

THE MEANING OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

by

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Even as a political fact the State of Israel is a unique creation. Its legal existence has been recognized by all of the major powers and by most other states; yet all of its immediate neighbors, the six Arab states on its borders, continue to insist that the presence of the State of Israel in the Middle East is a political and moral affront of such magnitude that it entitles them to try to effect its destruction. There have been many revolutions in the twentieth century in the name of national self-determination; Israel is the only example of a new state created by a largely non-resident people returning to the homeland of its ancestors.

In our century the tendency of political states, both old and new, has been to conceive of themselves as secular arrangements which represent no particular religious tradition. The State of Israel is indeed largely secular. For that matter, one of the avowed purposes of its creators was to make it possible for Jews to lead completely secular lives as Jews, within their own polity. Nonetheless, Israel was created by Jews to be and to remain an essentially Jewish State, that is, to represent something more than a conventional, secular political arrangement to serve the needs of its individual citizens, of whatever condition or provenance. This mystique pervades even the secularists in Israel; it is deeply felt among the majority of the Jews of the world, regardless of the nature of their religious convictions or commitments. The multiplicity of often clashing forms of life and value appears, from this perspective, to be the confusion of creativity, the necessary turmoil which attends the effecting of a synthesis between the old and the new. The present is seen as an age of becoming, and the sometimes even bitter internal conflicts of the moment are part of some larger harmony. The national mood in Israel is one of attempting to encounter the twentieth century in terms of its own historic tradition. It is a tragic paradox that the closest parallel to this self-image is to be found, in terms of their own pasts and presents, among the Arabs and, more generally, among many of the societies in the Third World, but most of these states are in varying degrees hostile to Israel.

The most unique characteristic of the life of Israel today is its connection with the Jewish community of the world. This theme was stated in law by one of its earliest constitutional acts, the Law of Return, under which any Jew is a citizen of the State of Israel from the moment of his arrival as an immigrant. Such a law is not entirely unprecedented among modern irredentist movements, but the whole complex of connections between the State of Israel and the world Jewish community is indeed unique. Support, both moral and financial, by the majority of the Jews outside of its borders is critically necessary to the development of Israel. The State of Israel regards itself, and is universally regarded as the spokesman for some Jewish interests, such as the rights of the Jews of the Soviet Union, which are not immediately related to its own position and which sometimes, in terms of narrowest self-

interest, Israel would be best off avoiding. The leadership in Jerusalem remains dedicated to the task of helping to preserve Jewish loyalty and consciousness among the Jews on all five continents.

It is too narrow and even unjust to view this concern as the desire of an embattled nation to keep alive a maximum reservoir of good will and support or even ultimately of potential new immigrants. The preservation of the Jewish spirit is the fundamental purpose for which the State was conceived by its founders; this commitment was even more important than the immediate needs which the Jewish settlement in the Holy Land has served during this tragic century, as the major place to which Jewish refugees from persecution could come as of right and not as an act of foreign grace. In turn, the Jews of the world look upon Israel as the major contemporary incarnation of many of their own hopes for continuity. The depth of the emotion which Israel evokes among them is, to be sure, affected by recent memories of Auschwitz. Israel is, indeed, in its very strength, a symbol of the end of Jewish passivity and lack of power to resist slaughter; it does represent an open door for Jews who do not easily, in this present age, trust anyone else but themselves with the keys to their safety. At the very root, however, Israel, and the world Jewish concerns which help sustain it, are both based on some of the grand and ancient themes of Jewish religion and of Jewish history. One cannot understand the present unless it is viewed as both a contemporary re-evocation of elements of faith and hope peculiar to Judaism and, paradoxically, as a contemporary tension between this older outlook and newer modes of thought and life.

When a Jew addresses Christians on these themes, another paradox appears. It should be easier to speak of these great issues to men of good will whose lives have been spent in understanding, in terms of their own faiths, the way of life and the outlook of the biblical tradition. Nonetheless, the religious and spiritual premises which are at the root of Zionism, both ancient and modern, are precisely those aspects of the Jewish experience which do not exist for Christians, in most of the versions of their understanding of their own faith. The task of a Christian, were he to try to make the most uniquely Christian element of his faith, the Incarnation, comprehensible to Jews would be of a comparable order of difficulty. Our religious traditions move, at their most characteristic, in different grooves. We do have a right to ask of each other two things: that we, indeed, attempt to hear how the great themes of the Bible have resounded when played by other players and on instruments other than our own; and that we attempt to hear each other without judgmental presumptions, laying aside the notion, insofar as it is possible for human beings so to do, that the experience of others should not have existed because it differs so radically from our own.

II.

