

Article

“Religious-Zionism”: Signifier without Signified? Or—Is Religious-Zionism Still Alive?

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Abstract: In the public discourse and the research literature, the signifier “religious-Zionism” is usually viewed as denoting a specific group located midway between secular and ultra-Orthodox Jews. This location does not turn religious-Zionism into a residual category including whoever is not part of the two others. Quite the contrary. Religious-Zionism used to be a group with unique characteristics, including values and a normative fullness of its own. I argue in this article that, at present, the category “religious-Zionism” no longer signifies a specific group due to a series of centrifugal processes affecting it. Its ethos, myth, textual web, and authority principle have collapsed and the signifier reflects no more than a political and rabbinic discourse attempting to control the breakdown.

Keywords: family resemblance; identity; messianism; religious-Zionist norms; solidarity; consciousness of self; pragmatism

1. Introduction: On the Religious-Zionist Discourse

In Israel’s social discourse, the term “religious-Zionism” signifies a specific, well-defined group situated between Haredim and secularists. This location, so it is claimed, successfully conveys the system of norms and values typical of religious-Zionists: one set of values, the religious one, distinguishes them from secularists, while another set of values, conveying their attachment to the state and the society, distinguishes them from Haredim. According to this analysis, religious-Zionism is not a residual category defined by non-membership in one of the two groups at the extremes. Its unique location conveys the fact that religious-Zionism established a set of norms and values that singles it out—it is a unique group because its norms and values are unique. Nevertheless, because of its commonalities with other groups in Israeli society, the discourse perceives religious-Zionism as a kind of mid-range faction mediating between the poles. Mediation was a stable feature in the self-consciousness of religious-Zionism, which saw itself as committed to the Jewish collective—*Klal Yisrael*—and entered the political discourse.

This feature, however, does not define religious-Zionism since, as a group with unique traits, it is not characterized merely by its position vis-à-vis other groups in Israeli society. Its location, then, rather than constitutive of its very existence, is a side effect of its values and its normative world. The term “religious-Zionism” is thus supposed to be a solid signifier, pointing to an actual group that exists “out there” in the world, beyond the linguistic term representing it. Its meaning—the semantic context of the term—is also sharp and clear, thus dismissing any option of several religious-Zionisms. Nuances and differences between sub-groups are secondary to the group’s basic characterization as religious-Zionism, and all the variations shelter under the concept of “religious-Zionism”.

Many use this concept. Men and women identify themselves as religious-Zionists without thereby conveying an explicit consciousness regarding the meaning or the function of this term in their lives. Responsibility for the fixation of this term as an unequivocal, essentialist signifier devolves into four easily identifiable players: scholars, rabbis who describe themselves as the rabbis of religious-Zionism, politicians who pretend to represent



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religious-Zionism, and media people who appointed themselves as this group's spokespersons. These are four weighty hegemonies, all using the term "religious-Zionism" as a set, clear-cut signifier that can be used to determine the boundaries of membership in the group and to mark those on its border and beyond it.

The scholarly hegemony differs from the others. The academic hegemony, like any hegemony, operates within the tension between the power ascribed to the prevailing research paradigm and the critical element. I cannot dwell here on the rise and fall of research paradigms, an issue that the literature has considered at length. The principle that matters in the present context is that, within the research paradigm, a thesis about religious-Zionism is merely that—a possible thesis. Ultimately, research is open and not even necessarily cumulative. Research turnabouts are common and widespread. The meaning of these determinations is obvious: a scholarly hegemony, at least in principle, is not supposed to be authoritative and ideological.

This state of affairs contrasts with that of the three other hegemonies: the rabbinic, the political, and the media. All three lack a critical dimension, pretend to present themselves as the consciousness of religious-Zionism, and view themselves as its "voice". This is a false consciousness in principle since no one can be a representative of the other's consciousness. No one can act, teach, or express the world of the other—be it an individual or a group. A group is a socio-cultural reality.¹ The question of whether religious-Zionism is a group is to be considered through an analysis of its characteristics, not by speaking in its name or even by making claims about its consciousness. All these three hegemonies are power hegemonies because they replace real living beings, be they individuals or groups, with an imagined one, signified by the term "religious-Zionism". They speak in the name of an imagined entity and an imagined consciousness that replaces the existing ones.

