English Abstracts

Jewish Identity Between Tradition and Self-Determination

Shlomo Avineri

This article attempts to relate some aspects of the dilemmas of Jewish identity in the Zionist and Israeli context to the current scholarly resurgence in questions of nationalism. Both traditional liberalism as well as Marxism have tended to marginalize nationalism and reduce it to economic issues; since 1989, the resurgence of nationalism in post-Communist societies has reawakened interests in various aspects of nationalism. While Benedict Anderson's characterization of nations as "imagined communities" is seen as extremely helpful in deflating primordialist claims, it tends to overlook the fact of other social entities — from family, church as well as the individual — being equally socially constructed. A case is made that all nationalisms have both a historically existing substratum as well as a consciously constructed identity reflecting the ideas of self-determination: Jacobinism and Herder are both always present in any national movement, though the mix would obviously be different from case to case.

In the writings of some of the major Zionist writers both the historical heritage as well as its conscious adaptation can be seen. Thus Herzl, an extremely secularized person, views the religious Jewish heritage as a central ingredient in Jewish identity ("we are a nation by our religion"). In a polemic with Zangwill, he totally rejects any racial component in Jewish nationalism and maintains that "we are a nation of divergent anthropological elements." His visit to Jerusalem is another example of how aware Herzl was of the centrality of revering traditional symbols — mainly derived from religion — in the construction of a modern Jewish national identity. Similar elements can be found in Moses Hess, David

Ben-Gurion and Arlosoroff, and in the conscious attempt of the Zionist movement to give new political and secular connotations to terms derived from the religious tradition (*aliya*, *keren kayemet*, etc.). It is this ability to create a wide spectrum of meanings that characterized the successful Zionist attempts at inclusiveness, and the same tendency can be helpful in the future as well, in creating a common solidarity that allows, however, for pluralism and different interpretations of a complex historical heritage: thus, tradition is preserved not due to its primordial normative standing, but through communal evolving self-determination.

The Jewish Historical Experience in the Framework of World History

Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt

In this paper I examine critically the place of Jewish history in world history, taking as my starting point Max Weber's analysis of Ancient Judaism. On the one hand, Weber sees Ancient Judaism as one of the Great Religions, as one of the "Axial Civilizations" (to use an expression later coined by Karl Jaspers); that is, one of those religions or civilizations that have revolutionized the history of mankind. On the other hand, Weber portrays the subsequent, post-Second Temple Jewish exilic experience as that of a "pariah people," a people basically outside the parameters of active history. While somewhat similar to Arnold Toynbee's notion of a "fossilized" Jewish civilization, Weber's conception certainly does not resonate with Toynbee's rather strong, if often subdued, anti-Semitic connotations.

According to their observations, the crux of this "fossilization" rested on the emergence and hegemony of the "Oral Law" (*Torah Shebealpeh*) with its practices that increasingly emphasized legal-ritual prescriptions based on the exegesis, study, and constant elaboration of texts; communal prayer as the focus of Jewish religion and tradition, and their continual, seemingly technical interpretation. At the same time, observations of the transformation of the political and universalistic components of the Jewish collective consciousness and collective life that developed in the period of the Halakhah's dominance seemingly supported the view of the Jews as a "pariah" people. In particular, this was considered to be

a consequence especially of the perceived "bracketing out" of collective Jewish active participation from the general political arena.

Our discussion reveals the central weakness in Weber's analysis of the Jewish "exilic" medieval experience as that of a "pariah people." Two implicit phenomena characteristic of a "pariah people" — the weakness of sectarian and heterodox tendencies and political passivity — were not aspects of the Jewish historical experience.

Thus, the paper points to some of Weber's striking insights on Jewish civilization: firstly, in particular, his recognition of this civilization as one of the Great Religions or one of the Axial Civilizations, with all its dynamics. Secondly, his identification of the many themes and orientations of this civilization. And, thirdly, his drawing attention to the necessity of analyzing the transformation of these themes and their institutional implications in various and changing historical settings. But at the same time his particular (and even more so Toynbee's) analysis of the Jewish historical experience in the exilic medieval period does not entirely stand up to a closer examination. The problematic he introduces, which is rooted in his basic view of the Jewish civilization as one of the "Great Religions" or — to use Jasper's nomenclature — one of the "Axial Civilizations," is certainly of crucial importance, not only for that period, but also for the modern era, and constitutes an important starting point for the understanding of the place of Jewish historical experience in the framework of world history.

Church, State and National Identity In Great Britain: On the Distance Between Buckingham Palace, Ten Downing Street and Canterbury Cathedral

Ofer Mosseri & Arnon Gutfeld

Present-day Britain is a democratic, liberal society that contains a large population of immigrants and foreign laborers, and is characterized by social and cultural diversity. It embraces a pluralistic, tolerant attitude toward people of very different religious and cultural backgrounds. English laws are intended to provide equality

of opportunity and to prevent discrimination based on religious belief. Historically, this was not always the case. Present-day English society is the product of a gradual process of secularization that began 150 years ago. At the beginning of the process, in the midst of the Victorian era, England was in fact a Christian-Anglican state in which religious discrimination against religious minorities was official state policy. Even today the Church of England is regarded and acts as the legally-established Church. There are still numerous basic elements that tie British national identity and the State to the Anglican Church in ways that prevent a clear and absolute implementation of the idea of full and total separation of Church from State.