All of the elements of Jewish religious consciousness were present and indeed defined in the very first encounter, in the biblical narrative, between the One God and Abraham. The account needs to be recalled, both for what it affirms and for what it excludes: "And God said to Abram, go forth from your land and from your place of birth and from the house of your father to the land which I will show you. And I will make of you a great people and I will bless you and make your name great; and be a blessing." In the next verse the last promise is amplified: "and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you". Abraham obeyed the command and

entered the land, where the One God appeared to him, reiterating and amplifying the promise: "and to your children I will give this land" (Gen. 12:1-3). In these encounters Abraham was taken away from all of his original relationships. Community, land and even the family within which he arose all represent ties which were broken in a fresh beginning, a covenant with the Lord, in which a new community is to be created which Abraham is to found. It is to arise in a particular place, the land of Canaan, which is set aside for authentic encounter between the seed of Abraham and the God who founded their community. The life of this community in this land exists for a purpose, to demonstrate to all other people how human life is to be lived at its most moral. The implication already exists in the original sending that any falling away from such a standard will represent a breach in the covenant and a defilement of holy soil. Exile is already conceivable as punishment and the ultimate return is already in view as laden with messianic meaning, of redemptive quality for Jews and for mankind.

One can skip the centuries and quote a modern writer from almost our own time, to find these most ancient themes reappearing essentially as they were first pronounced. Solomon Schechter, the first President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, wrote in 1906 in New York: "The selection of Israel, the indestructibility of God's covenant with Israel, the immortality of Israel as a nation, and the final restoration of Israel to Palestine, where the nation will live a holy life on holy ground, with all the wide-reaching consequences of the conversion of humanity and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth - all these are the common ideals and the common ideas that permeate the whole of Jewish literature extending over nearly four thousand years."

Both as a fact and a promise the relationship of Jews to the land of Israel thus appeared as an indispensable element in the original covenant. Jerusalem appears later, at the time of David. It is clear from both of the biblical accounts of its conquest, in Samuel and in Chronicles, that making the city into the capital is the act which set the seal on the creation of the Jewish Kingdom. The city did not belong to any individual tribe, not even to the tribe of Judah: "And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem" (I Chronicles 14:4), thus acquiring it by action of the entire people and making of it the place to which all Israel would turn. It certainly does not need to be demonstrated that all of the biblical writers looked to Jerusalem as the essence of the meaning of their faith, life and hope. In the later years of the existence of the Second Temple Jerusalem was the center of pilgrimage not only for the Jews in the Land of Israel but also for the increasingly scattered Diaspora. The evidence for this is to be found in all of the literature of the period, in Josephus (Wars I, 4, 13), Philo (Laws 1, 68) and the New Testament (Acts of the Apostles 2:5). The literature of the Talmud is, of course, laden with accounts of masses from all of the Jewish world coming to the Temple, especially to celebrate the Passover. There is a tale, no doubt, exaggerated, that one Passover King Agrippa had the priests count the number of paschal lambs that had been offered up and he found that the total exceeded 1,200,000 (Pasahim 64b). It is well known that in those days, in the century before the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, the Temple was visited by gentiles as well as Jews and there is Talmudic evidence that in the sacrificial cult there was regular provision for acts of prayer and atonement for all the "seventy nations" of the world.

The connection between Jews and the land was not broken by the Exile. By the third century the Babylonian Jewish community had begun to overshadow the one which remained in the land under the Romans, and yet Babylonian authorities ruled, as firmly as those in the Holy Land, that either party to a marriage could force the other, by appeal to Rabbinic courts, to move from the Diaspora to the Land of Israel (Ketubot 110b). Dwelling in the land remained, in the view of most of the later rabbinic authorities, a biblical commandment of continuing validity. Those of the medieval writers who did not insist on this as a religious good absolved themselves and the people of their generation because of the dangers to life that the journey involved (Responsa of R. Isaiah Trani II, 25). This point is perhaps best made by quoting a tale from the Third Century: Two rabbis were once on their way out of the Land of Israel to Nisibis, where the great teacher, R. Judah ben Bathyrah, dwelt, to learn Torah from him. They got as far as Sidon and there they remembered the Land of Israel. They began to weep, they rent their garments, and they remembered the biblical verses which promised the land to the seed of Abraham. The rabbis turned around and went back to their place in the land, pronouncing that dwelling in the Land of Israel is in itself an act equal of religious significance to all of the Commandments in the Torah (Sifre, Re'eh).

In aspiration and in memory the connection of Jews with the land was thus not broken by the Exile. On the contrary, the destruction of the Temple and the Holy City, Jerusalem, and the absence of Jews from their land were regarded as a time of punishment. Life outside of the Holy Land was possible for Jews, but it was less than the full life, in perfect obedience to God, which could happen only with physical restoration. What has increasingly appeared with the progress of historical research in the last century is that these religious commitments were more than merely visionary. Some Jews continued to remain in the land even during the most dangerous and disastrous times. In every century there were returns to it, sometimes by small handfuls of leading spiritual figures and, on occasion, by substantial communities.

