish commonwealth, Jews began to pray for Moshiach, imagined as a powerful priest-king, to redeem the people of Israel and return them to their homeland. Later prophets tied this idea to other apocalyptic predictions, including the ingathering of the exiles (the ten lost tribes of Israel) and other magical portents of the End of Days. Scholem notes that “Classical Jewish tradition is fond of emphasizing the catastrophic strain in redemption” (see, e.g., Bavli Sanhedrin 10) and that “hopes for redemption always show a very strong nationalistic bent,” framing messianic redemption as the “crowning event in the national and communal saga” (Scholem 1971, 38).

In contrast to the idea of Moshiach as a historical, human priest-king, the early kabbalists shifted the focus “from the military and concrete and toward the mystical and

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41 See too the lurianic doctrine of the partzufim or faces of God (Fine 2003, 138–41; Sherwin 2006, 75; Scholem 1961[1941], 269–71).
42 The treatment in this paragraph is drawn from Goldish (2011,115–117).
spiritual” (Goldish 2011, 117). They focused on individual redemption through a “path of inwardness” (Scholem 1971, 38–9). Their imagined messianic era also featured a decline of Gentile power and return to the Promised Land, but chiefly emphasized a revelation of the “true interpretation,” i.e., mystic meaning, of the Torah to all on Earth, and reunification of the sefirot. Thus, “a mystic utopia takes the place of the national and secular utopia of the early writers” (Scholem 1971, 40). Moreover, this state would be effected gradually through personal contemplation and self-rectification, particularly “individual mystical prayer” (Sholem 1974, 176–8). The zoharic corpus teaches that one must not to try to hasten the coming of the messiah; instead, the pious Jew should focus on tikkun hanefesh, i.e., mending one’s own soul (Sherwin 2006, 211). Green (2004, 152–53) states unequivocally that the Zohar is not a messianic work in the cataclysmic and political sense characteristic of earlier Jewish literature, despite the Zohar’s inclusion of some apocalyptic passages.

For Luria, however, it behooves Jews to spur on the messianic age, not just through cosmic rectification but also through mundane history. No personal messiah will bring redemption; instead, the messiah will come as the result of redemption, once the process of tikkun is completed in heaven and on earth. Moshiach thus “symbolizes the advent of redemption, the completion of the task of emendation” (Scholem 1971, 48). Lurianic Kabbalah is infused with acutely messianic intent, calling upon righteous Jews to consciously promote the advent of redemption through participation in tikkun:

“[I]t is man who adds the final touch to the divine countenance; it is he who completes the enthronement of God, the King and the mystical Creator of all things, in His own Kingdom of Heaven; it is he who perfects the Maker of all things! … The intrinsic, extramundane process of Tikkun, symbolically described as the birth of God’s personality, corresponds to the process of mundane history. The historical process and its innermost soul, the religious act of the Jew, prepare the way for the final restitution of all the scattered and exiled lights and sparks. The Jew who is in close contact with the divine life though the Torah, the fulfilment of the commandments, and through prayer, has it in his power to accelerate or hinder this process. … It follows from this that for Luria the appearance of the Messiah is nothing but the consummation of the continuous process of Restoration, of Tikkun” (Scholem 1961[1941], 274).
This approach to *tikkun* contained a fine tension between practical activity and theoretical speculations, which became incendiary when conjoined with acute messianic expectation; this potential broke out in the Sabbatean episode (a messianic movement in the 17th century; Scholem 1974, 75–6).

Rabbi Kook’s ideas would have been impossible without this basis. His radical interpretation of modern Zionism as evidence of the dawning of the messianic age and his calls for vigorous Jewish settlement of *Eretz Yisrael* as a means to hasten it are built on the zoharic and lurianic foundation that views Jews’ earthly acts as having theurgic effect—even to the point that the arrival of the messiah should and must be pre-empted. As will become clear shortly, there are strong resonances between these ideas and the *Kuzari*’s notion of Jewish history as a form of divine revelation on the mundane plane.

**Judah Halevi and the *Kuzari***

**Jews and the Divine: Exclusivity and intimacy**

The notions outlined above (Jews’ special nature and unique role in metaphysics) receive an additional contribution from Halevi’s *Kuzari*, which is a vital link in Avraham Kook’s historiosophy because it asserts that Jews’ divine function plays out not just on the individual level but also on the collective, historical level. Jewish history, for Halevi, was nothing less than divine revelation. Halevi grounded this understanding in Jews’ ontological uniqueness and exclusive intimacy with the divine, enabling them to embody the divine and reveal it to the world through their lived historical experience, not just religious teachings.

Halevi insists “that they [Jews] are distinct from and superior to all other peoples, and that this distinction is caused by a special [divine] characteristic, unique to the Jews, [*inyan elohei* in Hebrew; *amr ilahi* in the original Arabic,43 often translated as ‘divine order’ or ‘divine influence’] literally passed on from generation to generation [by the holy seed]” (Kellner 1991, 4; see too Jospe 1997, 114–5; Katz 1975, 69; Lobel 1999, 117–121; for a lengthy analysis of the *inyan elohei* concept, see H. Wolfson 1942). In addition to the biological transmission of the *inyan elohei* from generation to generation,

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43 The original text was is in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written with Hebrew letters) and uses a great deal of language originally corresponding to Sufi concepts (see generally Lobel 2000).
Halevi uses the (Arabic) term *machall* (dwelling place) to designate the status of Jews as the earthly dwelling place of the *Shekhinah* (see, e.g., *Kuzari* III:65, III:22, II:14).  

For Halevi, *Am Yisrael* was intrinsically holy before the giving of the Torah (i.e., as in zoharic and lurianic Kabbalah, its holiness is an innate property rather than a consequence of higher spiritual learning). Indeed, God had no choice but to give the Torah to Israel, as only they were biologically and metaphysically capable of receiving it: “it is not the Torah that makes the Jewish people possible, but the Jewish people who make the Torah possible” (Jospe 2008[1980], 23). Halevi holds that God revealed the Torah to Jews because of their innate prior prophetic capacity (Bodoff 2005, 384); this is a key pillar in his particularistic argument for the truth of Judaism over other faiths, a truth tied to the Chosen People specifically rather than a rational, ‘provable’ philosophy for universal human consumption and acceptance (cf. *Kuzari* I:12).

Accordingly, the *Kuzari*’s God is not the abstract creator of the universe but rather the familiar and familial God of the patriarchs, Moses, and their descendants, experienced directly and immanently by Jews rather than accessed rationally through the study of religious concepts (*Kuzari* I:11, 25–7, 83–4, and 87; Kogan 2003, 117). He is no universal benefactor or depersonalized philosophical “cause of causes.” The Jewish People enjoy an immediate and intimate relationship with God Himself. The *Kuzari* appropriates Sufi and philosophical terms for union to depict “a concrete, mutual, covenantal relationship, both individual and communal” between Israel and God; “[u]sing Sufi language of passionate love and service, Ha-Levi depicts Abraham as the ultimate knower, lover, and servant of God” (Lobel 2000, 4). The intimate, visceral character of this relationship implies the particularism of Jewish Truth: “God and the Jewish religion are not simply facts to be known and understood like the laws of science. They are living entities to be acquainted with, to be devoted to, to love. … The method of acquaintance is open only to those who by birth and tradition belong to the family of the prophets, who had a personal knowledge of God, and to the land of Palestine where God revealed himself” (Husik 1916, 152).

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44 This notion was adopted by Nachmanides; see Lobel (1999).

45 Note that some argue that both particularistic and universal elements are present in his work (e.g., Frank et al. 2000, 202–3); however, using Maimonides or the like as a point of comparison, particularism is clearly a more apt characterization of Halevi’s attitudes.

46 For a contrary reading of Halevi’s works (emphasizing instead the link between the essence of Judaism and observance of the commandments), see Silman (1995, 275–88).

47 On this tension between the particular and universal, see Sirat (1985, 117).
He thus sees Judaism as an experiential state, comprising immediate and historical “lived experience and the unique relationships that inspire trust and loyalty,” rather than a collection of ideas or “reasoned conviction” (Kogan 2003, 117; see too Epstein 1935; Katz 1975, 67; Silman 1995, 253–73). Indeed, Halevi’s central conception of the Jewish religion was as the historical experience of the Jewish people through the ages: the miracles they experienced, the public revelation at Sinai, the conquest of the Promised Land (Kuzari I:11, trans. Shear 2008, x). Halevi thus situated the locus of divine revelation in Jewish history, implying Jewish history’s central role in a revelatory epistemology. This is consistent with Halevi’s broader philosophy of religious reason (see Husik 1916, 150–2). His works have been characterized as offering a Jewish nationalist defense against the attacks of external philosophies. While not opposed to logic, mathematics, or reason generally, Halevi argues that they do not suffice for grasping the ineffable divine (Frank et al. 2000, 202; Jospe 1997, 115–7)—that is, the revelatory epistemology offered through Jewish historical embodiment of the divine is superior to all other modes of religious knowing and knowledge.

Consistent with this, for Halevi, only Jews have an intrinsic drive toward prophecy (Katz 1975, 66 and 68), and this is by direct inheritance, as only they are descended from Adam through Seth, Enosh, Noah, the patriarchs, and the twelve tribes (Kuzari I:95), who were

“… the select few that worthyly succeeded Adam as the heart of the family to the exclusion of the other members, who are as the peel, until in the sons of Jacob all twelve were worthy, and from them Israel is descended. These

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48 This emphasis on the immanent and experiential is typical of the context of 11th- and 12th-century Spain—see Fenton (2003), Lobel (2000, 1999), and Kraemer (2003).
49 C.f. Maimonides, for whom philosophy and Judaism were internalized friends and rivals (Husik 1916, 153), and who argued that Judaism contained truths of universal value to the human race, accessible to all people of sufficient intellectual growth regardless of their birth.
50 Kogan (2003, 111); “Rather, its [the Kuzari’s] theological defense of Judaism is deeply informed by philosophy and respectful of both its integrity and its methods.” See too Jospe (1997, 119–123) and Katz (1975, 68). Compare, however, Sirat (1985, 117) and Katz (1975, 65) on Halevi’s rejection of especially Aristotelian philosophy. Perhaps “ambivalence” (Frank et al. 2000, 201) best characterizes Halevi’s relationship with philosophy: see, e.g., Kuzari I:65–7; see generally Epstein (1935). However, he is certainly more critical of philosophical logic and the sciences than was Maimonides: compare, e.g., Guide for the Perplexed III:51 and especially the Guide’s dedicatory letter to Maimonides’ student, R. Joseph Ibn Aknin. On Maimonides’ engagement with the philosophical canon of his time, see generally Davidson (2011); for comparison of Halevi and Maimonides’ relationship with Hellenistic philosophy, see H. Wolfson (1912).
51 Consistent with this, Halevi “denied that Jewish distinctiveness could be associated with ethics or rationality, which must be universal… That which makes Israel unique among the nations is … neither rational nor ethical, but divine” (Jospe 2008[1980], 23).
remarkable men had divine qualities which made them a different species from ordinary men. … We do not exclude anyone from the reward due him for his good works, but we give preference to those who are near to God... Outsiders too may attain to the grade of wise and pious men, but they cannot become equal to us and be prophets” (Kuzari as paraphrased by Husik 1916, 164).