These hegemonies do not perceive the religious-Zionist entity as imagined. They would certainly reject the notion that the term "religious-Zionism" is a linguistic signified since, in their view, their discourse is about reality rather than words. To overcome the apparent fallacy entailed by the claim that the object of language is linguistic, just like the act of speaking is, we must assume that the hegemonic discourse takes, as its starting point, that language itself enables whatever exists to appear in it. Hence, for all three hegemonies, the signified of the term "religious-Zionism" is an entity like any other that exists in the world. The signified of the term "religious-Zionism" is thus a static and unchanging object resembling a tree or a chair found in the real world, to which language merely relates. The determination that language relates to entities in the world and not to the linguistic space is not at all trivial, certainly not after the linguistic turnabout that pointed to the crucial role of language in constituting entities, an issue I consider below. My operative assumption here is that the relationship between language and the world is possible and, therefore, even if the signifier is linguistic, its signified is not necessarily so. Language is not only about itself and speech is not about speech. In this light, the term "religious-Zionism" is referential and points to an entity in the world—the religious-Zionist group. But the fact that these four hegemonies speak about *religious-Zionism* means that the conversation is an essentialist mode of speech: religious-Zionism is an entity that exists in the world independently of the speech about it, and is signified by the concept of "religious-Zionism". The speech about this entity, then, exposes its essentialist features—it does not create it. Given that this discourse is essentialist, questions related to the discourse about a socio-cultural group are irrelevant since suggesting an empirical, critical analysis of non-contingent entities is pointless. If religious-Zionism is an entity that exists in the world, we need not shift from the realm of discourse to the realm of facts—the discourse will suffice. The three hegemonies—the rabbinic authorities, the politicians, and the media people—are caught in this trap: their discourse is a simulacrum, words that speak about words, or an essentialist discourse referring to a socio-cultural group as a metaphysical entity existing as such in the world.

Researchers of religious-Zionism are not supposed to fall into this trap and see themselves as representatives of the religious-Zionist group. This group is for them a field of study—religious-Zionism is their object, and they are the subject investigating it. In

their research, they might study the historical, social, and cultural contexts of this group, texts written by its members, and so forth. Should they suggest generalizations about this group, they will not imply a shift to an essentialist discourse but a summary of the study and research on this group at a specific time and place, and in given social and cultural conditions. This gap between the researchers of religious-Zionism and the other hegemonies is important, and points to the place where the hegemonies part from one another, with researchers on one side and rabbis, politicians, and media people on the other. And yet, the discourse of all these four hegemonies shares something in common, at least from the perspective of the present—all agree that the term “religious-Zionism” signifies a well-defined group.

This characteristic discourse at times precludes the question of whether religious-Zionism exists beyond the discourse about it. This is the question I consider in this essay, and I begin by formulating it more precisely. As will become clear as the discussion proceeds, asking whether religious-Zionism exists and challenging its very being as a real socio-cultural group seems illogical. To question the very existence of this group requires an analysis of its social and cultural history. I assume that a rigorous examination of this matter will show that this group did exist, and could be characterized through dimensions that identify it. The question I ask is more limited: does religious-Zionism exist today? Does the term “religious-Zionism” signify a defined group? At this stage of the discussion, I will avoid suggesting a more precise description of the term “today”² since, if a claim that religious-Zionism does not exist as a defined group at present can indeed be validated, the validations themselves could offer a path to the estimated time of its demise.

One issue bears emphasis: the fact that religious-Zionism is spoken of and written about does not constitute evidence that such a group exists. A socio-cultural reality in the world is not necessarily correlated to speaking or writing about it. A society can exist in the world “out there” without speaking or writing about itself or without others writing about it. Its being in the world is not contingent on written or spoken reflection about its existence. And vice-versa: lively writing and talking about a society and a culture are not necessarily proof of its existence beyond the borders of the discourse about it. The discourse itself may generate existence. The present discourse may also obscure the fact that the object addressed in this reflection had existed in the past but does not necessarily exist in the present. A discourse that takes place in the present is fundamentally a discourse, and its connection with its referential object is open to discussion.

The lively discourse about religious-Zionism is undeniable. The question I grapple with, however, is the relationship between this discourse and the reality it addresses in a world that, purportedly, is actually “out there” and not contingent on the discourse.