This article focuses on the genesis and the basic characteristics of the secularization process in Britain, highlighting the major elements in the attempts to maintain the status quo and the main trends in the efforts to change policies and laws relating to the subject of Church and State. The interrelationship, official and other, between secular and religious institutions is evaluated. British and American positions on the subject are compared. This is important since both societies share similar problems regarding this dilemma. We conclude by examining the question of the status and the social role of the Church of England in multicultural, multiethnic present-day Britain.

The Challenge of Extremist Parties to Democratic Regimes:
The Israeli Example

Ami Pedahzur & Arie Perliger

In recent decades, many Western democracies have been forced to contend with extremist parties, which challenge basic norms of democracy as an ideological idea and as a form of government. The political party has become a major institution of 20th century political life, and extremist parties have already demonstrated their ability to overpower democratic regimes. This has impelled many democracies to develop a variety of defensive mechanisms in order to counter and limit the activity of extremist parties. In this article we look into the

mechanisms developed in Israel, and try to investigate which factors determine when and how these defensive mechanisms are applied by the defending democracy.

We differentiate between "anti-system parties" (a party separated from the others in the party system by a large ideological gap), and "anti-democratic parties" (aimed at changing the democratic character of the regime). Our contention is that, in most cases, the defending democracy will use aggressive counter strategy, such as formal exclusion, against "anti democratic parties" and milder strategies, such as non-formal exclusion and integration strategy, against "anti-system parties."

A review of the strategies applied by the Israeli political system against the extremist parties supports our hypothesis. The only anti-system party that was officially excluded was the Arab "Socialist Party" in 1965. Since then, in almost 40 years, the anti-system parties have all suffered from non-formal exclusion, but formal exclusion was never applied (although there have been some cases where formal exclusion was blocked only by a Supreme Court ruling). Furthermore, most of the anti-democratic parties (mainly Kach and its factions), have been blocked by a variety of legal procedures, thereby using a form of formal exclusion.

In its conclusion, the article attempts to promote a theoretical framework for understanding the actions of a democracy defending itself against extremist parties, by pointing to two main variables that determine the means used — the nature of the extremist party, and the level of polarization in the party system.

Israel's Arab Parties from a Comparative Perspective:
The Challenge of Marginality and the Dilemma of Influence vs. Protest

Ofer Kenig

The 1999 elections to the 15th Knesset saw the Arab parties increase their parliamentary representation to a record high of ten seats. This achievement was the latest phase in the electoral consolidation of these parties, which started in the mid-1980s. However, it seems that ongoing electoral success has not increased the political power of the Arab parties. Despite their electoral success, their ability

to influence the legislative process, their accessibility to political power bases, and their executive power, remain insignificant.

It is very likely that the reason that this electoral consolidation has not been linked to political achievement is to be found in the unique circumstances of Israel's political arena. This highly tense arena is shaped by ongoing and deep-seated security issues in which the main cleavage is not socioeconomic, but the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the future of the West Bank. Given such conditions, it is no wonder that the Arab parties find it hard to achieve real power. However, it is possible that the Arab parties' case is not unique and that it does indeed share certain characteristics with other "national minority parties" worldwide.

The article examines the Arab parties' case from a comparative perspective. Its goal is twofold. First, to assess the factors that dictate the accessibility of "national minority parties" to power and influence; second, to suggest a basic classification of the range of political situations in which these parties might find themselves in the legislative and coalitional arenas. Two of the Arab parties are compared with three "national minority parties" in Western Europe: the Basque National Party (PNV) in Spain, the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Britain, and the Swedish Folk Party (SFP) in Finland. The basic assumption is that in order to avoid marginality and arrive at the bases of influence, a party must overcome two obstacles — relevancy and legitimacy. The article claims that in the case of a "national minority party," even if it does overcome these two obstacles, it may choose to stay out of power (and away from political influence) for strategic, electoral, or ideological reasons.

Torah and Life: Halakhah in Eliezer Goldman's Thought

Avi Sagi

This article analyzes Eliezer Goldman's contribution to the understanding of Halakhah. Eliezer Goldman is a towering figure among contemporary Jewish thinkers, and is one of the founders of a scholarly field known as the Philosophy of Halakhah. Many of his studies are devoted to an analysis and understanding of Halakhah's structure, and one of his most significant contributions is the systematic development of the concept of "meta-Halakhah." This concept points to the value system guiding the judge when he issues a specific halakhic ruling. The meta-halakhic element may come to the fore in a prevalent halakhic technique or it may have an extralegal value. A prominent instance of the former is the principle stating, "the Torah protects the assets of Israel." An example of the second type is the principle that says of the Torah, "its ways are gracious," suggesting that clashes between Halakhah and ethics should be avoided.

These meta-halakhic elements mediate between Halakhah and the concrete circumstances guiding the judge, which include both facts and values. Recognizing a meta-halakhic element means negating both formal and positivist theories of Halakhah. Goldman points to flaws in both these theories, and to their inapplicability to the halakhic system.

After rejecting legal formalism and legal positivism, Goldman must suggest a concept suited to a view of Halakhah as leaving decisive scope for human discretion, values and norms, even if its ultimate aim is divine worship. The article analyzes in detail Goldman's contribution to the development of a new approach to the study of Halakhah, and its significance within a multicultural context. In an era of growing sensitivity to the various contexts of meaning that individuals rely upon to shape their lives, a perception of Halakhah as actually resting on such contexts rather than excluding them is enormously significant.