Other nations can approach God “only through the intermediacy of Israel,” just as ordinary people require the prophets’ mediation to access divine truth (Katz 1975, 68). Through their unique prophetic gifts, Jews constitute a bridge between the divine and worldly domains. Members of other religions are ontologically inferior (by descent), and while converts to Judaism represent an improvement over Gentiles per se, even they cannot attain equal prophetic status to Jews (Bodoff 2005, 375; see especially Lasker 1990). Thus, the separation between Jews and Gentiles is one of kind rather than degree. Jews differ from Gentiles because of “a special divine distinctiveness, which made them as though they were a different species and a different, even angelic substance” (Kuzari I:103, trans. Kogan 2003, 129). Husik elaborates: “As the plant is distinguished from the mineral, the animal from the plant, and man from the irrational animal, so is the prophetic individual distinguished above other men. He constitutes a higher species” (Husik 1916, 156). This has at best racialist, and at worst racist, implications (see especially Bodoff 2005, 374–387; see too Afterman 2007, 34; Dover 1956, 320–1; Jospe 2008[1980], 23; Jospe 1997, 117–8; Kogan 2003, 130). Many passages in the Kuzari are suggestive of “aggravated nationalism” or “racialism” (Dover 1956, 318). For example:

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52 The notion that only Jews can experience God directly appears in many streams of Jewish literature; see Wolfson (1994, 13–51).
53 “To adopt a brilliant and amusing metaphor of Daniel J. Lasker’s, just as IBM PC clones may run the same software as original IBM hardware, but are still not the ‘real thing’; so, too, converts may believe what native Jews believe, and act as they do (software), they are still not the same as native Jews (hardware)” (Kellner 1991, 5).
54 Scholars give various arguments against interpreting this as straightforward racism. For instance, the harsh denigration of non-monotheistic faiths in the Kuzari (e.g., Halevi wrote of Indian Hindus that “they are a dissolute, unreliable people, and arouse the indignation of the followers of religions through their talk, whilst they anger them with their idols, talismans, and witchcraft”; Kuzari I:61) is drawn from opinions and interpretations ubiquitous in Halevi’s intellectual milieu (Dover 1956, 317). Dover (1956) similarly contextualizes Halevi’s poetry in Jews’ minority status and persecution: “it is minority poetry at its early best. And like other minority poetry, … it is most effective when it expresses protest and national feelings. These are so dominant [in Halevi’s poetry] that they exclude another characteristic of minority literature—the theme of universality” (pp. 312–3). Further, the dialogic format, in which the king challenges the sage, contributes to this defensive claim for Jewish pre-eminence (for instance, he responds to the king’s charge that Jews are rebellious with an argument for their intrinsic nobility as the chosen people; Kogan 2003, 129). Other arguments can be
“[A]ny Gentile who joins us unconditionally shares our good fortune, without, however, being quite equal to us. If the Law were binding on us only because God created us, the white and the black man would be equal, since He created them all. But the Law was given to us because He led us out of Egypt, and remained attached to us, because we are the pick of mankind” (*Kuzari* I:27).

Halevi’s poetic works also lend support to assessments of nationalism and racism (see, e.g., Dover 1956, 313–4), though there is not scope to discuss them here.

**Eretz Yisrael in the Kuzari**

The *Kuzari*’s essentialist conception of holiness continues in its discussions of the status of *Eretz Yisrael* (and its relationship to *Am Yisrael*; see generally Afterman 2007, 48–77; Kogan 2003, 131–2; Silman 1995, 153–8). Just as *Am Yisrael* is the only nation capable of prophecy, *Eretz Yisrael* is the only place where prophecy can be received (Epstein 1935, 218). Halevi holds that all prophecy arose either in the Land of Israel or because of it (*Kuzari* II:10–14)—and then only by Jews, and only in Hebrew (Katz 1975, 62 and 66). Indeed, for Halevi, these two earthly vessels of holiness, *Am* and *Eretz Yisrael*, intertwine to enable prophecy: “The divine influence present in the Land of Israel conjoins with the inborn divine influence of the native-born People of Israel to produce the possibility of prophecy” (Lasker 1990, 82).55

The Land’s prophetic capacity, as with that of the Jews, is essential and embodied; in this case it stems from Israel’s innate spiritual climate, which cultivates spiritual perfection just as the physical climate is suited to the cultivation of figs and olives. *Eretz Yisrael* “has a special power in its air, reinforced by its soil and the heavens” (*Kuzari* IV:17),56 making it ontologically superior to all other lands, just as Jews are superior to all other nations. The *Kuzari* describes how “Among Noah’s sons, Shem was the select

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55 One should note the significance of this metaphysics of the Jewish people and the territory of biblical Israel to the radical spiritual interpretation by the rabbis Kook of Jews’ return to Palestine in the modern era, the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, and especially Israel’s capture of biblical Judea and Samaria in the 1967 Six Day War: the Chosen People and the Holy Land were reunited, thus opening a channel for divinity to manifest in the world.

56 On the origins of this paradigm in geographic theories widespread in Halevi’s medieval intellectual milieu, see Altman (2005[1942]).
one, and he occupied the temperate regions of Palestine, whereas Japheth went north
and Ham went south—regions not so favorable to the development of wisdom” (Husik
1916, 160; 163). Further, the Israeli climate is held to evoke moral purification by
strengthening Jews’ halakhic impulse: “a whole-hearted return to the ancestral tradition
can be completed only by a wholehearted return to the ancestral land” (Kogan 2003,
133). The Land also enables practical fulfillment all 613 mitzvot, and one of Halevi’s
poems emphasizes the imperative of securing Jewish rule in the Holy Land in these
terms: “How can I fulfill my vows and my bonds, while yet / Zion is in Edom’s domain,

In Halevi’s metaphysical map, the Land of Israel is the “gate to heaven,” the point
where all creation started, and Jerusalem is the center of the world (consistent with
Kabbalah). This earthly configuration has a metaphysical parallel—as below, so
above—and thus Eretz Yisrael constitutes the link, bridge, and channel between these
two realms and the place closest to God. However, this channel for the divine influx can
be activated only by spiritually advanced Jews, and Jews can only become spiritually
advanced when in Eretz Yisrael:

“The visible Shekhinah … does not reveal itself except to a prophet or a favored
community, and in a distinguished place. As regards the spiritual Shekhinah, it
is with every born Israelite of virtuous life, pure heart, and upright mind before
the Lord of Israel … [but] heart and soul are only perfectly pure and immaculate
in the place which is believed to be specially selected by God” (trans. Bodoff

The above theosophy—with dimensions of i) Jewish historical experience of the
divine, ii) Jews’ innate prophetic capacity, and iii) the innate holiness of Eretz Yisrael as
an incubator for that prophetic capacity—lent itself to a salient activist dimension in
Halevi’s ethics, with particular emphasis on the duty of Jews to inhabit the Holy Land in
order to hasten redemption (Silman 1995, 268–71). “In his philosophical work as well
as his poetry, Judah Halevi spoke out harshly against those who deceived themselves by
speaking of Zion and by praying for its redemption while their hearts were closed to it
and their actions far removed from it. … The mission of the prophet is not to instruct
men in eternal truths, but to teach them the deeds whose performance leads to the
experience of God’s presence” (Katz 1975, 62 and 68). To quote one eminent scholar:
“[For Halevi] human action takes precedence over any intellectual or mental disposition. … [T]he human condition in general and the Jews’ special concern with historical destiny lead to activity aimed at steering the course of history… [and] the later Halevi underscored the importance of action intended to change historical circumstances and advocated action explicitly aimed at bringing closer the Redemption of the Jewish people (Kuzari 5:27). In his opinion, it is incumbent on his contemporaries to emigrate to Eretz Israel, even if this involves some physical danger” (Silman 1995, 268–9; my emphasis).

Indeed, Halevi himself (like the chaber in the Kuzari) chose to immigrate to the Holy Land, setting out for Palestine in 1139 (Katz 1975, 63). Another influential teacher who chose this path was Nachmanides, to whom I now turn.

**Nachmanides: Am Yisrael & the mitzvah of settlement**

There are powerful resonances between Nachmanides’ work and Halevi’s regarding the historical character of Judaism, Jews’ capacity to function as a “dwelling place” for the divine presence, the “all-pervasive centrality” of Eretz Yisrael (Newman 1968, 21), and a practical and activist emphasis. Like Halevi, he saw divine providence as operating through Israel’s history, as shown most perfectly in the narrative of the Torah. Indeed, even the “natural law” of nature is subsumed by him within the category of “hidden miracles” (Henoch 1998, 16). This amounts to a synonymity between natural forces (what actually happens) and divine intervention, and represents an underpinning of Kookian epistemology (reinforcing that of Halevi): “there is no conceptual difference to Nahmanides between indirect, ‘natural’ providence and miraculous divine intervention” (Berger 1983, 7).

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57 The Shekhinah; Nachmanides appears to have borrowed the “dwelling place” terminology—used in his Mishneh Torah on Deuteronomy 11:22—directly from Halevi. See Lobel (1999).
58 On the link between Nachmanides and Halevi’s thought on Eretz Yisrael, see Newman (1968, 22).
59 For Nachmanides, theurgic knowledge trumps theosophical understanding (Idel 1995, 562–6), and his stress on the mitzvah of settling Eretz Yisrael is unparalleled (see below).
60 Nachmanides stresses the supernatural (rather than allegorical) character of the Torah (Guttman 1988, 224) and the reality of miracles and divine providence.
61 Note, however, that a thoroughgoing analysis of Nachmanides’ thought on providence reveals limitations that effectively dilute this strong level of divine activity and protection to the extremely virtuous only (hasidim), which excludes even the vast majority of Jews, who fall on the wide spectrum between extreme evil and extreme goodness within which natural chance presides (Berger 1983, 8–10). “Nahmanides, then, was no occasionalist or near occasionalist. Except in the rarest of instances, the natural order governs the lives of non-Jews, both individually and collectively, as well as the overwhelming majority of Jews. The Jewish collective is
There are also distinctions with Halevi. Nachmanides’ teachings on the nature of Jews, Jewish *segulah*, and prophecy are far more universalistic than Halevi’s. Nachmanides’ theosophical anthropology is universal, positing neither metaphysical nor hereditary distinctions between Jewish and Gentile souls (Goodman 2004, 468). In all his teachings on the creation of man in the image of God (*be-tzelem elohim*), he does not indicate explicitly or by allusion any distinction between Jew and Gentile (see, e.g., *Mishneh Torah* on Genesis 1:26 and 2:7). Nachmanides also considers prophecy and the experience of esoteric knowledge of the divine generally available to all nations, not just Jews (Afterman 2007, 46; Goodman 2004, 467–8). However, the catch is that only in *Eretz Yisrael* is prophecy accessible (see Goodman 2004, 460–1 note 8).

This is linked to his conception of holiness. For Nachmanides, holiness or *kedushah* is “the nature of an object or concept which is designated for the service of God,” though also “separation” from sin and impurity (Schreiber 2011, 33): “one may be considered *kadosh* when one separates oneself from certain interactions with this world, and instead shifts exclusively to interactions with God. *Kedushah* can be defined as separation for the sake of God” (Schreiber 2011, 33–4). Jewish *segulah* is contingent on holy thought and holy practice, as noted earlier (Goodman 2004, 476; Henoch 25):

“[A]ccording to the Method of Truth, ‘you shall keep my covenant,’ in order to cleave to Him, is identical with ‘If you will hearken to My voice, and you’ll do all I tell you, then you’ll belong exclusively to Me; among all the nations you will be special unto Me,’ … and so it says: ‘And I’ll separate you from the nations to belong to me’ (Leviticus 20:26)—exclusively … or exclusiveness [*segulah*] means attachment, like the [upper] land belongs to Me … And so: ‘you will be unto Me’ (Exodus 19:6)—you will be uniquely attached unto me, unlike the other nations” (*Mishneh Torah* on Exodus 19:5; trans. Henoch 1998, 25).

often guided by miraculous providence, but it too can find itself forsaken and left to accidents; and though the absolutely righteous and absolutely wicked also enjoy (or suffer) a chain of hidden miracles, the chain is apparently not unbroken. Moreover, Nahmanides’ uncompromising insistence that providence is exclusively miraculous means that, although God is constantly aware of everyone, he does not exercise providence when nature prevails; since nature almost always prevails, the routine functioning of Nahmanides’ world is, as we have already noted, extraordinarily naturalistic” (Berger 1983, 14). This is in contrast to other scholars’ characterization of Nachmanides as anti-rationalist, e.g., Baer (1971, 245).

It is interesting that this universalistic teaching has not achieved wide reach, given the extent to which religious Zionist rabbis as well as self-styled kabbalists like Ginsburgh rely on Nachmanides’ halakhic position on the *mitzvah* of settling *Eretz Yisrael*. The discrepancy may represent another avenue for tempering the dualistic elements of religious Zionist theosophical discourse (and Ginsburgh’s Kabbalah) regarding Gentiles.
This interweaves with Nachmanides’ emphasis on the centrality of *Eretz Yisrael*, where a higher level of holiness can be attained.63 As explained in the subsection on Kabbalah, he sees the holiness of *Am Yisrael* as stemming in major part from living in *Eretz Yisrael* (Goodman 2004, 471–2) rather than its own essence. In a slightly paradoxical twist, Nachmanides also goes much further than Maimonides in his *utilitarian* assessment of the value of *Eretz Yisrael*—attaching to it a supreme value with stark metaphysical consequences for the worth of both the Jewish people and even the Torah. If, for Maimonides, living in the Land was a prerequisite for a full halakhic lifestyle, Nachmanides’ “thesis is that none of the laws of Judaism have any intrinsic validity outside *Eretz Yisrael*. Halevi had waxed eloquent over the many commandments belonging to the soil of the Holy Land (*mitzvot tezuyot ba-aretz*), but Nachmanides determined that all the *mitzvot* were tied to the Land!” (Newman 1968, 24). In Nachmanidean Kabbalah, the special status of the Torah itself depends on *Eretz Yisrael*, as noted previously.