2. On the Religious-Zionist Group and “Family Resemblance”

My discussion of this question will be set within a Wittgensteinian context. A group is real if its components bear a “family resemblance”. Resemblance is not sameness but suffices for characterizing a group as such. In the socio-cultural context, however, pointing to a casual resemblance potentially found in other groups as well is not enough. Moreover, aspects that are distinguishing fundamental characteristics of the group and supposedly lead to its differences from others must also be pointed out.

This methodological claim about the nature of family resemblance relies on a basic assumption about the identity of a group. A group cannot be characterized only negatively—saying that group A is not group B only because group B does not view group A as included in it is not enough. Religious-Zionism is not a defined and unique group only because those known as Haredim or secularists characterize it as a special group different from themselves. The question about the standing of the other when constituting self-identity exceeds the scope of my discussion here. This issue, which has been discussed at length, is not relevant to the present topic. The claim that a religious-Zionist identity conveys only negation is incompatible with the consciousness of the three groups of hegemonies: rabbis, politicians, and media people. For them, being a religious-Zionist is not determined by the other’s

gaze. The self-consciousness of these hegemonies could be false, but this determination cannot rely on a potential theory assuming that the gaze of the other constitutes the identity of the self. Rejecting facts due to a possible theory refuted by the facts makes no sense. We must relate to the self-consciousness of hegemonic groups as reflecting their world, even if to the scholar this consciousness is false. This justification moves in a vicious circle, which refuses to see and understand the phenomenon before it.³

The hegemonies' self-consciousness is reaffirmed by that of religious-Zionists themselves. If individuals, in the past or the present, identified themselves as religious-Zionists, they will not be satisfied with the determination that they are religious-Zionists only because they are neither Haredim nor secularists. Their self-consciousness and their identity were not constituted by the other. Quite the contrary: *because* they are religious-Zionists, they are neither Haredim nor secularists.

These insights are compatible with the history of the identity discourse and of identity itself. Groups constitute their identity and conduct a discourse about it out of their social-cultural-historical reality. Identity grows primarily from within. Anyone rejecting this stance will be forced to claim that a person is a Jew only because he is not a non-Jew. *Prima facie*, this claim is fallacious. A more reasonable claim is that, since a person is a Jew, she is not a non-Jew. Her self-identity situates her in opposition to the other.⁴

In this light, a separate religious-Zionist group will emerge based on a family resemblance constituted from within. A group's "family resemblance" rests on the sharing of the following components:

- (1) Constitutive foundational myths.
- (2) Typical ethos and practices.
- (3) The authority principle.
- (4) Shared canonic texts.
- (5) Group solidarity.
- (6) Self-consciousness as an "us" group.

To what extent are these components shared within the group currently signified by the term "religious-Zionism"? The greater the sharing, the easier it is to infer the existence of a family resemblance showing that the signifier "religious-Zionism" has a real signified—the religious-Zionist group. And vice-versa—the lesser the sharing, the lesser the family resemblance, and the lesser the centripetal element organizing the group, which goes through centrifugal processes that break it apart or even convey its disappearance.

2.1. Constitutive Foundational Myths

The history of religious-Zionism is based on constitutive foundational myths that convey its religious historical vision, explain historical events, and set its purpose. These myths offer an account of human history from a religious and theological perspective and determine the appropriate norms in a given reality.

Key myths of this group will be traced in broad terms here. Messianism is the original foundational myth of religious-Zionism.⁵ In this historical movement, the idea of messianism is not an expression of the dogmatic principle—the belief in the coming of a messiah who will redeem the people of Israel from exile and return them to the Land of Israel. The innovation of historical religious-Zionism is the foundational claim that a messianic era has reached concrete expression in Zionism and the State of Israel. Religious-Zionist believers knew that the Zionist movement began its course in specific historical circumstances, driven by a demand for national life in the Land of Israel. Its thinkers well knew that Zionism began in an era of national renaissance in Europe, and secular Zionism was aware that it was acting in this era and within this specific European history.

This messianic foundational myth, however, reinterpreted immanent history. In this view, the immanent renaissance is the "awakening below" that will lead to an "awakening above," manifest in God's actual involvement. This foundational myth thus suggested a demythologized interpretation that redraws the course of history. Without negating concrete history, it assumes that this immanence is part of a metaphysical redemption

process that culminates in the return to the Land of Israel and the renewal of full Jewish life in it. Immanent history has no autonomous meaning in this foundational myth and, therefore, neither does Jewish secularism. Rav Abraham Hachohen Kook's heroic attempts to endow secularism with religious meaning are the complementary facet of the messianic foundational myth: Jewish secularism is a temporary state, and in the full redemption now evolving, the Jewish people will repent. The return to the land is part of the process of the return to God, and secularism is the catalyst, the provocation, and the unease that will lead the people to return to God.