In the early centuries access to Jerusalem itself was denied to Jews, though there is some evidence that the Roman emperors of the second century and the one thereafter did permit them to visit the city and to worship on the Mount of Olives and sometimes even on the Temple Mount itself. The situation became even more difficult by the fourth century. There is contemporary evidence from Christian sources that Jews had the greatest difficulty in buying the right to come, at least on the Ninth of Ab, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple, to pray near the Western Wall. The Pilgrim from Bordeaux, the earliest Christian visitor whose written account of his visit to Jerusalem has survived, tells that in the year 333 Jews came every year to that site to "bewail themselves with groans, rend their garments, and so depart" (The Bordeaux Pilgrim, pp. 21-22). There are comparable accounts by the Church Father Gregory of Nazianzus (Orat VI de pace, p. 91) and by Jerome in his commentary to Zephaniah, written in the year 392 (Migne, Patrologia, XXV, Col. 1354). With the end of Roman rule in Palestine the prohibition against Jews living in Jerusalem was lifted and after that there is evidence for an often flourishing Jewish community in the Holy City. During the Crusades the great traveler Petahiah of Regensburg was in Jerusalem in the years 1180-1185, and he reports that at that time there was only one

Jew, a dyer, resident in the city. After the era of the Crusades the community began to rebuild.

It is instructive in this connection that since 1844, a half-century before the first stirrings of modern Zionism, Jerusalem has been the one city in the Holy Land which has consistently had a Jewish majority in its population. According to the 1844 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica the population figures were then: 7,120 Jews, 5,530 Moslems and 3,390 Christians. At that point the entire population of Jerusalem lived within the walled city. By 1896, when much of the Jewish population was already outside the wall but the city as a whole was a unit, there were more than 28,000 Jews and some 17,000 Christians and Moslems, combined into roughly equal halves (Luah Erez Yisrael, 1896). The first government census by the British, that of October, 1922, found almost 34,000 Jews and about 38,000 Moslems and Christians in the whole of the city. Even at that point, with the Jewish population growth taking place entirely outside the wall, there were still 5,639 Jews in the Old City itself. In 1931 Jews were a majority of 51,000 in the city out of a total population of 90,000. By 1939 the Jewish population of all of Jerusalem was an even more pronounced majority, but almost two decades of riots and pogroms by Arabs against Jews in the Old City had made it a dangerous place in which to live, and Jewish numbers in the Old City itself had declined to something over 2,000.

In the last two millenia of its history Jerusalem has been the most dangerous and difficult place for Jews to dwell of any of the city of the Holy Land. This sampling of population figures is evidence that physical connection to the city remained so precious to Jews that they were willing, throughout the ages, to risk the dangers and to submit to the suffering. All of the chronicles and contemporary accounts of the Middle Ages substantiate the import of the figures for the last century: whenever the barest possibility existed, even under hostile powers, enough Jews were to be found to cleave to Jerusalem so that, across the centuries, theirs was the largest continuing presence in the city. In Jerusalem memory of the past, messianic hopes for the future, and modern Zionism in all its contemporaneity are indeed the heirs of the major continuing physical connection to the city.

This clinging by Jews to Jerusalem, even more than to the whole of the rest of the Holy Land, is no accident; it has the deepest roots in the continuing religious tradition and folk consciousness of Jews. It is "the city which I have chosen unto me" (I Kings 11:36) and the one "upon which my name is called" (II Kings 21:4). It was, of course, the place where the Temple stood, the seat of God's presence, even though the heaven and the heaven of heavens could not contain Him. In the imagery of prophecy Zion and Jerusalem are often parallel to all of Israel; both these names are often used to represent not only the whole of the

people but also all of its land. For example, "Speak unto Zion, you are my people" (Isaiah 51:16) or "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; speak to the heart of Jerusalem" (Isaiah 40:1). The synagogue poets of late ancient and medieval times made much of these themes. Of the hundreds of examples that could be given, the most famous is also the most characteristic. Writing in Spain in the eleventh century, Judah Halevi cried out: "Zion, wilt thou not ask after the peace of thy captive children?" This poet and philosopher ended his life as a pilgrim in the Holy Land, where he was killed soon after his arrival.