However, Nachmanides’ most central contribution to the Kook school is his elevation of the *mitzvah* of settling in the Land of Israel to a positive commandment (*mitzvat a’aseh*—see Nachmanides’ *Mishneh Torah* on Deuteronomy 1:8 and Numbers 33:53), indeed one that supersedes all others: “Judaism was designed for those living in the Land of the Lord… living in Eretz Yisrael is equal in importance to all the commandments—this is what brought me out of my country and thrust me from my place [like Halevi, Nachmanides left the Diaspora, following the Tosafist *aliyah* of the 300 rabbis (see Kanarfogel 1986), to settle in Palestine]. I abandoned my home and forsook my heritage. I made myself as the raven to my sons, heartless to my daughters, because it was my desire to end my days in the bosom of my mother” (trans. Newman 1968, 22). Thus, for Nachmanides, settlement is a “practical and unambiguous commandment” (Afterman 2007, 71). Nachmanides’ addenda to Maimonides’ *Sefer Hamitzvot* (*mitzvot aseh*, addenda no. 4) decry the omission of the commandment to settle *Eretz Yisrael* from the latter’s list of the 613 *mitzvot*, diluting it from a full “positive commandment” (see, e.g., Bleich 1979, 48–9).64

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63 It can also be viewed as explaining Israel’s inheritance of the land—by virtue not of innate holiness, but because of the sins of the *Canaanites* who had first rejected God’s law and acted immorally, as at Sodom and Gemorrah (see, e.g., *Mishneh Torah* on Genesis 9:26 and Devarim 14:18; Henoch 1998, 119–21).

64 On Maimonides’ omission and indications that he nonetheless saw great merit in living in Israel, if not the full force of a commandment, see Bleich (1979, 50–3).
Furthermore, “the commandments regarding the treatment of the Seven Nations who occupied the land of Israel at the time of Joshua are not only still valid today, but apply to any nation which occupies the Land of Israel” (Afterman 2007, 72). Thus, “To Nachmanides Moses’ admonitions to the children of Israel to take possession of the Promised Land, drive out the native inhabitants and settle therein were of immediate practical application” (Newman 1968, 22). His rebuke to Maimonides is clear:

“We have been commanded to take possession of the land which the Lord gave to our forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and we are specifically forbidden to abandon it to any other nation or allow it to become desolate. This is implied in the text: ‘You shall take possession of the land and dwell therein since I have given you this land to inherit and you shall inherit it.’ He specified for them the exact boundaries of the territory to which this religious obligation applied. The proof that this is an outright commandment emerges from Moses’ exhortation to the spies: ‘Go up, take possession, as the Lord, God of thy fathers, hath spoken unto thee; fear not, nor be dismayed.’ It is further stated: ‘The Lord sent you from Kadesh Barnea saying: Go up and possess the land which I have given you.’ When they refused to go up, the text observes: ‘You rebelled against the commandment of the Lord and disobeyed Him.’ This indicates quite clearly that a specific commandment and not a mere promise or prophecy is involved. This is what our sages termed a holy war (milchemet mitzvah). Do not be misled into imagining that this commandment only applies to the displacement of the original seven nations (in Joshua’s time). Those nations we were commanded to destroy or make peace with them under certain conditions. But the land itself was not to be left in their possession or in that of any other nation, in any generation. Similarly when those nations fled from before us, for example the Girgashite (who according to the Midrash repaired to Africa), we were still commanded to enter the land, conquer the cities thereof and settle our tribes therein. We were also forbidden to leave it and conquer Assyria, Babylonia or other countries. The commandment specifically refers to Eretz Yisrael. Our Sages extolled the virtues of Eretz Yisrael in extravagant terms. They said: ‘He who leaves it and lives outside the land should be regarded by you as idolator.’ I maintain that such hyperbolic statements were prompted by their concern to honor this explicit positive commandment of the Torah to take possession of the land and live therein. Accordingly, it is a positive commandment applying to
Thus, Nachmanides’ halakhic position imposes strong obligations relating to Jewish presence in the Holy Land (see generally Henoch 1998, 114–29). The above passage goes significantly further than even Halevi: the latter articulated a moral and spiritual obligation of Jews to live in Eretz Yisrael; Nachmanides, however, elevates this obligation to a commandment, and extends the obligation beyond mere settlement to military (re)conquest of the territory, if necessary, with the Gentiles presently living therein to be dealt with according to the precedents of Joshua’s original (bloody) conquest of Canaan. In a meticulous analysis, Rabbi Bleich breaks Nachmanides’ prescription into four key components: “1) to conquer the land by force of arms; 65 2) to dwell in the land; 3) to refrain from seizing any other land for the purpose of establishing a national homeland therein in substitution for the Land of Israel; and 4) not to allow the land to remain in the hands of any other nation or to allow it to remain desolate” (Bleich 1979, 49; see too Henoch 1998, 116–7).

There are, of course, caveats. The obligation to win the territory by force of arms translates to prescriptions for warfare as nuanced as there is variety in the stories of the Torah. As with biblical exegesis and interpretation of Halakhah generally, the interpretation of the Torah’s manifold indications on the obligation (and proper conduct) of war in order to claim the Holy Land is subject to rabbinic debate (see, e.g., Carmy 2006; Walfish 1981, 312–3). In several cases, the Joshua analogy leads Nachmanides to stipulate highly ethical standards of warfare, as in his Mishneh Torah on Genesis 34:13. 66 However, in other cases, the massacre of women and children seems to be endorsed essentially for the sake of national vengeance (Mishneh Torah on Numbers 31:6; Blau 2006, 21). 67 On the other hand, Bleich presents a substantive halakhic corpus constraining the pragmatic possibility of conducting a war of conquest in the Holy Land

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65 Bleich relies on a distinction between individual and communal mitzvot to render this text compatible with the three oaths Israel undertook for the period of exile, one of which is not to take up arms to re-conquer the Holy Land. He reasons that Nachmanides sees only the individual mitzvah to settle as active during the Jews’ (divinely imposed) exile, while the communal mitzvah to wrest full control of the territory from Gentiles by force of arms remains latent during exile (Bleich 1979, 55–6). This is similar to Tau’s argument (see Chapter 2).
66 See too Carmy (2006, 67), in which Nachmanides’ reading of the Torah appears to be more lenient on the Canaanites than is Maimonides’; see too p. 86 note 35.
67 See generally the discussion in Blau (2006).
compatible with Jewish law on the sanctity of life (see too Carmy 2006). Bleich argues (while acknowledging disputation) that Nachmanides implicitly accepted these constraints, which curtails his prescriptions to the idealistic normative plane rather than the practical one (Bleich 1979, 56–60).

However, there is legitimate scope for divergent interpretations of Nachmanides’ writings, including a maximalist reading:

“It is quite conceivable that the entire community of Israel might converge upon a limited portion of the total area of the Land of Israel vouchsafed to our ancestors. Every individual Jew would thereby have fulfilled his obligation with regard to establishing domicile in the promised land. Every single Jew might indeed dwell in the Land of Israel and yet the commandment ‘and you shall inherit the land’ would remain unfulfilled. An intrinsic component of the commandment, declares Ramban, is not to allow any portion of the land to remain in the possession of any other nation. Moreover, even if no foreign nation enjoys sovereignty over any portion of the land, the commandment remains unfulfilled so long as any portion, no matter how insignificant, of the Land of Israel, is permitted to remain desolate, i.e., uncultivated and unpopulated [cites Baba Batra]. Thus, according to Ramban, there exists an obligation not simply to establish residence in the Land of Israel, but also to establish a Jewish homeland upon the sanctified territory in its entirety and to settle upon and cultivate every particle of sacred soil” (Bleich 1979, 49).

Note that Nachmanides saw the immediate obligation to reoccupy Eretz Yisrael as an everyday injunction, not to be delayed until (nor requiring as a precondition) the messianic age.68 He sharply rejects interpretations of Numbers 33:53 (“And you shall inherit the land…”) as merely “a promise and as a prognostication” or “prudent advice” (Rashi’s commentary; Bleich 1979, 47–8); to him, it was clearly a direct order from God (see Nachmanides’ Mishneh Torah on Numbers 33:53). This represents the halakhic underpinning of Avraham Kook’s stance and the project of Gush Emunim.

68 In Sefer Ha-Geulah, Nachmanides delivers a case for the inevitability—and, erroneously, precise timing—of Jewish redemption (see Chazan 1992, 172–94), but this argument is based in textual analysis and Gematria, not on an unambiguous perception by Nachmanides that Jewish agency (e.g., by returning en masse to Zion) was necessary to effect the coming of the Messiah (though Maccoby 1986 argues that neither was Jewish merit irrelevant); indeed, he seems to argue that redemption will arrive irrespective of Jews’ sins based on God’s unconditional promises (Chazan 1992, 176). Note, however, the controversy over this interpretation: see Berger (1986) vs. Maccoby (1986).
Chabad Hasidism

Hasidism and Rabbi Kook—the controversy

Hasidism developed in the 1700s through the teachings of the Ba’al Shem Tov. In the hands of the Chabad dynasty founded by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), it became a renowned revivialist movement centered on (inter alia): a pantheistic/acosmic conception of divinity; the charismatic figure of the tzaddik; the value of ecstatic worship even by the common, unlearned Jew; and the popular dissemination of Kabbalah (see, e.g., Scholem 1961[1941], 325–50).

It is not my intention to weigh in on the debate over the influence of Hasidic thought on Rabbi Kook, compared with, e.g., the historiosophical Kabbalah attributed by Garb (2004) to the Rabbi Haim Luzzato and the Vilna Gaon. However, Chabad Hasidism’s articulation of an acosmic conception of divinity certainly finds resonances in Kook’s work, whether or not Hasidism should be understood as its intellectual source. (Moreover, this brief survey of Chabad theosophy and its contemplative tradition furnishes counterpoints to Ginsburgh’s interpretations.)

Regarding Kook, Fine (1995, 32) argued (cf. Garb 2004, 85) that he shared with Hasidism a radically monistic worldview whereby “there is no separation or difference whatsoever between divinity and the world. The cosmos is a perfect unity,” an “acosmic view” that dovetails with Chabad Hasidic theology (Fine 1995, 32).69 He continues: “Everything that appears to exist apart from God possesses no real substance, for all the true substance is rooted in divinity. However, from the perspective of human perception, the illusion exists that the world is separated from its divine source. The separation exists only within the consciousness of human beings… [i.e., it] is epistemological in nature, not ontological” (ibid.).70

Thus, as explained by Steinsaltz: “a completely wicked person is a contradiction in terms because anything that is totally of the Sitra Achra is only an intellectual abstraction; like a total lie, it cannot exist in reality” (Steinsaltz 1988, 81), a close parallel of Kook’s thought. Monistically, the sitra achra and the kelipot are not

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69 See further Scholem (1961[1941], 107–10).
70 Thus, for instance, the ‘canonical’ text of Chabad Hasidism, the Tanya (see below), described the lurianic doctrine of tzimtzum (the self-contraction of divinity to create space for creation) as the descent of the Torah (as “an integral part of God himself”) to the level comprehensible to the ordinary person (Sefer Shel Beinonim 4:16; see Etkes 2015, 100–101).
necessarily evil: they contain elements of good and also perform dialectic roles. However, the *kelipot* exist in concentric layers, descending to ever greater levels of impurity and coarse materiality, such that it becomes more difficult for the darker shells to be ‘repaired’ or release their hidden light (Steinsaltz 1988, 1–6; Etkes 2015, 102).

The dialectical logic of his monism also appears in Chabad thought. As summarized by Elior: “Underlying Habad thought is a world-view that perceives a dual reality of existence and a dialectical relationship between its two components. The significance of this duality is that everything simultaneously manifests itself and its converse. … That is, all things embody the unity of their opposites. This duality of meaning … applies to every dimension of reality and human experience” (Elior 1992, 25).

In turn, this is rooted in a monistic interpretation of lurianic Kabbalah. But whereas “in Kabbalistic thought these concepts relate exclusively to the heavenly realm, the world of the sefirot, and the stages of emanation… in Habad thought, these pairs of opposites and the dialectical principle they embody apply to the earthly, the heavenly, and the human realms. They are applied in every dimension that defines and distinguishes religious creativity—in the conception of God, in divine worship, and in the vantage point from which reality is interpreted” (p. 26; see too pp. 33–6, 201–6).

Simultaneously, and in contrast to the contemporary approaches of Schneerson and Ginsburgh, Chabad diluted the urgent messianic focus of lurianic theurgy through its focus on the individual and the psychological: “the old Lurianic doctrine on the ‘uplifting of the holy sparks’ was deprived of its intrinsic Messianic meaning by introducing a differentiation between two aspects of redemption,” being the “individualistic redemption”/“salvation” of the soul and truly messianic redemption, with the Hasid’s focus properly resting on the former (Scholem 1961[1941], 330).