The assumption whereby Zionism was part of a messianic era of the return to God was tied to the endowment of unique mythical meaning to the Land of Israel. The Land of Israel is not only a place of historical importance in the consciousness of the Jewish people but *the* place, the *axis mundi*, the axis of the world. Without it, the existence of the Jewish people is not complete. The unity of the people and the land is not founded merely on the classic historical connection to the Land of Israel as the original homeland. The Land of Israel is the place of redemption. God, who acts in history to bring back the Jewish people to the divine, acts to return the Jewish people to the metaphysical place they belong to—the Land of Israel (See Schwartz 1997). These foundational myths, organized around the idea of messianism, combine basic myths about history, the people, the land, and divine action in the world.⁶

This mythical complex was used to justify cooperation with secularists in the early stages of religious-Zionism, which functioned as the bridge that enabled believers to break out from their religious-social isolation and act jointly with secularists. This process generated another foundational myth—the responsibility of religious-Zionism for the people, the state, and the land that, in turn, prompted this movement's consciousness as caring for the Jewish collective rather than a caste set apart. This care was anchored in a myth whereby only religious-Zionism understands the course of history, shaping a mythical consciousness of “sacred history” to which it alone holds the keys.⁷ On this basis, it concluded that it is charged with a duty to cooperate with secular Jews in general and Zionist ones in particular and be responsible for the Jewish people, the Land of Israel, and the State of Israel as the space for the fulfillment of redemption.

This analysis of the foundational myths enables us to examine to what extent they continue to function in the life of the group signified by the concept of “religious-Zionism”. For some individuals, these myths are certainly still constitutive, but a socio-cultural analysis of the group signified by this term will reveal that they are increasingly disappearing. The Israeli-Western lifestyle common among members of this group sharpens their critical attitude, lowers the register of the metaphysical language, and marginalizes faith in religious-Zionist messianism in all its connotations.

The full integration of religious-Zionists into the range of occupations prevalent in the Israeli bourgeoisie not only lowered the mythical pathos but also made it implausible. The shared discourse within the religious-Zionist group is now a discourse of rights and a discourse of identity constituted by its specific needs and values. In this context, it affects its members' particular way of being religious, which they seek to protect and in whose name they demand their rights. They, like all the state's citizens, insist on their right to realize their lives as religious people and not necessarily as religious-Zionists. Hence, they often join forces with the two other groups, Haredim and secularists. On religious questions, they link up mostly with Haredim, and on social questions, they shift between association with the secular and the Haredi groups. This fluctuation reflects the centrality of social and religious norms and values among members of this group and not necessarily that of the foundational myths. Social mobility is a clear sign of a lower mythical-messianic pathos.

The discussion so far is not meant to imply that this myth has disappeared. Quite the contrary. In some groups, the myth became dramatic, although, paradoxically, wherever this happened, it was accompanied by a process of separation from historical religious-Zionism. These groups perceive historical religious-Zionism as merely an intermediate stage on the road to redemption. The return to the land after the Six-Day War expedited

their crowding around the *nexus mundi*—the Land of Israel. The greater the fixation on the land as constitutive of messianism, the greater the group's detachment from society, the people, and real Jewish existence. The emergence of a Haredi-national (*Hardali*) movement and its various extensions is a sign of this enhanced mythical pathos. This phenomenon, which began in settler circles, draws attention to the largest and most important group, which rejected these myths and integrated into the normative-value system of the State of Israel. This integration intensifies the dialectical tension.

One striking example is the Orthodox feminist revolution that draws on fundamental moral ideas, creating a partnership with the universal moral community. Its religious commitment, however, poses a challenge to halakhic commitment. And yet, rather than seeking to undermine religious commitment, this revolution seeks to strengthen it while enabling women to be full partners to it. This revolution wages its struggles without resorting to the classic foundational myths of religious-Zionism. These myths have no place at all in this struggle since they present a model of return to an imagined, pre-modern religiosity striving “to renew our days as of old” rather than reconstitute them in light of the present.