In the daily prayers of Jews to this day one of the benedictions of the silent devotion is a prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem; that paragraph represents the hope for the restoration of Jews to the Holy Land as a whole. In the grace which Jews say after every meal, morning, noon and night, the third benediction reads: "And rebuild Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily and in our day; blessed art thou O Lord who builds Jerusalem". All synagogues throughout the Jewish world, from the first synagogue in antiquity to those being erected this very day, have been built in such fashion that they face towards Jerusalem. Its very name has always evoked the memory of a time when all was well, when Jews lived on their land and worshipped God in His holy temple, and the hope for the day when some of this glory would return. To be buried on the Mount of Olives, no matter where one dies, has been regarded for two millenia as surest hope of the Resurrection and bodies were being returned from Rome some 2,000 years ago for that purpose. To kiss the stones of Jerusalem, even in its destruction, was to be as close to God as man could be. To participate in its rebuilding was the hope of the ages.

In the Holy Land as a whole, the Jewish presence after the fourth century was, in terms of numbers, of relatively lesser importance. Nonetheless, the realities of Jewish history during the nineteen centuries of the Exile are misstated without emphasis on the important existence of Jewish communities in the land itself throughout the centuries. The Talmud of Jerusalem was created by important schools of Jewish learning in the Holy Land, and these declined only in the fourth and fifth century under Christian persecution. The fixing of the vocalization of the Hebrew Bible, the Masoretic Text, was done by Jewish scholars in the Tiberias between the eighth and tenth centuries. At that time, and for the next century or so, both the Karaites and the followers of the Talmudic tradition had important communities in the Holy Land, and for a while, around the year 1000, academies of rabbinic learning were reconstituted in Jerusalem and Ramleh; these were of such consequence that they shared leadership in the Jewish world as a whole with the schools in Babylonia, though the Babylonian academies had, by then, enjoyed an uninterrupted tradition of almost a millennium. Even under the Crusaders Jewish communities

continued to exist in the cities of Acre and Ashkelon and in a variety of other places, especially in a number of villages in the Galilee, in several of which Jews have dwelt without interruption, since before the destruction in the year 70.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century there came the first organized attempt by Jews in Europe to return to the Holy Land, when three hundred rabbis of France and England came there; some of these men were of the highest intellectual rank. Nahmanides left Spain after an unfortunate disputation in Barcelona, which was forced upon him by Pablo Christiani, and spent the last three years of his life from 1267 to 1270, reconstituting a Jewish community in Jerusalem. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the almost equally important Obadiah of Bertinoro, the author of the standard commentary on the Mishnah, left Italy for the Holy Land and he, too, reinvigorated the Jewish community in Jerusalem.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, there was an important growth of Jewish population in the Galilee and especially in the town of Safed. Exiles from Spain, after the final expulsion of Jews in 1492, arrived in the country in some numbers and within a century there were no less than eighteen academies of Talmudic studies and twenty-one synagogues in Safed alone. Indeed, the most important spiritual stirrings and creativity within Jewry during the sixteenth century took place there. There was an abortive attempt to reconstitute the authority of the ancient patriarchate, which had lapsed under Roman persecution; the studies of both Kabbalah and Talmud were pursued with renewed creative élan. It was in Safed that Josef Karo published in 1567 the Shulhan Arukh ("the prepared table"), which was almost immediately accepted by the bulk of world Jewry as the authoritative summation of Jewish law and practice. To the present day all discussion in this area, even among the more liberal elements of Jewry, pays major attention to this code.

Until the end of the seventeenth century, the overwhelming majority of the Jews in the Holy Land were either Sephardim, of Spanish extraction, or Orientals. Central and East European influence became prominent in the year 1700, and it has existed in unbroken continuity into the contemporary era. A group of several hundred people arrived from Poland under the leadership of Rabbi Judah the Pious. Even though the destiny of this community was not a happy one, these immigrants were followed by others. Toward the end of the eighteenth century there came disciples of Elijah of Wilno, the greatest Talmudic scholar of the age, as well as a major group of relatives and other followers of his great antagonist, the founder of Hassidim, Israel Bal Shem Tov. Both legalists and ecstasies within East European Jewry could not then imagine the continuity of Judaism without a living link to the soil of the Holy Land.

Throughout these centuries economic conditions in the country were generally difficult, and the Jews suffered perhaps more than other communities. Those in the Holy Land were constantly sending letters and even personal emissaries to their brethren in the Diaspora asking for support. One of the prime sources of our knowledge of medieval and early modern Jewish history is in what remains of these exchanges. It was a well established tradition throughout the Jewish world that these continuing requests from their brethren in the Holy Land took priority even over local charitable needs.

The Jews in the Holy Land were, to be sure, living largely from foreign alms, and in this they were seemingly parallel to Christian pilgrims and monastic orders in the land during that era. There were two important points of difference; Jews who came to the Holy Land did not cluster around a variety of holy places. From Jewish perspective dwelling in the land, anywhere, was the fulfillment of religious commandment. In the second place their very presence in the land had radically different resonance among the Jews of the world than the Christian or Moslem presences had among their brethren elsewhere. This often embattled and struggling Jewish community, repeatedly reinforced by new arrivals and always in connection with the whole of the Diaspora, was a constant reminder to the majority that it was living less than the ideal religious life and that return to the land was the ultimate goal. Maimonides in the twelfth century had defined this consummation as not necessarily an eschatological event, attended by miracles and cataclysms. The restoration would happen in a natural way, by change in the political situation which would allow Jews to return to their homeland as part of a universal process ushering in a final age of justice and peace. This did not then become the dominant view for Messianists continued to dream of a cataclysmic "end of days".