Garb (2004) argues that this individual, psychological focus is lacking in Kook’s teachings. He argues that Luzzato and the Vilna Gaon followed a subtly different interpretation, whereby mundane reality was ontologically separate from divinity, in order to allow for systems of rule and authority other than God to arise, in turn in order for their seeming opposition to the divine to be annulled, revealing God’s sole and ultimate rule. Whereas Chabad’s acosmic theosophy led to a focus on *individual* humans’ struggle to overcome the *psychological* illusion of division,71 he argues that the

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71 In Scholem’s words, for instance, Schneur Zalman gave Chabad its distinctive feature, whereby “the secrets
historiosophical Kabbalah of the latter led to first the Vilna Gaon’s and then Rabbi Kook’s focus on the Jews’ national/collective flourishing in Eretz Yisrael as facilitating this political–historical manifestation of God’s unity—a revelation identified with messianic redemption (pp. 81–4). The divisions are not, however, obvious. For instance, Scholem described early Hasidic doctrine as including “something like a rudimentary theology of history” (Scholem 1961[1941], 90–1). The exact relationship is an interesting question, but one I have not studied. I therefore do not pursue the debate here, but rather turn to Chabad’s paradoxical dualistic teachings on the status of Gentiles (in its otherwise monistic theosophy), before addressing its contemplative tradition and lastly the political position of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe (Menachem Mendel Schneerson) on Israeli territorial concessions.

Jews and Gentiles in Chabad ontology

Chabad shares the monistic notion of Jews’ radical interclusion that appears in Kook’s thought, described by Steinsaltz as “a rather extreme notion of Israel as a physical-spiritual collective body… something so sensitively organic in its unity that any separation of one of its smallest limbs or parts was seen to inflict a serious injury on the whole, which was the Shechinah, the Divine indwelling” (Steinsaltz 1988, 211–2).

However, Chabad subscribes to an ontological hierarchy between Jews and Gentiles that is largely dualistic (and arguably racist), articulated via the lurianic scheme of the kelipot. In Chabad doctrine, Jews are thought to have two souls: an animal soul rooted in the sitra achra and impurity, and a divine soul. However, for Jews, the animal soul stems from an intermediate kelipah, the “glowing shell” (kelipat noga) which contains an admixture of good and evil and thus enables Jews to find and elevate the good hidden in mundane, corporeal, bodily existence (Etkes 2015, 102; see Sefer Shel Beinonim 6:20), as opposed to the three (almost entirely) demonic and impure shells at the origin of Gentile souls. Thus: “Two contrary types of soul exist, a non-Jewish soul comes from three satanic spheres, while the Jewish soul stems from holiness” (Shahak & Mezvinsky

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of the divine realm are presented in the guise of mystical psychology. It is by descending into the depths of his own self that man wanders through all the dimensions of the world; in his own self he lifts the barriers which separate one sphere from the other; in his own self, finally, he transcends the limits of natural existence” and “Kabbalism becomes an instrument of psychological analysis and self-knowledge” (Scholem 1961[1941], 340–1). E.g., he interpreted the exile of the Shekhinah as a psychological condition (Etkes 2015, 122).

72 As acknowledged by Garb (2004, 85).

Moreover, the divine Jewish soul is “consubstantial with the divine” (Wolfson 2009, 45; see Sefer Shel Beinonim 2:11). Jews alone are held to possess a holy spark, or yechezek, by which “the individual can be reincorporated into the incommunicable unity of the nondifferentiated One (yahid)… A distinctive rank is [thus] accorded the Jews, as it is reputed that only they have the facet of the divine that is enrooted in the essence of the Infinite” (Wolfson 2009, 232).

The patriarchs, Moses, and their biological descendants stem from the kabbalistic plane of atzilut (the highest) and are “parts of the structure of the Divine manifestation” itself (Steinsaltz 1988, 112), implying the exclusive ability to unite the divine and bestial souls. Steinsaltz explains: “… it is a new humanity of which we speak… a total transformation and the creation of a new species of humanity, whose chief characteristic is a Divine Soul. The old humanity has life force or life-soul and mind-soul, which is the capacity to reach the highest levels of organization and intellect (like Aristotle, as the Rambam put it). Whereas the Jewish inheritance from the Fathers, this holy spark, or Divine Soul, is not dependent on any level of intelligence or any physical or vital factor” (pp. 211–2). As he acknowledges, this has racialist implications: “such ideas seem to contain certain unsavory elements of physical or racial superiority which are very non-Jewish… the idea… implies that they [the patriarchs] unite, almost physically, with the essence of the Divine so that holiness passes through them biologically, strange as this may seem” (p. 113), despite his apologetic insistence that the possibility of conversion implies that the issue is above biology.

According to Wolfson (2009, 152–85) and Shahak and Mezvinsky (1999, 59–62), these views were embraced by the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994). Schneerson shared the Zohar’s Judeocentric account of the creation of Adam (Wolfson 2009, 235) and thereby argued that “the Jewish soul (yidishe neshome) is substantially different from the soul of the non-Jew… and in truth, the Jewish body is not the same as the body of the non-Jew; the former, in contrast to the latter, is holy” (Schneerson’s Purim talk of 1959, trans. p. 152; see too Shahak & Mezvinsky 1999, 59–60). Wolfson links this to a belief “that Jews uniquely bear the divine soul (nefesh elohit)” referenced above (Wolfson 2009, 152).

The following quoted assertions by Schneerson share this vein: “the mark of circumcision is identified as the divine image (selem elohim) in virtue of which he is called adam, that is, the true nature of what [it] is to be human is linked to circumcision, which empowers the Jew over the beastly nature of the other nations, who are not considered to be in the category of human in the fullest sense” (p. 154); and “in the future-to-come, the bodies of the nations will be like animals [ba’alei hayyim] … they are not at all in the level of the human [adam], and Israel particularly are in the level of the human, as it [sic] written you are called adam (Ezek 34:31)” (Schneerson, trans. Wolfson 2009, 359 note 119).

A trace of Chabad’s characteristic monism is preserved, but it is restricted to the messianic era: Schneerson “resisted an absolute dualism by insisting that a facet of Esau, who represents the demonic other side (sitra ahara), continuously receives illumination from the side of holiness. The messianic ideal is predicated on discerning that aspect, which effectively neutralizes the underlying basis for the halakah, the seemingly intractable difference between sanctified and defiled, and its sociocultural manifestation in the need to maintain the boundary between Jew and Gentile” (p. 185).75

Like Ginsburgh, Schneerson therefore stressed an asymmetric axiology of Jewish vs. Gentile life, as manifest in his halakhic teachings. For instance:

“… the Halacha, stipulated by the Talmud, showed that a non-Jew should be punished by death if he kills an embryo, even if the embryo is non-Jewish, while the Jew should not be, even if the embryo is Jewish. … Why should a non-Jew be punished if he kills even a non-Jewish embryo while a Jew should not be punished even if he kills a Jewish embryo? The answer can be understood by [considering] the general difference between Jews and non-Jews: A Jew was not created as a means for some [other] purpose; he himself is the purpose, since the substance of all [divine] emanations was created only to serve the Jews. ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ [Genesis 1:1] means that [the heavens and the earth] were created for the sake of the Jews, who are called the ‘beginning.’ This means everything, all developments, all discoveries, the creation, including the ‘heavens and the earth – are vanity compared to the Jews. The important things are the Jews, because they do not exist for any [other] aim; they themselves are [the divine] aim’” (trans. Shahak & Mezvinsky 1999, 60).

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75 Apologetic interpretations and alternative references to Chabad outreach to Gentiles can be found as well. See, e.g., Loewenthal (1990, 205–10).
The main body of the thesis shows the evolution of these ideas in Ginsburgh’s teachings (see chapters 6 and 7). Indeed, the link was noted by Shahak and Mezvinsky:

“[Ginsburgh] speaks freely of Jews’ genetic-based, spiritual superiority over non-Jews. It is a superiority that he asserts invests Jewish life with greater value in the eyes of the Torah. ‘If you saw two people drowning, a Jew and a non-Jew, the Torah says you save the Jewish life first… If every simple cell in a Jewish body entails divinity, is a part of God, then every strand of DNA is part of God. Therefore, something is special about Jewish DNA.’ Later, Rabbi Ginsburgh asked rhetorically: ‘If a Jew needs a liver, can you take the liver of an innocent non-Jew passing by to save him? The Torah would probably permit that. Jewish life has an infinite value,’ he explained. ‘There is something infinitely more holy and unique about Jewish life than non-Jewish life.’ … Changing the words ‘Jewish’ to ‘German’ or ‘Aryan’ and ‘non-Jewish’ to ‘Jewish’ turns the Ginsburgh position into the doctrine that made Auschwitz possible in the past” (Shahak & Mezvinsky 1999, 62).

**Intellectual contemplation, *bitul*, and *devekut***

In stark contrast to the approach of Ginsburgh’s “simple Jew” teachings around vengeance (see Chapter 7), however, I note Wolfson’s characterization of Chabad Hasidism as “intellectual mysticism,” in which self-obliteration (*bitul*) through unification with divine consciousness occurs through the modality of study and reason (Wolfson 2009, 32)—an annulment of the illusion of separation of the divine that is within the capacity of Jews exclusively (p. 237; also Steinsaltz 1988, 125). Even the movement’s name (an acronym of *Chokhmah*, *Binah*, *Da’at* or Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge) “emphasizes the significance of its intellectualist contemplative aspect,” with certain Chabad texts implying that “the major, cerebral, deeply intellectualist ecstasy is beyond the capacity of the emotions, the heart” (Loewenthal 1990, 76; see too Elior 1992, 159–66).76

This intellectual mystical practice was described in the *magnum opus* of Chabad’s founder, Schneur Zalman, the Tanya (*Sefer Liqutei Amarim*, published in 1796), which describes methods of contemplative prayer supposed to lead to *devekut* (mystical cleaving to God), and emphasizes Torah study with appropriate *kavanah* (intention) as

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76 See, e.g., Rabbi Dov Baer’s *Tract on Contemplation* (discussed in Loewenthal 1990, 148–53).
fitting preparation (Etkes 2015, 2). The Tanya’s Sefer Shel Beinonim (the Book of Average Men, 5:17–8) described this focused contemplation as superior even to the performance of mitzvot, and saw it as tied to individual transcendence of yetzer ha-ra (the evil impulse), thereby sharing the divine light through one’s individual self-improvement, in contrast to the lurianic conception of direct action on the sefirotic plane (Etkes 2015, 116; see too Sefer Shel Beinonim 36:90–1).\footnote{Cf. Loewenthal (1990, 77–101) regarding internal Chabad debate over emphasis on intellectuality vs. emotion. Note too that although Chabad was simultaneously and paradoxically populist, even the “simple believer” was not spared the need for suitable preparation of his consciousness through study and contemplation (in contrast to Ginsburgh’s “simple Jew”). Steinsaltz explains: “The simple believer, not having anything definite before him, does not really know what it is he believes in. And this is too perilously close to the uncritical belief of the sinner, the thief who naively prays to God for success before every unsavory adventure. Therefore, it is, alas, true that in order for faith to have consistent influence on behavior, the work of the mind, study and contemplation, are almost always essential. A firm connection has to be established between Chochma and Binah [supra-rational wisdom and rational understanding]” (Steinsaltz 1988, 118–9). Regarding the articulations of Hasidic doctrine by Steinsaltz: note that he teaches outside Chabad’s own educational and social frameworks (Garb 2009, 33).}

Chabad also stressed the overriding value of Jewish unity—to be secured in large measure through the humility of the learned vis-à-vis the ignorant. Self-annulment through contemplation of Torah and the overriding greatness of God would erode the ego, thereby facilitating fraternal love (see Loewenthal 1990, 186–8). As clarified shortly, the identification of Jews with God via their divine spark in Chabad doctrine implies that “the concept of Ahavat Yisrael, the love of one’s fellow Jew, even a sinner, points to the love of God” and that such love is not sentimental, but rather stems from the correct perception of reality at the level of soul (Steinsaltz 1988, 211).\footnote{There are strong parallels here with Tau’s approach, described in chapters 4 and 5.} It is forbidden to hate even the sinner, especially if he is not learned in Torah (pp. 213–15): “it is forbidden for me to judge my fellowman. It is not for me to decide whether he is innocent or guilty. That may sometimes be the task of a court, within the limits of a specific charge and along the lines drawn by Torah or the law. … Indeed, all these calculations… all belong to God. Only He can make them” (p. 214).