Halakhic feminism and the culture of the quasi-religious-Zionist enclave are indeed in a deep confrontation that exposes two contradictory processes—one centrifugal and one centripetal. Feminism was enabled through the cooperation of religious-Zionism with Israeli society and based on its adoption of liberal social and moral values. These values, as noted, have no connection with religious-Zionist foundational myths, and indeed question them. This revolution sparks and conveys a centrifugal process.

By contrast, *Hardali* trends generate a centripetal process that culminates in the boosting of these myths and their detachment from the concrete history of religious-Zionism. A deep expression of this displacement is a new hierarchical ranking of the foundational myths, which turns the Land of Israel into the primary mythical foundation—the essence of messianism, preferable to the actual people and the actual state. Religious-Zionism traversed a long way from its early days until the dismantlement of its foundational myths. In the beginning, religious-Zionism had seen itself as a partner to the project of rescuing the people—the people before the land. R. Reines, who supported the Uganda proposal, wrote to Herzl:

Why deny that our hearts are pained and grieved from the news reported by our eminent director, informing us that we are far from our hopes in the land of our forefathers. Who among us failed to shed salty tears and who was not embittered?! Nevertheless, we did agree to the African proposal because we are concerned about the needs of the people, who is more beloved to us than the land. (Heymann 1970, p. 180)

R. Reines' words leave no doubt: he never retreated from the idea of redemption and the messianic leanings. In his writings, he conveys a messianic stance that assumes redemption will indeed come. The view that his Zionist activity was not related to his messianic approach is also hard to accept.⁸ His approach reflects a hierarchical adjustment—the people before the land. In conflicts between the people and the land, the worthy course is to purposely delay the myth of messianic redemption, which will be amended in the future through God's action in history. Precisely because he (and in his wake most supporters of historical religious-Zionism) believed that we are in the midst of redemptive processes pointing to God's actions, he could endorse this deliberate delay and favor the people over the land since the redemption of the land would certainly come, but the people are now in danger.

This adjustment characterized the activity of the religious-Zionist group up to the Six-Day War. Until then, religious-Zionism had leaned toward political-social pragmatism not because it had renounced the messianic myth but because it had relied on it. It could be comfortable within an imperfect reality because it was certain that the ideal would be realized and this was a time to show responsibility for *Klal Israel*—the concrete Jewish people.

Since the Six-Day War, the mythical center of gravity has increasingly shifted toward the land, ultimately leading to the separation of those joining Israeli society from those who have persisted in creating the closed mythical culture of an enclave.⁹ Two opposite processes, then, are currently in progress. One leads to increasing closeness to the Haredi world. This closeness is evident not only among believers in the religious-Zionist myth but also among segments of the Haredi public that, contrary to their constitutive ethos, have turned into supporters of *Hardali* trends.

2.2. Ethoses and Practices

The concept of ethos has several meanings. In the present context, this term denotes characteristic habits and customs. It differs from practice, which functions here to denote an accepted norm that should be complied with. Are there religious-Zionist ethos and practices? Are there accepted customs and norms whose realization denotes membership in the religious-Zionist community? From a historical perspective, the answer is yes. Pointing out a member of this community had been easy. Their attire differed from that of Haredim, who continued to dress in the classic outfit of believing Jews in exile while religious-Zionists wore clothes resembling those of secularists. Religious-Zionists, however, were still recognizable: men wore berets and later knitted skullcaps, and women dressed slightly more modestly than their secular counterparts, though in a similar style. Some religious-Zionist women covered their heads, but head covering was not necessarily an identifying sign. Dress codes pointed to a closeness between religious and secular Zionism and set the distance between religious-Zionists and Haredim.

Though this was not a written law, it was clear to the members of the religious-Zionist movement that they were part of the real Jewish people. Historical religious-Zionism shattered the walls of the inner ghetto, broke free from the enclave culture, and participated in the real life of the society taking shape in Israel. This participation did not revoke the foundational myths but delayed them. This purposeful delay of the myths, as noted, was a persistent mechanism in religious-Zionism that enabled it to join Israeli society while preserving the dream that will be tied to the absolute transformation of Jewish existence—the return to God and his Torah.

The ethos drew the religious group and the real Jewish people increasingly closer. Ethoses and norms that were part of everyday life in Israeli society entered religious-Zionism, whose ways of life had so far been exclusively determined by the asceticism dominant in this group. The more it internalized values, ethos, and norms from the surrounding world, the more it drew away from its foundational myths.