Hopes of immediate return were aroused more than once through the ages. For a brief moment in the sixteenth century, when the melodramatic David Reubeni appeared in Rome, to offer some supposed military support to Pope Clement VII against the Turks, there was even talk of such a restoration in the highest Christian quarters. The false messiah Shabetai Zoi had half the Jewish world and some Christians convinced that the miraculous restoration would take place in the year 1666. During Napoleon's campaign in the Middle East, he summoned the Jews by proclamation in 1799 to rally to his banner with the promise that he would help restore them to their land. We now know that this document resulted from some conversation with younger elements of Jewry in the Holy Land. For that matter, the first stirrings towards making an end of living essentially on alms began before the middle of the nineteenth century. Sir Moses Montefiore, the leader of English Jewry, and various forces of the French Jewish community, especially the Rothschild family, worked to teach Jews in Palestine to become artisans and even farmers. Central European philanthropists even created a school for these purposes in 1854 in Jerusalem. This was followed in 1870 by the founding of an agricultural school, Mikveh Israel, and within the next two years two Jewish farm

colonies were established. The career of modern Zionism began in 1881, as a direct result of large scale pogroms in Russia, but in that year, before any of the new immigration to the land began, the American Consul in Jerusalem, Warder Cresson, wrote to his government that there were then a thousand Jews in the country who were deriving their livelihood from agriculture.

III.

This ancient and ongoing connection to the land and the messianic hopes which this connection both exemplified and helped to keep in being were the spiritual and emotional climate within which modern Zionism arose. In the immediate situation of the last decades of the nineteenth century the bulk of the world Jewish community, which was then to be found in Europe, found itself confronted by three situations. The most searing and immediate was virulent hatred of Jews, and not only in their major place of settlement in Russia. Millions were on the move from that country after 1881. It occurred to several of the intellectual leaders of Russian Jewry that in their newer homes these emigrants might ultimately be as much in danger as they had been in the places from which they were fleeing. Such phenomena as French and German anti-Semitism towards the end of the century raised the question whether the more liberal part of Europe, in which Jews had been formally emancipated, would honor, in bad times, the promise of equality for all.

In the second place, what seemed then to be the most hopeful of contemporary political ideas was the example of those peoples who were working toward their own national independence. Liberal nationalism was being proclaimed in the name not of dominance over others but of a creative future for all the historic communities, which would be both autonomous and live in concert with each other. This was the great dream of Mazzini, and the earliest major theoretician of Zionism, Moses Hess, responded to it as early as 1860 with acceptance and profound emotion.

The third situation, and the one perhaps most difficult to define, was the inner spiritual estate of Jewry itself. The dissolution of older values and identities, and especially of the religious ones, was engulfing the younger intellectuals of all the traditions of the Western world, but this was felt with particular poignancy among Jews. The stresses and tensions of the modern age were being experienced by the Christian world within Christendom. The new age was revolutionary and upsetting of the older faiths, but for the Christian majority the continent of Europe, its monuments and most of what men had built on that soil, and its very languages represented the continuity of Christendom. The new secular age was a revolutionary break with the past,

and yet it was occurring for Christians in a context which could ultimately assimilate even these tensions into some new synthesis. Viewed from Jewish perspective, even Western secularity required an act of personal conversion to the mode of life which descended from the majority tradition. What was worse, even those Jews who were willing to undergo this conversion, such as Heine and Disraeli, found themselves less than completely accepted. The nineteenth century thus taught some Jews that it had been possible for them to be authentically themselves in the century before, while still in the ghetto, apart from society. In the new, half-emancipated age that followed, it was much more difficult to find their own mode of encountering modernity, either as individuals or a part of their own historic community. The nineteenth century was sufficiently open to Jews, intellectually, for them to experience all of its problems; it was sufficiently closed to deny them the possibility, even if they had wished, to disappear as individuals in modern society. They remained sufficiently rooted in their own older heritage to regard their community as an ultimate spiritual good, worthy of both survival and inner refreshing. They were sufficiently men of their day to feel that their own involvement in their particular past and in the land sacred to their spiritual tradition was in keeping with the contemporary belief that historic communities and peoples were worthy of preservation, for their own sake and for the service of humanity.

The tragedies and torments of the twentieth century and the achievements of the Jews of Israel have confirmed the direst of these predictions and some of the greatest of these hopes.