Chabad tradition historically stresses the virtue of humility, and even identifies it with the holy yechidah that is a prerequisite for full self-annulment (bitul) through contemplation: “A person of Israel is said to be born with three … basic qualities: pity, shyness, and kindness … [and] it is something that every Jew has, a character structure which belongs to the paradigm of Israel. Thus, a person who does not exhibit these qualities is said to be not of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—even though he
may be a proper Jew in the sense that he performs the mitzvoth” (p. 5). In the Chabad sense, bitul involves the transcendence of ego, and of the anger that stems from egocentricity: “anger can be enjoyed almost as a form of idolatry in the sense that a person makes a cult out of it,” and the highest level of blasphemy is imagining one’s self-completeness vs. self-abnegation in the face of the divine: “the power of [supra-rational] wisdom is defined as the power of humility and self-nullification” (pp. 52–3). Although it is possible to place Ginsburgh’s teachings on vengeance (Chapter 7) in this framework, the tone is a drastic departure. “Humility and modesty were seen by Kabbalistic ethical literature as the highest virtues” and were emphasized in Hasidism as perquisites for bitul and devekut (cleaving to the divine, see below; Etkes 2015, 113).

Bitul and devekut were the pinnacle of the path of intellectual contemplation described in the Tanya. Paradoxically, though the Tanya describes a path to their attainment by elites through contemplation, they were held to be accessible to the common man via the “essence of the soul” of Jews (Wolfson 2009, 47), because they represented a level of love higher than that cultivable through contemplation. “The intention of the heart is illustrated by the image of the love of the father for a son, an ‘essential love’ that does not come by way of contemplation, a love that is an ‘essential bond from the side of the essence to the soul” (pp. 50–1). Not unlike Ginsburgh’s description of the source of the revenge impulse, Chabad understands the bond of devekut as arising from a supra-rational wisdom, via the sefirah of Chokhmah—the dimensionless point between “the nothingness of transcendence” and the “ultimate in the manifested universe” that is within every Jew; a “wisdom of Action” that can burst forth in crucial moments and is even stronger than the will to live (and is thus associated with martyrdom, or kiddush ha-shem; Steinsaltz 1988, 114). “Wisdom is the power of that which is not comprehended and understood or grasped intellectually; consequently, there is vested in it the light of the Infinite—the Ain Sof [Keter]—Blessed be He, who can in no way be comprehended by any thought” (p. 118).

However, in the Chabad classics this potential is understood as a powerful force that must be channeled carefully:

“…the essence of the inherited tradition within the soul, that which, on one hand, is not entirely under one’s control and, on the other, is strong enough to nourish one’s life and the life of the people as a whole. This is the faith of the simple
Jew, which does not come from an intellectual understanding and fear of the Divine but from an intrinsic love of God. … After one has exhausted the external sources, one penetrates into the abyss of oneself and draws forth the passion and power that are hidden there. Sometimes this passion bursts forth of itself, and it can be very destructive. Sometimes, such a bursting occurs in a moment of crisis, such as that offered by martyrdom. … this power… [is] so terrifying that one spends a lifetime trying to keep it within bounds… How can one dole it out in controllable portions and live with it? The Chabad way is that of constant exhortation to make the intellectual effort to maintain control over oneself and to develop consciousness” (Steinsaltz 1988, 110–1).

Ginsburgh’s teachings, by contrast, remove all such constraints. Moreover, his emphasis on the “I”/“I am” introduces an egocentricity to this concept that jars with Chabad’s stress on humility and association of self-augmentation with the demonic side of the *kelipah* (see p. 126). His association of the concept of supernal wisdom with antinomianism may also represent a subversion of sorts.\(^79\) That impression is certainly created by the contrast with Steinsaltz, who warns that “[s]ometimes, out of an excessive zeal for holiness, of whatever sort, a person commits horrendous crimes; and this can be in a state of absence of the Shechinah in which the Divine spark is asleep,” because lower intellect is in fact operating without higher wisdom (p. 130).

Ginsburgh’s focus on the arousal of positive emotional affect through vengeance is also arguably out of synch with traditional understandings of *bitul* and *devekut*:

“Devekut is something of fundamental essence: I cling to God; I am existentially in a state of Divine Union. At the same time, I may also be unaware of anything of the sort. But the test of the truth of the experience cannot be one’s subjective feelings, for if I determine my own emotions and enjoyments, this makes me Divine; good or bad depends on my personal relation to it. Indeed, the whole matter of Divine Union becomes a function of the animal-soul. Such feelings of perfection in an exalted situation are often misinterpreted as ‘Devekut’; the sages have called it ‘Klipah Yaffah’ or Beautiful Shell. … The point is that one’s feelings or subjective reactions are the shell and cannot be the criterion of Divine Union… the feeling of great happiness or sublimity is not in itself of any consequence. … And a person

\(^{79}\) See, however, the notes in the main text on antinomian strands in Hasidism.
cannot always be in a position to determine the level of the love and devotion of his performances” (Steinsaltz 1988, 58–9).80

The Lubavitcher Rebbe on Zionism and the peace process

A final dimension of Chabad teachings pertinent to understanding Ginsburgh’s approach is Schneerson’s teachings on Eretz Yisrael and the politics of the Jewish state. These merit separate analysis (see, e.g., Mezvinsky & Kolb 2013); however, two paradoxical strands should be noted. The first is his well-known right-wing political views, especially regarding the status of parts of Eretz Yisrael captured in 1967. The second is the messianic possibility of elevating the entire world to the status of Eretz Yisrael, thus implicitly undermining the latter’s unique status.

Schneerson’s (partial) affirmation of a religious-Zionist ideology (Wolfson 2009, 132), seeing God’s hand in the victories of 1948, 1956, 1973, and 1982 (Mezvinsky & Kolb 2013, 11) and his involvement in Israeli politics marked a departure from his antecedent (the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe), a staunch opponent of Avaham Kook—and indeed a departure from his own anti-Zionist position in the 1950s, by which “he considered the state of Israel a threat to God’s plan and this heresy. … [and] also rejected the position of Rabbi Kook’s religious Zionism” (Mezvinsky & Kolb 2013, 9; see too Heilman & Friedman 2010, 198, and Garb 2009, 48).

After 1967, his political involvement increased. He advocated settlement expansion, and “argued vociferously against returning any captured land to the Arab enemies” (Mezvinsky & Kolb 2013, 12):

“He and his Lubavitch Chabad followers … insisted that Israeli land concessions did not result in peace but only strengthened the intransigence of Arab enemies and expanded the threat to security of the Jews. The Rebbe did indicate that some territory, although none of the Holy Land, could possibly be returned to the Arabs if there was an absolute guarantee that this would save Jewish lives. He reiterated however that any such guarantee was most likely impossible because of Arab intransigence,” and they were thus “dismayed by the Israeli return of the Sinai to Egypt in accordance with the Camp David agreement in 1979” (Mezvinsky & Kolb 2013, 12–3).

80 This is reminiscent of Seeman (2005), who argued that Ginsburgh’s articulation of subjective, emotional criteria for defining acts of kiddus ha-shem (closely related to bitul in Chabad thought, as noted) marked a departure from Jewish norms.
He even argued that “mystical and Kabbalistic Judaic texts favored” military action to capture Damascus, and even delivered that message to the defense minister (ibid.).

Although he maintained that the secular state created by the Zionists was “blasphemous,” he saw Israel’s wars as “defensive and necessary to protect Jewish lives and security”—an overriding value—and maintains the classic tradition whereby Eretz Yisrael is a divine inheritance (pp. 14–6). Thus, the state served an instrumental purpose in protecting Jewish life until the messianic age, and military prowess and settlement expansion were understood in this vein: “Every inch of territory in Israel is like a city on the border; it is vital for her security. Giving it away to the Arabs exposes all her inhabitants to the possibility of attack” (Schneerson & Touger 2001, 10).

His stance on both the status of the state in the messianic process and the virtue of Jewish conquest and settlement of Eretz Yisrael thus differs from the Kookian conception—and, it would seem on this superficial reading, from Ginsburgh’s mystical interpretation of settlements. Schneerson moreover can be read as devaluing the role of Eretz Yisrael as the locus of redemptive action, consistently with Chabad’s long-standing focus on individual study, contemplation, and teshuvah. He argued that in a kabbalistic sense “the land of Israel cannot be limited to a particular physical space; rather, it signifies the revelation of the divine through Torah study and prayer” (Wolfson 2009, 132). Being in Israel meant sensing the sanctity of the land; thus, one could ‘be in the Land’ while living in galut, and one could live in Eretz Yisrael and yet not ‘be in the Land’, thus affirming “a diasporic conception that un hinges the very notion of the land from a narrow topology” (p. 133). Moreover, in the messianic era, the binary distinction will be erased (consistent with Chabad monism); Chabad’s identification of a new “center” at the Rebbe’s Brooklyn house was part of this project of “sacralizing every civilized space” until “all the dimensions of the world are elevated to the gradation of the land of Israel” (p. 134; see too Garb 2009, 65–6).81

This concludes my limited survey of intellectual traditions from which the rabbis at the focus of this thesis mined their symbolic language and built their worldviews. Tracing the evolution of the ideas herein from thinker to thinker would be beyond the project’s scope; however, it is hoped that this survey adds a layer of depth to the account in this thesis of settler religious discourses.

81 Cf., however, the argument in Ravitzky (1996, 200) that Schneerson veered toward a negation of the value of diasporic Judaism.
Appendix 2

Tau’s rhetoric: Examples in expanded format

Introduction

This appendix presents some of Tau’s rhetoric in expanded format. It commences with a more detailed description of his metaphors of the unruly teenager and the “worm of Jacob” (introduced in Chapter 4), then turns to Tau’s continuation of Avraham Kook’s teachings on the interdependence of supernal and earthly teshuvah (repentance) in triggering the redemptive process. Lastly, it presents an expanded account of his rhetoric around the events of the Hitnatkut and the clashes between settlers and security personnel at Amona.

With the exception of the discussion of teshuvah, the content herein is merely an expansion on the ideas presented in the main body of the thesis. Its interest primarily lies in the opportunity to see Tau’s rhetorical style in a format more faithful to his own discursive rhythm and methods, showing how biblical and talmudic metaphor, references to the rabbis Kook, and appeals to core religious Zionist values and concepts are woven together. So that the appendix stands as a self-complete summary, there is some limited repetition with the main text. The explanation of Kook’s and Tau’s resolution of the need for Jewish repentance as a criterion for messianic redemption is new. However, it is not of sufficiently central significance to justify inclusion in the main body of the thesis, though it does serve to clarify the ‘causal weight’ of developments on the mundane vs. metaphysical plane for influencing the messianic process, according to their worldviews.
Key metaphors

The unruly teenager

As described in Chapter 4, the human developmental metaphor is laid out most fully in Tau’s essay Dor ve-dor (pp. 28–38) and centers on the metaphor of the prodigal child who turns into a moody and sullen teenager—Tau’s metaphor for the state of Israeli society at the start of the 1990s. This analogy is consistent with Tau’s interpretation of the generation in the framework of “kriyat ha-shem,” the calling of God’s name, but is more general and appears often as a rhetorical device for framing the deficiencies of secular society and its politicians as part of a constructive process.

Tau presents an elaboration of this metaphor from Orot Ha-Kodesh (ח"נ, ת"ל), where Kook asserts the value to be found from understanding modern wisdom such as psychology, and applies a textbook on young adult development to the analysis of his generation. The maturation process has many oscillations. In infancy, the child does not yet understand that it is separate from the world, and a long struggle is required to develop a separate ego-consciousness of the “I.” Applied to recent generations, this phase refers to the imitation of Gentile nations by the secular Zionists in creating a Western-style democracy (p. 31).

Thus, though the early religious aliyot (e.g., of Rabbi Kalischer) indicate that the Zionist movement’s origins are in the holy, the Jewish community at large did not yet have a well-developed sense of the Jewish national essence and so the proto-national movement could not yet to shift from the imitation of European political styles and ideologies such as individualism. In support of this, Tau argues that Herzl himself was “no Epicurean,” based on quotes describing the importance of religion to Jewish national culture, but claims that he excluded any mention of religion from the Zionist platform to try to persuade the assimilated, anti-Zionist Reform Jews of Europe to join, but they were too ‘goyish’ to take part, a reflection on the degraded national consciousness of the people as a whole in galut (Perakim, 71).

On the cusp of adulthood, the child must be pulled fully into the outside world. Initially, the differentiation between the youth and the world is still unclear, and he struggles to dissociate the interior and exterior realities. An external rebellion is required to allow an inner deepening. This inner struggle is reflected in the teen’s erratic
or disruptive external behavior, as he tries to conceal his urgent need for a new adult authority (located in one’s self rather than one’s parents; Dor ve-dor, 32). The youth seems dreamy and out of touch, as his focus is directed inwardly in an attempt to extricate the emerging self from its outer environment. In Tau’s generation, the secular Israelis are struggling to differentiate themselves from the pioneer generation. The behavioral pattern is one of rebellion, isolation, distance, and criticism of one’s elders.