Contemporary imagined religious-Zionists wish to live in the immanent life space, like the rest of Israel's society. They are partners to its values, its ideals, its consumer products, and its pervasive images. This partnership does not necessarily hinder their religious commitment. Quite the contrary—it reinforces it. Thus, for example, when imagined religious-Zionists go on a cruise, they will seek an option enabling them to observe the commandments—kosher food, Shabbat, and so forth. In doing so, they act solely as Jews committed to the Torah and the commandments, and being religious-Zionists plays no part in the shaping of their concrete life.

A clear expression of this dramatic change is evident in their attitude toward the Land of Israel. Right-wing attitudes are widespread among those regarded as “religious-Zionists”. Their choice, however, is not necessarily anchored in a metaphysical myth but in right-wing leanings prevalent in many segments of Israeli society, and are unconnected to the foundational myths of religious-Zionism. The typical family resemblance is a resemblance between voters for right-wing parties and not necessarily religious-Zionist ones.

The replacement of the ethos is evident in the constant decline of voters for the party seeking to preserve the constitutive myths of religious-Zionism. Most “religious-Zionist” voters vote for a party that is not labeled as religious-Zionist and whose leaders may lack any religious-Zionist commitment. Although religious-Zionist authorities committed to the foundational myths could be expected to protest against this situation, no such protest

exists and, if it does, it focuses mainly on whether it is appropriate for a secular woman to lead a religious-Zionist party! Religion is the focus, not the myth.

If the religious-Zionist ethos, customs, and habits are in decline, what about the normative aspects? Those brought up in religious-Zionist surroundings will point to several distinct religious-Zionist holidays: Independence Day and, after the Six-Day War, the 28 of Iyar, the day of the liberation of Jerusalem. Without entering into a detailed analysis of Independence Day celebrations in religious-Zionism, what is clear is that the proposal of the Religious Kibbutz Federation (RKF) to devise a special prayer service for that day was not accepted. The prayer service that was finally adopted precisely conveys the difference between standard Jewish holidays on the one hand and Independence Day as a kind of imperfect reproduction of them on the other. Someone praying in a “religious-Zionist” synagogue cannot but sense the difference between it and the immediately preceding Passover holiday. Whereas the Passover prayer is standard and clear, the Independence Day prayer appears as a careful and guarded attempt to celebrate without upsetting or hindering existing halakhot.

In the past, this unease led many youths to look for places where this prayer is a primary religious event rather than a reproduction or a shadow of Jewish holidays. Thus, for example, in the 1960s and 1970s, many traveled to pray at the Merkaz Harav yeshiva or at kibbutzim. Independence Day is now a holiday celebrated by most of the Jewish people and, except for the problematic prayer, has no special features for the group regarded as “religious-Zionism”. This group celebrates it as an Israeli holiday entwined in the web of sadness and joy experienced between Remembrance Day and Independence Day. Neither of these special days bears any distinct religious-Zionist features. Indeed, neither bears any religious features at all, except for prayers, and religious-Zionism celebrates this holiday as part of its greater partnership in Israeli existence.

A far greater problem is tied to the 28 of Iyar. This was a distinctly religious-Zionist holiday conveying the concretization of the messianic myth that had impelled religious-Zionism—the return to the land and the place of the Temple, a renewed meeting with the God of history. Although this holiday was an especially powerful event immediately after the Six-Day War, it failed to enter the heart of Israeli society, which has a complex attitude toward it. In my youth, when I was studying at the Netiv Meir yeshiva in Jerusalem after the Six-Day War, all of us—students and teachers—shared a sense of this day as an important holiday that sums up the essence of religious-Zionist faith. We felt redemption had taken a further step: “They shall come back from the distant land,” and the experience was that “the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion”. My rabbi and teacher Arie Bina, of blessed memory, a Torah va-Avodah supporter, expressed his classic and fervent religious-Zionist faith on this day. He was deeply distressed when some of the students slipped away from the yeshiva to celebrate at Merkaz Harav. He was well aware of the gap between his classic religious-Zionist views and the new approach taking shape at Merkaz Harav. In a sermon engraved in my memory that he preached on the Sabbath that followed the holiday, he protested against a Zionism with its head in heaven and its feet not planted on earth. He negated a metaphysics that is not anchored in real life. Neither he nor other classic religious-Zionists could have imagined the mythical turn that would develop in Merkaz Harav and its extensions.