It cannot be emphasized enough that even the greatest of opportunities that the open society made available to Jews raised for them severe questions of spiritual survival. The rights of equality, wherever they have substantial meaning, were given to Jews as individuals, and the continuity of their community perforce had to be defined as a matter of private belief or, at its most organized, as a religious association parallel to that of contemporary Christian churches. From Jewish perspective such redefinition, enshrined in the modern slogans of the separation of Church and State or of religion and culture, were a far more difficult and devastating charge than they were for the Christian majority in the Western world. For Jews, the holy congregation of all Israel, which means the reality in this world of all that Jews do in community, is the fundamental premise of their identity and tradition. The individual, of course, exists, but between him and all of humanity there stands a mediating value, the Jewish people as a holy congregation.

It was not accidental that comparison was made at the beginning of this essay between the difficulties in explaining the spiritual roots of Zionism to Christians and of explaining the Incarnation to Jews. As nearly exact

as anything can be in parallels drawn between two different traditions, this comparison points back to the ancient sources and forward to the present. Classic Jewish interpretation of the Bible has always insisted that Israel "according to the flesh" is what is meant by Isaiah's prophecies concerning "the suffering servant". It is the individual Jew's experience of the Jewish people, of its corporate life, way and history which mediates for him between the individual and God. When the richness and inner integrity of the life of that community is attenuated by either persecution or assimilation, or when belonging to the tradition becomes so privatized as to represent a bewildering variety of personal choices, that which is specifically Jewish in the consciousness of Jews will act, as it had acted in the last century, to recreate a living Jewish community on the land of Israel. For the rest of world Jewry this community represents the indispensable contemporary center which ties Jews to one another and which encourages them to believe that their own lives, though cast in different molds and under minority circumstances, are viable. Its very creation some two decades ago represented a turning away from despair in the aftermath of the Nazi years and the rekindling among Jews of belief in the future. To use one of the cliches of the contemporary "theology of hope", the Jewish people in the 1940's had ceased believing in either the humanum or the futurum. It regained belief in both in 1948, when the State of Israel was established. In the spiritual, cultural and practical connections between the Jews of the world and those in Israel the inner life and verve of the world Jewry has been refreshed.

IV.

There can be no doubt that the Zionist reconstitution of a national Jewish community in Palestine in our time was an act which derived both from the ultimate well springs of the historic Jewish faith and from the immediate necessities of a stormy contemporary age. This does not mean that all the trappings of political statehood and all the acts of sovereign power are here being presented as commanded, valid or necessary. On the contrary, what saves any nationalism, any sense of historic community and kinship, from becoming exclusivist, from the arrogance of "blood and soil", is conscience. It is an even more wicked assertion that there is no salvation outside one's own nation than to pronounce that there is no salvation outside one's own church. The conscience which protects us from both such assertions has become manifest in the modern age both in secular forms, such as the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, and in religious pronouncements by all the major Western faiths. This most fundamental of our moral convictions has as its source biblical prophecy. It was Amos who said to the Jewish people of his time that in the eyes of God, chosen though they were by Him, they had no more rights than the children of the Ethiopians and that his bringing the Jews from Egypt was paralleled by his bringing the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir. Here we are confronted by the

universal element, the command of the living God of all the world, which enters as radical demand into the midst of every human particularity and keeps it under judgment. Indeed, the meaning of community for Jews is that they live in the real world of action and choice, in this world, and the meaning of their choseness is that they are subject to the most severe and searching of moral judgments: "Only you have I known from all the nations of the world"; therefore, I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). For men of religion, indeed for all men of conscience, both elsewhere and in Israel, its acts, like those of any other people, are under judgment.

It needs to be remembered in this connection that the Zionist movement has itself, at least during part of its history, been of two minds about the demand for a sovereign Jewish state. Statehood as such was not even in the Zionist program from the days of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 until almost all the Zionists, with the doors of Palestine completely closed to Jews, had little choice but to opt for sovereignty in 1942.

In accepting in 1917 the last reformulation of the Balfour Declaration Weizmann and his colleagues knew that they were agreeing to some form of bi-national existence with the Arabs in Palestine. This was all clearer in the exchanges of 1919 between the Emir Feisal and both Felix Frankfurter and Chaim Weizmann. It was against any increase in Jewish numbers in Mandate Palestine, and not against a Jewish State, that Arabs made riots in 1921. For that matter, the repeated stoppages in Jewish immigration by the British authorities under Arab pressure, especially during the 1930's while Hitler was becoming an ever more murderous menace, was what made it clear to the Jews that any increase in their numbers, any possibility of having the legal right to buy land, or even the ultimate safety of their community could not be left to the good will of others, of which there was all too little. From Jewish perspective partition and even statehood were not hoped for consummations but rather dire necessities. For that matter, even the very military might of Israel is less a source of pride and of national chauvinism than of fear of the constantly threatened destruction. It is certainly beyond doubt that the present choice of Israel is either its own sovereignty or its closing to exist not only as a state but also as a community.