The teen also engages in obsessive self-analysis and self-criticism for his deficiencies or incompleteness. In this situation of inner crisis, the serious withdraw into critical introspection, leaving the “marginal” elements to control life. An inferiority complex arises from not apprehending that this is all just a process: a great aching for wholeness is felt, but the teen does not understand that it is necessary and temporary (p. 34). If he is allowed to deteriorate further into a sense of frustration and inferiority, i.e., if those who can see the true process (the religious community) fail to engage with him, compensatory aggression can be expected, and this is one of Tau’s explanations for the presence of “militant” leftists in contemporary Israeli politics. Parents’ anger and criticism of the teen stem from misunderstanding that he is going through a stage in a process of maturation. They isolate the youth, making the situation worse (p. 35).

“**The worm of Jacob**”

Another extended metaphor (Perakim, 53–79) is built on a biological rather than psychological analogy as commentary on the phrase “worm of Jacob” in Isaiah 2 ( אלה תיראי תולעת יעקוב מתי ישראל אני עזרתיך...). Here, says Tau, the prophet is discussing the redemptive process itself, and the order of the pasukim reflects the order of geulah, starting with material construction (i.e., economic, material, and security concerns) and the abandonment of divine consciousness. Although the process commences with the material/secular aspect, it ultimately leads to the corruption of the material/secular, and the situation deteriorates in order to catalyze the ultimate emergence of the union of the material/secular and sacred/spiritual in perfect form, as follows (pp. 57–8).

The worm, Tau writes, represents Israel’s form after centuries of galut. Lacking any physical power, the Jews can only pray. However, it is not an ordinary worm but a silk

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1 See most generally: Tau’s Le-eminat etanu (2), pp. 2-72. This metaphor is also mentioned in Fischer (2009, 33) and analyzed in the context of Kook’s corpus in Rosenak (2013, 147–54). Rosenak focuses on Tau’s Kavei rather than Perakim, but the content is essentially the same. On the source of this metaphor in Avraham Kook’s writings in response to the massacres of the 1920s, see Rosenak (2013, 149 note 135).
worm—actually the larva of a butterfly. As “Jacob” is used to refer to the lower, deteriorated side of the Jewish nature, and “Israel” to the higher side, the image represents the unification of the higher and lower aspects: the worm is not a true worm. The image thus symbolizes a lost or broken thing that will return, from being a worm of the dust, to its ancient form (pp. 54–5). Tau narrates the entire trajectory of Zionism, from its beginnings in the Diaspora to the upheavals of his generation, through the many steps in butterfly growth. He cites Rashi and the Ramban to justify the inspection of natural processes in order to perceive divine patterns, an approach that is the more valid because of the slow, natural character of redemption (p. 53). First, as noted, comes galut. In this state, some pray for miraculous redemption—they pray for the messianic process to happen all at once (בבת אחת)—hoping to skip straight to the butterfly stage. Instead, they find an egg. This corresponds to early religious aliyah, e.g., by Rabbi Kalischer, which represented the humble beginnings of redemption by slow, natural means (p. 55).

Next, those few who did participate in the idea of worldly, natural redemption (e.g., by making aliyah) also expect to immediately see a butterfly. But instead they get a caterpillar—an independent embryo. In many respects, Tau writes, this represents an even worse frustration of their hopes than the egg. A butterfly or egg is harmless, but a caterpillar devours everything. Its whole life is fixated on consumption and survival, that is, economics and security. Its head is in fact part of its body: it has no separate brain (evidently a comment on the lifestyle of endless material consumption and lack of spiritual values that Tau sees as rampant in Israel). This obsessive, destructive consumption and self-preservation are a necessary phase, because the size of the caterpillar will determine the size of the butterfly, so the greater its gluttony at this early stage, the grander the final form (p. 56). But the outer appearance is one of complete self-absorption. In addition to its gluttony, the caterpillar is sterile, and so it is disconnected from the continuity of the generations; from eternity (pp. 56–7).

Tau relates this to Kook’s well-known teachings on the divine will’s use of all capable tools to effect redemption—including the secularists (Ma’amarei, 309). National institutions are part of the ‘body’ of the caterpillar (future butterfly), and represent the building up of the crude substance, i.e., the secular body of the nation, from which the final form, i.e., the holy, can be shaped. Thus, building the profane is essential to building the holy (Perakim, 59; see too Kook’s Ma’amarei, 310, 400; Orot
The end goal of holiness is driving the solidification of the practical/secular body of the Israeli nation, and an inner beating drives everything toward the form of the “butterfly” even for those apparently so far from faith (Perakim, 60; Kook’s Orot 2”א).

Tau repeats Kook’s teaching (e.g., Midot 1”א) that an “empty generation” is most fit as a vessel to receive the light of redemption. The secularists represent such an empty vessel, and a necessary stage in the order of geulah. There is no point shaking the tree if the fruit isn’t ripe, and there is a need for the secular to develop for a time without the disturbance of the holy, like a child before the age of reason. If one were to implant a brain in the body of the caterpillar, it would undergo premature metamorphosis, and the result would be a small butterfly, as opposed to letting the caterpillar eat and grow and eventually being rewarded with a large butterfly, proportional to the size of the caterpillar (Perakim, 64–5; see too Kook’s Orot Ha-Teshuvah 2”א).

In the course of its development into a butterfly, the caterpillar experiences ongoing changes, such as shedding its skin, which it does five times. It spends short periods in cocoons for the shedding process, representing a short pause in growth for hormonal or environmental reasons. From the outside, this hibernation looks like paralysis or even death. This analogy is an illustration in narrative form of teachings by Avraham Kook (Perakim, 63) on the hidden unity of the building and blocking forces in history—apparently contradictory but actually working in concert (Olat re’aiyah 1”א). Progress in fact comes through the clash of these forces, following the dialectical model (Igrot ה”י פ”ה). There can be a need for forces of destruction in order to renew that which exists already, but in a higher or more perfected form (Igrot ל”א), and these negative forces hide within them a divine light (Ma’amarei, 403; Orot א”ג).

The caterpillar produces two excretions that govern these changes, each with a different hormone. One promotes youthfulness, and another skin-shedding (i.e., aging). These two forces appear to oppose one another, but the correct balance, and the to and fro necessary to produce a butterfly, are directed by the brain—representing the inner mind of the nation, or the pulse of geulah operating directly from Knesset Yisrael upon the klal (community). The apparent effect of destruction may well serve the actual purpose of growth, and Tau stresses that we cannot know what stage we’re in at any given time, but must learn about the overall process and its paradoxes so as not to
succeed to despair or to end up doing damage to the natural process through our ignorance (Perakim, 62).

The caterpillar’s final emergence as a butterfly is the hardest stage of all, Tau writes, and this has a parallel in the life of the nation in his time. The caterpillar’s growth reverses. It loses its independent agency as it imprisons itself in a cocoon, and the caterpillar literally hangs its body (its security and economics) by thin threads of web, an excretion that is actually part of itself; that is, it chains itself to a tree, upside down, by strands of its own body, and appears to regress to the form of an egg (p. 57). The troubles of the current time, Tau asserts, relate to this rebirth of the caterpillar (p. 60).

The internal destruction occurring in parallel is even greater. After all the stages of growth, the caterpillar digests itself (Perakim, 61). In national life, this corresponds to ideological abandonment of Eretz Yisrael, and of commitment to secure borders. Much of the caterpillar’s body is dissolved, in order to produce material that will eventually be converted into wings. The intermediate destruction looks, and is, drastic, but the heart, lungs, and sexual organs survive, and the brain guides this process, just as in geulah the direction of the process is determined by the inner kedushah of Knesset Yisrael and by the blueprint of the final form to which God aspires (Perakim, 58; Orot ה"ע).

Such a process is hinted at in Orot (see the citations above), Tau argues (Perakim, 61), where Kook states that a return to dust—to primordial material—is necessary for enabling the perfection of form. Only someone strong can see the truth of what’s happening while immersed in the process itself (Orot ז), a challenge Kook described elsewhere (Ma’amarei, 72) via the metaphor of digging a well. When no water is found, only the believers continue the work. But then, when it finally arrives, and relief should be at hand, the water is found to be polluted, and the camp is again divided as to whether to continue the work. Kook counselled that despair is an even greater mistake than rebellion, and advocated renewed effort (Perakim, 62).

**Geulah and teshuvah**

Kook faced challenges in justifying his revolutionary claims that the atheistic Zionists could constitute the generation of redemption (Perakim, 33; see too Kook’s Igrot (2) פ"ש), and Tau contextualizes his explanation of the sins of his own generation (and the correct political response) in this earlier framework (Perakim, 76–7). One particularly
thorny problem was the traditional Jewish belief that God would withhold the messianic era until the Jewish People had fully repented for their sins (for which they had been exiled in the first place) and submitted to the yoke of full Torah observance; i.e., they first had to undergo teshuvah. Modern Zionism had not, and made no apology for it.

To resolve this challenge, Kook argued that the “inner will” and teshuvah of Knesset Yisrael was sufficient to ensure the outcome of redemption as a historic inevitability. Reading history through a Torah lens (a “divine speculum,” as Tau puts it), allows perception of the truth of the nation’s inner urge/will of teshuvah, as felt by the supernal Knesset Yisrael, from the historical reality of Zionism and the creation of the state. This was Kook’s paradoxical resolution to the need for prior Jewish repentance, identifying the very phenomenon of modern Zionism as an unconscious manifestation of Jews’ supernal teshuvah (repentance), which would in turn usher in messianic redemption, as per the traditional messianic narrative (Afterman 2007, 90; Goldwater 2009, 132–3; see, e.g., Orot Ha-Teshuvah IV:6 and IV:11). Kook asserted that “the reawakening of the people’s desire to go back to the land, to its essence and spirit and character, is motivated by the light of Teshuvah” (Kook, quoted in Afterman 2007, 89–90). Kook thus rendered Zionism simultaneously as a symptom of the start of redemption, and as a causal mechanism of its completion.

This link between geulah and supernal teshuvah operates as another thread in Tau’s theosophy that leads to a restrained and compassionate approach to intra-Jewish conflicts. His recent book “הארת התשובה והגאולה” argues that it’s appropriate to draw a parallel between individual and national teshuvah, though the latter appears in a form that is much more complex and often concealed or hidden from all but the deepest inspection (He’arat, טז). In collective teshuvah (teshuvat ha-klaal), the process operates from an inner will that is invisible from the outside, whereas in individual teshuvah the person’s will is explicit (p. פ!).

The paradox whereby the reluctant return of secular Zionists is understood as teshuvah operates as follows. Tau cites various sources arguing that the redemptive

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2 Because in God’s eyes, redemption became real at the moment of supernal teshuvah, and remains real in His timeless perspective; the history leading to earthly redemption is merely a progressive revelation of that reality. See further Fischer (2009).

3 For Kook, all of reality was infused with this impulse toward repentance and tikun; it was part of the natural fabric of creation. However, Israel’s intimate link with the divine meant that it felt the ‘prodding’ toward repentance first (Orot Ha-Teshuvah V:9, VI:1–2).
process, with which national teshuvah is bound up, will begin under the covering of the secular (p. 17).

See too Fischer (2009) on the “inner will” of the nation.

Again, see especially Fischer (2009) on this concept in religious Zionist thought.

The concept of the tamir (hidden/concealed) is developed in Kook’s writings, especially, e.g., Pinkasei ha-re’aiyayah, p. 12.
spirits alluded to in the Zohar,” which is the root of the soul: Knesset Yisrael, the supernal collective soul of the Jews (p. כד, כה). It is the involvement of this layer that imparts the inner meaning of the return to Eretz Yisrael as the commencement of the return of Klal Yisrael to God and to Torah. At the beginning of the process, on the revealed layer, it appears as an externally coerced teshuvah in response to fear and sorrows, but in the innermost part of the generation’s neshamah, the light of redemption shines and the hidden urge (ha-chefetz ha-tamir) awakens and pushes the generation to teshuvah from love.

Tau stresses that this link remains operative: Knesset Yisrael is the most powerful influence in the life of all the nation. External setbacks are mere appearances, as apparently “external” developments ultimately come from the same divine source (to which Knesset Yisrael is directly connected) and are part of the overall scheme (p. כז). Thus, geulah and teshuvah, the outer process of redemption and the inner process of repentance, are in fact one process, being driven by the same divine program. Because of this ongoing causal flow, believing in the greatness of the soul of the generation and the reality of its teshuvah, however sinful and misguided it appears to be externally, constitutes the basis of emunat itanu (אמונת עתנו) — the “belief/faith of our time.” The spiritual challenge of the community of believers, i.e., the religious Zionist community, is not to be impressed by external appearances, but to maintain patience. Tau’s discussion of national teshuvah concludes with a passage by Kook (Pinkasei, ה) that states that understanding the hidden root of teshuvah/geulah should lead to patience regarding the complications experienced the generations of return. However wicked and inadequate it appears on the surface, the present generation’s essence is holy, and the greatest driver of its conduct is Knesset Yisrael and thus divine (pp. He’arat, כז-כט).

Orot ( הארץ) teaches that the inner character of Knesset Yisrael has already set the character of the coming redemption. Material events are the small beginnings of the process; the main shift is spiritual and takes place within Knesset Yisrael, and the “outer” events are as nothing compared with the “inner” process we could see if we had the eyes of prophets (Ma’amarei 360; Orot Eretz Yisrael I). Geulah is already real, and the visible, earthly developments are a form of revelation (Perakim, 45). However, while redemption is a reality already, this revelation of geulah on the plane of human reality starts slowly (הדברים צומחים לאיטם; Perakim, 44), and the faithful must help (Zekhero, ב).
Spiritually, says Tau, we’re already in the midst of *geulah*, but in terms of its emergence on the plane of physical and social reality, we’re still at the start (*Dor ve-dor*, 11).7

This does not imply a course of passive acceptance of atheism, weak attachment to the Greater Land of Israel, and so on, on the part of secular Jews. Tau’s earlier writings make clear the positive duty of the religious public to engage in a campaign to lead the generation to *teshuvah*, “even if there are no ears fit to hear;” guided by the values of respect and affection (*Perakim*, 35). As argued in Bavli Shabbat 11a, Tau notes, one is under an obligation to attempt to convince one’s fellows of the truth, even if the proof won’t be accepted (*ibid.*). Tau proposes the following four reasons for this obligation on those capable of perceiving the true process that is underway (*Perakim*, 36–7).

Firstly, as Chapter 4 explains more fully, the nation is one organ, and the actions and consciousness of every part affect the whole. This is the value of a true “see-er” and teacher, says Tau: by perceiving the interconnected spiritual structure of the nation and the divine end goal of processes taking place within it, a teacher can ensure that all deeds that flow from his teachings will take their ideal form, as the teachings will be coherent with both the state of the nation and the divine trend. As the last section of this chapter elaborates, this is the central role of true believers in Tau’s theosophy. They represent a firm core at the heart of the nation—a community in which disasters, politicians, the media, and other distractions have no influence and cannot distort the perception of the divine truth. This community can see clearly and articulate correct beliefs to the generation, again and again (see, e.g., Kook’s *Orot* 36b).8 Secondly, if this truth is being articulated correctly, evil cannot increase (e.g., by latching onto the vulnerabilities of the ignorant). Thirdly, the belief itself and its articulation operate on the *inner* dimension of Jewish souls as individuals, and as a collective soul; they speak to the inner longing, even if there is outward denial. Tau quotes Kook’s letter on young rebels against the Torah, affirming that the hidden seeds of their hearts would ultimately fruit, however alienated they were at present (Kook’s *Igrot* 118b). Fourthly, the “foreign ideologies” currently holding sway in Israeli politics are destined to implode and pass away, like communism, as they are empty (see the next subsection). This will leave a void and thirst among the public for true ideals and beliefs. The generation will

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8 On this and similar themes in Tau’s writings, see too Rosenak (2013, 100–2, 138–9, 141, 202–3).
then be receptive, ready to receive the truth—but someone must be speaking it. Chapter 5 explains this ethic more fully.

Tau draws on other elements of Kook’s teachings to support the above interpretation and link it to his metaphors for the nation’s progressive growth. For instance, Kook argued based on talmudic midrashim that a generation of apparent wickedness and materialism (such as his own) could nonetheless precede the coming of the messiah (Oreach mishpat רֵמָח). These midrashim spoke of the need for three generations before the messianic era, which Kook characterized as follows: one generation preoccupied with the material but lacking in any belief or ideals; another generation of purely material ideals that still lacks spiritual truth; and finally, the unification of the material and holy. Thus, explains Tau, a large portion of the Jewish population today feels calm and satisfied already with what Zionism has accomplished (the fulfillment of the material ideal of a safe haven), believing that the whole purpose of the national revival has been accomplished. However, this narrow, secular paradigm contradicts the inner essence of the people, which is precipitating a storm that in turn will eventually reveal the truth of God and trigger a religious revival (see the Schwartz 2001, 96). But the prior and intermediate stages cannot be skipped. There is, writes Tau, one purpose behind the secular Zionists’ rebellion against the holy in these first two generations (Perakim, 78): to strengthen the material, a physical basis to shape into the final ideal form, like the body of the caterpillar discussed previously.

If Mizrachi could have fulfilled the role envisaged by Kook, there would be no need for this process, as the physical development of the state would have “suckled” and taken its nourishment and direction from the side of the holy from the very start. It proved impossible, writes Tau, because of the “diluted,” weak state of Jewry after centuries of galut and assimilation. The people weren’t ready. The Jews’ material power had been sapped or oppressed, and so the basis for statehood in material power had to be restored first.

The resultant path, says Tau, is more difficult and complicated, marked by inner struggles and upheavals. In Orot (ל”א), Kook described the need for the birthpangs of the messiah (חבלי מושיח) on this path, where “חבלי” also denotes a rope that chokes—representing the last struggles of the descent of the divine light down to the depths of sin, to expose the superficiality of the material, immediate, concrete preoccupations of the
generation. This “choking” and “agitation” is what produced the chutzpah (loosely, impudence) of the generation: it was a symptom of the struggle between the inner essence of the people and the limited conception of nationalism represented by secular Zionism. Tau thus sees the starting point for understanding his own generation as the crisis in consciousness stemming from this contradiction, as predicted by Kook. He also cited talmudic sources predicting that the messiah would come in a time of moral decline, chutzpah (loosely, brazenness) and apostasy (Eisen 2011, 148–9)—attributes that many Orthodox readily perceived in the irreligious Zionists.

In sum: on the inner or supernal level of reality, the Jewish nation has already undergone teshuvah, in Tau’s view, and so redemption is deterministically inevitable in the long run. However, redemption’s full realization requires the nation to undergo conscious teshuvah as well. The contradiction between the inner truth and the prevailing external apostasy and secular consciousness is the source of the upheavals of the time, says Tau. However, as seen in chapters 3–5, he posits a dialectic role for these upheavals: they are not merely symptoms of the misalignment, but a mechanism in the divine structure of Jewish history, designed to rectify the misalignment by catalyzing a strengthening of Jewish consciousness.

**Tau’s rhetorical response to the Hitnatkut**

The above ideas, and the worldview analysis in chapters 3–5, contextualize Tau’s rhetorical response to the Hitnatkut and Amona clashes. The remainder of the appendix presents an expanded description of this rhetoric (presented in concise format in Chapter 5), closer to Tau’s original format.

With regard to calls to condemn the secular leaders as responsible for the Hitnatkut and thus the appropriate targets of anger, Tau argues that this confuses the nature of what’s happening by failing to perceive the divine dialectic logic of history. The Talmud suggests an association between the generation of the “heels of the messiah” and the prevalence of a shallow perspective or understanding, or the misattribution of causes to local, concrete agents rather than the grand scheme. The situation, he says, is analogous to that of a dog being hit with a stick. The foolish dog thinks that the stick is

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9 *Bavli* Suta ב, טה.
responsible, not the man holding it. The “stick” here, says Tau, is the prime minister, but those who are wise will perceive God’s control over the process (Kavei, י’; Ha-yashar, נ”). Similarly, Jacob mistakenly thought that Joseph’s brothers, not God, were responsible for his kidnapping and exile in Egypt, but nothing happens outside the divine design; the apparent tragedy was a necessary prelude to future miracles (Kavei, נ”). Similarly, in analyzing the purpose of the withdrawal, one must see that “God is wielding the axe” and try to discern his purpose (p. נ”).

The first angle through which the disengagement can be understood spiritually is through Tau’s theosophy of dialectical cycles in redemption, as discussed in Chapter 3. A principle of divine government, he asserts, is that the appearance of regression is actually progress: God is actually renewing the good in the world at just the moment when it seems absent, as was the case during the “loss” of Joseph in Egypt after his kidnapping (p. נ). There was never a guarantee that the redemptive process would be free of setbacks, says Tau; quite the contrary. The prophecy of Isaiah described great struggles that would lead to the messianic age, but these struggles have a purpose and should not be cause for despair (p. נ”). Tau reminds his readers: no matter how bad things look, God finishes what God starts (p. נ”). Everything is part of the messianic process, which on the spiritual plane has already been completed: “the end is created before the beginning,” and the faithful should remain secure in that conviction (p. נ”).

Tau cites a talmudic passage as further support for the view that the current pains are in fact part of the great blessing of redemption. It says that three gifts have been given to Israel by God (the Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and ha-olam ha-ba), and that all of them have been or will be delivered via sorrows and struggles (p. נ”). He compares the current trials to the birthpangs experienced during the original forging of Am Yisrael as a nation and its conquest of Eretz Yisrael, only this time, the trials signal the struggle to enter the messianic era, in which ha-olam ha-ba and the current world will unite. Tzvi Yehuda taught, he says, that the messiah will come at a moment of despair. The despair is thus a requirement for the messiah’s arrival, and so is in fact a surface-level “negative” symptom of the positive process of geulah (p. מ”). Consistently with the worm–butterfly metaphor, in which the base vessel that precedes and contains the good is proportional to the good that will finally be revealed, Tau argues that the measure of “revealed light”

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10 Bavli Brachot 8, נ.
will be proportionate to the measure of darkness and obscurity that precedes it. The disengagement from Gaza was an unparalleled evil in history, he says, and so it will be with the subsequent light (p. 360). All the trauma is thus part of the dialectical process of (national) rebirth: at first the light is hidden, but eventually it will be revealed. So Avraham Kook (Ma’amarei, 360–1) taught on the massacres of 1929: however traumatic, good has always eventually come from the yishuv’s challenges. They facilitate inner growth, and strengthen the people’s longing for the revealed end (p. 361).

One form that the “revealed light” will take is an elevation of consciousness—and specifically that of the “heart” of the nation, the religious Zionist public. The disengagement, argues Tau, will force the community of true believers to refine its perception of reality, moving to a fuller and more elevated level of consciousness. The surface-level appearance of reality may be that the settler world is being “punished” for some inexplicable “sins,” but rather than righteous retribution, what is going on is a creative dialectic process: these “sins” are just present inadequacies and deficiencies from which one needs to detach in order to enable the emergence of a perfected form in the future (p. 361). As the depth of sorrow of the events is “too great to be apprehended” within our present mindset, writes Tau, they function as a catalyst for the development of an even grander conception of reality—a deeper and fuller understanding of divine reality on earth (p. 362). The purpose of the apparent tragedy is to facilitate the destruction of “lesser concepts” (ibid.); we must “awaken” our hearts and consciousness to a higher level (p. 362).

This operates on two levels: the national, and within the community of believers specifically. On the national level, the fault that needs to be repaired according to Tau is subservience to gentile culture—the “all-pervading” materialism and atheism in Israel, despite the vast superiority of the Torah culture (p. 362). Tikkun, he writes, starts with eliminating the influence of gentiles, as this cultural and spiritual weakness is the source of the national weakness. That is, the disengagement is a result and symptom of a broader “cultural disease,” in which Israel’s leaders are slaves of Europe and America, and so repairing the state starts with “casting off the gentile yoke.” He criticizes those who seek the approval of the “goyim” and are immersed in “foreign culture,” and says these faulty opinions and the faulty spirit must be repaired (Be-chokhma, 5). What is

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11 The Jewish community in Mandate-era Palestine.
needed is a return to the “original,” “pure” Israelite culture, and its deep connection to
the land (Kavei, τ). When we are saturated in an alien culture, he argues, and sorrows
such as this are sent to “purify us,” strengthen us, and “reset” our connection with Eretz
Yisrael on the right footing (p. 19). The negative cultural condition is the correct target,
Tau says, for the settlers’ anger, rather than the leaders more immediately responsible
for the withdrawal, who are like “babies” or “simple peasants” (p. 29).

However, this begs the question among the religious Zionist settlers who are Tau’s
intended audience: “why us?” Why should the hammer blow fall on precisely the
community that is not saturated in foreign culture and is standing firm against pressures
to cede parts of Eretz Yisrael, the Jewish inheritance, to Arabs? If Israel is to be stood
on its correct foundation, “why aren’t we the foundation?” (p. 29). God could have no
reason to punish this community, so surely the disaster is the result of the secular
leadership, not a divine process.