It would be morally obtuse to presume that there has not been from the very beginning of this struggle, and that there is not now, especially as one contemplates the continuing misery of hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees, much justice on the side of Arab anger. Repeated attacks by Arabs since 1921 on often defenseless people, their tendency to

assassinate or to threaten to assassinate their own moderates, as well as their continuing refusal to negotiate any kind of détente with Jews; and the treatment by the Arab governments of their refugee brethren from Palestine (e. g. Gaza) tend to undercut their standing in the court of moral opinion. For that matter, convinced though I am that the falls from grace among Jews throughout this half century have been very much less, and almost always reactive, the creators of the new Jewish life in Israel have not always been, and are not today, invariably prophets and angels. We must, however, get behind the often horrifying details of this half century of struggle to the basic moral issue.

From the point of view of the Arabs in Palestine at the end of World War I, the Balfour Declaration was at its very root, even in its most limited application, an act of injustice. They were not impressed by the legal argument that all of the land in the region had not been sovereign for many centuries and that no local population in Palestine had never had sovereignty over the country since the end of the second Jewish commonwealth under the Maccabees. The Arabs of Palestine regarded themselves as morally entitled to their own development and their own national life, untroubled by the claims or needs of others. It did not do to assure them, as Weizmann and others tried to do repeatedly, that Jews were coming to the land not to dispossess them or to take from them any of their rights, and certainly not to deny Arabs any of their personal or communal rights. The Arabs of Palestine presumed, correctly, that anything approaching freedom of Jewish immigration into Palestine would soon produce a large and dynamic Jewish population, the existence of which would block the way to the attainment of a normal kind of Palestinian Arab State. For them to agree to live permanently with the inevitable constraints of another people of equal standing was already quite intolerable. As is well known, some of the noblest of Jews, such as Magnes and Buber, who kept dreaming this bi-national dream, could not find any substantial Arab counterparts with whom to work seriously towards its realization. Taking into account the Jewish emotion about the land, the dynamism of a highly trained people and the vastness of the need of millions of Jews for refuge, the Arabs were right, from their point of view, in fearing an open door would soon reduce them to a minority. Against this, they went into desperate battle almost at the very beginning, and they continue to insist that to have denied Arab nationalism in Palestine what would have been a normal development anywhere else is a grave injustice.

To be sure, even had there been no modern Zionism, it hardly needs to be demonstrated that the Holy Land is not like all other lands, and that Arab nationalism in that country would have had a far different road to travel than that in Iraq or Egypt. All of the major biblical faiths have continuing involvements in the Holy Land which they regard as their right and which no sovereign nation, including the Israelis today, can deal with

in the most simplistic categories of national sovereignty. The denial by a sovereign Jordan of access by Jews to the Western Wall during the twenty years of its occupation of the Old City and the destruction of all of one of the more than fifty synagogues to be found there, as well as the desecration of the cemetery of the Mount of Olives, was such an act of sovereign revenge on the Jewish adversaries of the Arabs. The possibility of such an occurrence in the midst of political tension of any kind in the future must be guarded against on behalf of all the faiths and in relation to all the political sovereignties of the region.

Nonetheless, without Zionism there would have been an Arab majority and perhaps ultimately an Arab State of some kind in Palestine. There is, thus, great pain and pathos and considerable stature to the Arab case, and many of the actions by which it has been contaminated do not blind Jews to its moral importance. Nevertheless, an objective assessment of the moralities involved in the entire situation in all its elements, must arrive at different conclusions. An Arab majority and a sovereignty in Palestine and, in particular, over that part of post-partition Palestine which is now Israel, is not vitally necessary to the survival and creativity of the whole of the Arab national culture and history, or of the Islamic faith. The great centers of Arab continuity and survival are elsewhere. A viable Jewish people in the land is, however, indispensable to the survival of the Jewish spirit in our age. If we are to presume, as all men of good will must, that the disintegration of either of these great traditions, the Jewish or the Arab, would be a catastrophe of the first order, then it is our moral duty to work towards these conditions that make such eventualities impossible. What reversed a rapid trend of world-wide Jewish disintegration was the élan and hope which Zionism and the State of Israel have brought both to Jews and to Judaism. Even to contemplate making an end to the Jewish State for even the most moral of reasons, that its existence denies to Palestinian Arab nationalism sovereignty over the whole country and that we are horrified by the present misery of Arab refugees, is to put one's moral priorities in the wrong order.

In the world of human action all of our judgments can never occur without some cost, for justice can only be proximate and there is always some right, and often great right, on the side of those whose aims we do not accept. This is the human condition at all times and everywhere, and it is nowhere clearer than in a consideration by ethicists of this grievous conflict. It would, however, be a trap and a delusion not to get our moral priorities in the right order. Indeed, a Hassidic teacher once said that Satan does not seduce us by proposing wicked action; he is at his most effective when he asks us to labor for the good, while keeping us from understanding that this labor is in the wrong order of priority and thus destructive of other, greater goods.

For the continuity of Judaism and Jews the State of Israel is today a prime necessity for all men who care that the Jewish ethos should flourish and make its own kind of contribution to all of mankind. Once this is accepted as the moral good of the first order, it then becomes possible to say that the immediate next order of moral concern is that every justice be done to Palestinian Arabs, short of such action which would result in the end of the Jewish State. At a moment of political and moral resolution of tensions, when the day of peace begins to come into view then the return of some former Arab residents to Israel, large scale compensation and the resettlement of the bulk of the refugees on a permanent and creative basis among their Arab brothers in the large expanses of the Middle East must all be undertaken. Precisely because Jews have been inevitably involved in this tragedy, justice for Arabs should involve them in large and generous action.

At the very core of both Jewish and Christian concerns in the Middle East is not the tense and unhappy present, but the past from which it flowed and the more hopeful future for which we are laboring. That past involves us all, but it involves us in different qualities. Our interests are very deep, but they are not exactly parallel. Perhaps the best statement of this that has ever been written - it is the best that I know - was once formulated by a distinguished scholar whose own religious root was in the Anglican tradition. Writing in his History of Palestine, James Parkes defined these historic involvements as follows (pp.172-173):

"The intimate connection of Judaism with the whole life of a people, with its domestic, commercial, social and public relations as much as with its religion and its relations with its God, has historically involved an emphasis on roots in physical existence and geographical actuality, such as is to be found in neither of the other religions. The Koran is not the history of the Arab people; the New Testament contains the history of no country; it passes freely from the Palestinian landscape of the Gospels to the hellenistic and Roman landscape of the later books; and in both its records the story of a group of individuals within a larger environment. But the whole religious significance of the Jewish Bible - the "Old Testament" - ties it to the history of a single people and the geographical actuality of a single land. The long religious development which it records, its law-givers and prophets, all emerge out of, and are merged into, the day to day life of an actual people with its political fortunes and its social environments. Its laws and customs are based on the land and climate of Palestine; its agricultural festivals follow the Palestinian seasons; its historical festivals are linked to events in Palestinian history - the joyful rededication of the Temple at the feast of Hanukkah the mourning for its destruction on

the ninth of Ab, and above all the commemoration of the original divine gift of the land in the feast of the Passover. The opening words of the Passover ritual conclude with the phrase: "now we are here, but next year may we be in the land of Israel. Now we are slaves, but next year may we be free men". And the final blessing is followed by the single sentence "next year in Jerusalem".

Turning to the present, the most hopeful recent utterance by an Arab on the future of the Holy Land is by George Hourain, in a paper in November 1968 which addressed itself to themes which are essentially the same as those being discussed here. Speaking as President of the "Middle East Studies Association in the United States", Mr. Hourain considered "Palestine as a Problem of Ethics". He ruled out the notion that the modern Jewish settlers in the land had no moral right to be there; he was even inclined to consider the proposition that Jewish historic presence in the land granted Jews, even from his prospective, some substantial claim of residence and that on this point "the Arab case is not quite so unequivocal as most Arab spokesmen have claimed." Hourain climaxed his argument as follows:

"Given residence in considerable numbers, and a strong sense of national identity among Jews, it is reasonable that they should enjoy independence in a part of Palestine, on just the same grounds as the Arabs in theirs. To be absorbed as citizens in an Arab state, even as a federal province, hardly assures them of a flourishing future. Here it can be said that the drive for a Jewish state was self-fulfilling: given that drive, the feelings on both sides became so hostile that a bi-national state could not be expected to work in the foreseeable future. The logic of partition is the same today as it was under the British Mandate, the previous period of forced marriage. Both parties want to be in Palestine, but they are not there for love of each other; the driving force of both is to lead their own lives in freedom from each other. Both are happier with a whole half than with sharing the whole."

Jews and Christians may look back from various perspectives upon the events of the last half century and be saddened by much of what has happened in the Holy Land and wish that it were undone. History does not, however, permit us to unscramble eggs.

It is the task of men of peace, mindful of the realities, to bring reason and conciliation to bear. It is certainly not our task to encourage continuing war even with the most moral of rhetoric. It is not only Israel and the Arabs of Palestine, or Jews and the Arab world, who remain under judgment. So do all men. Great are the peacemakers for the name of God himself is Shalom.