Tau struggles to address these complaints in a way that is fully coherent with his
past writings. As seen from the previous discussion of his theosophy, the radical
interclusion of all Israel implies on some level that the faults of the seculars are at least
partially the responsibility of the devout. He has argued that the weakness that can be
seen in the government is not the fault of the left alone, or any one group or another
within the nation, first because of the relationship of interclusion and second because of
the role of “true sight” at the most fundamental level of reality: Tau has declared that
the weakness of believers, us, is the cause (Zekhero, ω) of national and government
weakness. This is firstly because of the total interclusion of Jews. As long as there
remains one Jew “who shaves off his sidelocks,” “you [the religious person] have half a
nice beard, and half a defective one,” Tau asserts. The same is true, he argues, of
attachment to the Greater Land of Israel in the wider community: while there is even
one Jewish Israeli who doesn’t feel ownership of Eretz Yisrael, our attachment to the
land is incomplete, our belief is defective, and a spiritual state of wholeness not yet been
attained (Shlach, π).

Tau argues that the disengagement, although an outer disconnection from the land,
in fact strengthens the religious community’s inner connection with the land; a spiritual,
rather than human, connection (Kavei, τ). The physical appearance of separation is not
the reality: it is like the process of childbirth, and the pain of physical separation in fact
strengthens the connection with the land, like a mother and child during labor (p. 2). However, the implication here of the superiority of a transcendent spiritual connection over one that is embodied and lived sits uneasily with Avraham Kook’s emphasis on the importance of living a “natural,” normal life tied to the land as the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, and with the character of the messianic era being the unification of the earthly and physical and the spiritual. It is difficult to reconcile this interpretation with Tau’s own teachings, discussed in the previous chapters, that the unification of the material and spiritual is superior to focusing on spirituality exclusively.

Other metaphors that Tau uses include describing the pressure being imposed on the believers of the nation as like the pressure of the olive press that produces the oil (p. 7), or like the uprooting of “small beliefs” for repotting in a larger vessel, like plants (p. 12). We need uprooting, says Tau, in order to be replanted in a “more developed,” “higher” way, so we can attain a new level of spirituality and consciousness (p. 12). We’re not yet ready, writes Tau, to embody the most supreme consciousness, so we are “being shaken” to enable its development. The settlers were chosen for this task because only pure, devoted believers can attain such a high level of consciousness; others would just abandon Israel and move to the United States when confronted with such a challenge, e.g., the seculars and the Haredim (p. 17).

Consistently with his theosophical teachings on the relationship of “true believers” and “true see-ers” to the rest of the nation and the redemptive progress, Tau argues that this task of raising one’s consciousness has great importance for the Israeli public at large, and is a divine mission. The argument flows more naturally here. The religious public represents the spiritual elite within the nation, he writes, like a special military unit, and it is blessed by God, even in sorrow, to walk a hard path for kiddush ha-shem (sanctification of God’s name, understood in traditional usage to mean martyrdom), and to walk it in might and joy (p. 82). The purpose of all this, he writes, is not to turn us into “poor refugees”—a “social problem” to be solved by the government (referring to the relocation of Gush Katif residents in trailer parks after the evacuation). In fact, it is the nation at large that is in trouble and “needs our help.” We can’t become poor, marginal figures, because the nation’s need for us is too great (p. 72). Those who are disconnected from the life of Torah are the “poor ones,” and we must help them to see
the light, instead of our despair and anger (p. 83). We’re legions of a king, he asserts, entrusted with the “drug of life” for the whole nation (p. 25).

Gush Katif was just the start of a greater mission (p. 72). The ideals behind it have not suddenly disappeared and become irrelevant; on the contrary, it’s clearer now just how essential they are (p. 26). These ideas give the klal a reason to exist. Therefore, when the nation is deficient, God brings this to our attention. Gush Katif, writes Tau, was as an ideal, sheltered, religious community. It contained “no worms.” Now, it is undergoing a forced confrontation with a very different, “sick” community, in order to reinforce its sense of mission to “heal” it. Unconsciously, this “sick” community’s policies against the settlers are like the bad behavior of a small child acting up to get its father’s attention (p. 29). The task is therefore to show the nation the way, and the religious community was chosen for this task because it embodies the spiritual “nutrition” the nation needs (p. 2).

Because of this sacred task and special status, the true believers must be a light to the rest of the nation, just as Israel is a light to the nations. It would be wrong, says Tau, to despair at this point and believe that the disengagement shows Zionism has run its course, as if we believe that the child is “gone” once it leaves the womb. The true spiritual values that animated the return to Zion haven’t disappeared, he says, and they’ll burst out eventually in a revolution. The process of living among the multitudes (עם רב) and facilitating this revolution is our new task (p. 72). We must meet the “ugly face of the generation” and reveal the good hidden in it, so that the same hands that participated in destruction will instead participate in building (p. 73). Rather than disconnecting from the secular public in anger, Tau calls for face-to-face (panim el panim) communication in furtherance of this mission (p. 25).

We’re called to this task, says Tau, despite the scorn of the seculars (p. 73). The secular community are like the ignorant peasants (amei ha-aretzot) who hated the wise students (talmidei chakhamim) of Torah in the time of Rabbi Akiva. This outer stance is in opposition to their inner one of love and attraction. Rabbi Akiva himself himself was initially a peasant who hatred wise students (p. 25). This generation, says Tau, is like Akiva before his return to faith. It is made up of people who will gladly sacrifice themselves for the people and their homeland in principle—but who “want to wipe out the Kookists.” Tau says the prophecy of Isaiah shows that this situation of hatred toward
the *talmidei chakhamim* will reverse (p. 32). But the faithful must hold to their task for it to happen, and not give in to despair.

Tau stresses that this patience must stretch to a potentially very long time scale. In a question-and-answer session with yeshiva educators after the clashes at Amona (see the next subsection), one participant challenged Tau’s consciousness-raising focus, saying that if we bring the nation back to *teshuvah*, they’ll just return to their bad old ways in another 100 years. Tau replied, “So what if it takes us 1000?” (*Be-chokhma*, 15) Another asked, “Is everything we’ve done a failure [after the evacuations]?” Tau replied with an emphatic *no*. By the power of what we did, he says, “we’ll return to the Gush,” and it will be rebuilt with the consciousness of all Israel behind it (p. 16). He reminds his audience that there was a Jewish settlement called Bnei Yehuda in the Golan Heights in the period of the pre-state *yishuv*, about a hundred years ago. These early settlers, he says, showed great *mesirut nefesh*, settling among the Druze and the Arabs, where they were all eventually killed and the settlement demolished. But today the Golan is in our hands—thanks to them. All *mesirut nefesh*, he argues, endures eternally and adds to the grand sum (*cheshbon*) of the revival of Israel. “You’re working for the sake of eternity,” he reassures the audience. Even if Gush Katif was uprooted, the settlement there was the basis for the future, and on its foundation the state will arise in its ideal and full form (p. 16).

As noted in Chapter 5, the Amona evacuation was marked by unprecedented violence between the protestors and the security forces. In his question-and-answer session with yeshiva educators, Tau was asked whether the strategy of violent protest was perhaps the way to deal with attempts at evacuations by the government. His response, reemphasized in his answers to several other questions throughout the session, was unequivocal: violence is forbidden and ineffective. “You can’t rehabilitate people from violent clashes like that,” he asserted (p. 12). Tau also rebutted claims that it was necessary to fight evacuations as part of one’s duty to fight for *Eretz Yisrael*, and that what happened at Amona was arguably an example of *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice). The settlers are already *moserim nefesh*, he replied, by living in Judea and Samaria and dealing with the threat of terrorism. They have nothing to prove. The Amona clash was *chilul hashem*, a desecration of God’s name (p. 9, 12).
In very stark contrast to the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, Tau asserts that the duty of one who studies Torah is שיקול דעת—being measured and cool-headed. He repeats the Akiva parable mentioned in the previous subsection: the religious Zionists are the talmidei chakhamim; the rest are peasants (p. 7). The conduct of these peasants may well be aggressive and cruel, but a higher responsibility is laid upon the learned student, and he should not retaliate in kind. Every cop, Tau asserts, can become a ba’al teshuvah, like the famous rabbi Akiva (p. 8). Moreover, Tau criticizes the tactic of deliberately forcing a confrontation with the police to create a media event, citing an example from the days of Gush Emunim when similar tactics were used at a protest against a visit by a Christian missionary and were criticized by Tzvi Yehuda as unethical: “you’re using the police… you’re forcing them to sin.” Such tactics therefore come under the category of a “mitzvah ha-ba’ah be-aveirah”—a mitzvah that is performed by means of a sin, and thus unacceptable (p. 9).

The police don’t know any better, he says: they didn’t learn in a yeshiva (ibid.). They’re not our enemies; they’ve simply been coerced or brainwashed by the secular left, and in a secular person’s eyes, the settler is a “messianic,” “irresponsible,” “damaging” actor (pp. 6–7). It is the “leftist extremists,” says Tau, who want the conflict with the settlers (p. 6). They want the violence, he says, and the shocking photos (p. 12). The left incites the Israeli public to hatred and is irresponsible, whereas we have a higher duty (p. 9). Tau insists: “don’t be part of the performance” (p. 12).

Tau thus redirects responsibility for the acts of the security forces from the officers themselves to the broader culture and spiritual situation, consistently with his approach to Gush Katif, as outlined above. When questioned about whether one should fight with the security forces, Tau says that this is like “throwing the baby out with the bathwater,” or the confusion described earlier through the metaphor of the dog and the stick: the police and the soldiers are the stick, says Tau, but who is holding the stick (p. 5)?

He is even more scathing in his criticismism of those who threatened civil war. Those who talk about a civil war are simply wrong, he says: this threat is a flawed, unethical method that undermines all and imperils the Jewish national project in its entirety. The leftists don’t care, he asserts, if we lose the Jewish state; they’d be happy to be “just another star on the United States flag.” But we value the state, and so our responsibility

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12 One who returns to faith.
is greater. He reminds his audience that civil war (i.e., “baseless hate,” as discussed earlier in this chapter) was responsible for the destruction of the the Temple, and begs, “don’t rip the child in two” (referring again to the parable of King Solomon and the two “mothers”; p. 13). Rather than conflict, he argues, we must persuade the people to follow. Attacking our fellows won’t be persuasive (p. 4). “Don’t fight the soldiers; invite them to tea,” he says (p. 14). A frustrated audience member protested: isn’t this a form of “dumbing down”? Tau replied that “face to face” engagement (panim el panim) certainly isn’t “dumbing down”; and besides, “you’re teachers,” “you ‘dumb down’ all the time” in order to engage with your students on their level, and the situation is analogous with regard to engagement with seculars. There is the same need now in order to educate the public, whether the person before you is an intelligent man or a simple one (p. 15).

Tau also contextualizes this approach in his “cultural war” argument. Events like the withdrawal, he argues, are possible only because “European Union ideas” are affecting the national leadership—the leaders are “serving the EU.” Rather than attacking leaders like Sharon or the security forces, the battle must be ideological: EU beliefs such as “modernity,” “progress,” a “Palestinian nation,” and “two states for two peoples” must be fought (p. 7). There is a “big light” in our generation, he says; it is just misdirected (p. 14). “You haven’t identified the enemy,” Tau asserts. That must be the first question, before all: at whom are you aiming your canons? We’re in a culture war, and that should be our focus, not the police and soldiers (p. 15). Asked whether it is permissible at all to hate wickedness, Tau replied that “the ones pulling the strings” are wicked. Asked to clarify, he named “the intelligentsia” and “peace organizations,” but qualified that we must “hate their opinions,” not the people (p. 13). With what sounds like irritation, Tau advises that one should not worry about whom specifically to curse; never mind his name and ID number, as only God knows. Hate evil, he says, but if your brother is the one committing hateful deeds, then hate his hate, not your brother (p. 14). Provocation should be resisted. When they shoot at you from one direction, he advises, don’t fire in a different direction. They’re shooting at us only because they’ve been “drenched in wicked culture for 30 years” (p. 15).

This concludes my illustration of Tau’s rhetoric in expanded format, which shows how the assumptions and logic of his broader worldview are buttressed by rhetorical
resources from the Kookian canon and appeals to classic Jewish values and metaphors. It also elucidated the self-perception among this milieu as a spiritual elite. Tau’s appeal to settlers’ sense of moral and spiritual superiority was shown especially by the medical metaphors, and it partially reflects the discursive strategy recommended by Atran and Axelrod (2008, 231); i.e., that Sharon should have called the settlers “heroes.” Tau’s rhetorical strategy can also be interpreted as prioritizing the sacred value of Jewish unity over the need to protect other Gush Emunim norms—but he does so by contextualizing settlement in a very gradual messianic narrative, rather than dismissing settlement’s theurgic, halakhic, or moral value. In sum, this more detailed account illustrates the style and key elements of Tau’s religious rhetoric of restraint in action.
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