Indeed, the 28 of Iyar was adopted as a holiday mainly by those who were influenced by the new mythical web woven at Merkaz Harav. It did not make inroads among those called religious-Zionists, just as it failed to affect Israeli existence in general. Today, the 28 of Iyar is largely the holiday of youths educated in *Hardali* institutions or those close to them, though remnants of it are still found in the institutions known as religious-Zionist: the religious-Zionist educational networks. In any event, this is not a religious-Zionist holiday because religious-Zionism is no longer and is entwined with Israeli existence.

Further analysis, however, allows us to question this determination. The *mi shebeirekh* (One who blessed) prayer is broad-ranged. It covers individuals and groups that individuals or the public wish to bless—those in need of healing, new mothers, synagogue deacons, and

so forth. My discussion will not deal with the religious and theological implications of this prayer and I will confine myself to one basic claim: one need not be a religious-Zionist to bless IDF soldiers or to recite a prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel. We know of a tradition in European synagogues where prayers were recited for the welfare of the emperor or the king on clearly practical grounds: the safety of the Jewish people depended on rulers who protected them. If the ruler was a benevolent figure, such as Franz Joseph in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, contemporary prayer books included a prayer in his honor. Visitors to a synagogue in a big city in Morocco will find that, close to the *musaf* service, a prayer is recited for the welfare of IDF soldiers beside one for the welfare of Morocco's king.

The prayer for the welfare of IDF soldiers or the *Yizkor* (memorial) prayer for them convey experiences of gratitude and care that believers translate into prayers. These believers see themselves as belonging to society and mediate this belongingness to their religious world as well. Claiming a necessary link between these prayers and religious-Zionism assumes that people are not aware of their needs nor of the fundamental values of their life within a given society.

The prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel requires a more complex analysis. In this prayer, the State of Israel is characterized as "the initial sprouting of our redemption". Ostensibly, this is a classic religious-Zionist prayer based on the religious-Zionist myth. Because he could not agree with this claim, Eliezer Goldman refrained from conducting prayers in the *musaf* service. According to his philosophical stance, people are not allowed to make claims they cannot duly substantiate, and he viewed this claim as a kind of hubris, conveying human intrusion into a forbidden realm.

Most religious-Zionists and most members of the RKF, where Goldman played a prominent role as a member of kibbutz Sdeh Eliyahu, did not endorse his approach. The key question touches on the meaning of the phrase "initial sprouting of our redemption". Since the beginning of the Zionist endeavor, the term "redemption" functions in the secular discourse as an operative term. Zionism sought to redeem the Jewish people from exile and this redemption denotes a deep political and existential metamorphosis. The Jewish people are redeemed from political exile as an alien nation among the nations of the world, while individual Jews are redeemed from the self-alienation that had imprisoned them in their countries of exile. Believers reciting this prayer can express through it their faith in the political and existential significance of the State of Israel, and they need not be religious-Zionists to do so. "The initial sprouting of our redemption" is a polysemic phrase, and all believers can pour their values into this prayer.

Moreover, the notion that these and other prayers convey a religious-Zionist approach becomes debatable in light of other prayers and festivals. First among them is Tisha B'Av, a day of mourning when the *nahem* (console) prayer and *kinnot* (lamentations) are recited. Despite the reiterated controversies, particularly surrounding the recitation of the *nahem* prayer, nothing has changed. Petitioners still ask God to restore the destroyed and desolate city. Positive rituals are thus balanced and weakened by opposing ones.

Furthermore, if family resemblance within the religious-Zionist group is meant to rely on synagogue rituals of polysemic meaning, religious-Zionism is a synagogue community or, more precisely, a closed religious community functioning only within an enclosed space rather than at the heart of Israeli life.

2.3. The Authority Principle

In the course of its history, the religious-Zionist group shed its reliance on specific religious authorities. Although led by rabbis at its founding, headed by R. Reines, its historical activity did not rely on the power of rabbinic authority. The symbolic capital of the rabbinate was not displaced to the space of religious-Zionist activity. Rather the opposite—this movement rejected the *da'at Torah* idea born in Agudat Yisrael circles. The positions formulated by the religious-Zionist leadership did not rely on halakhic rulings but on the assumption that a halakhic-moral outlook can direct life, even if rabbis oppose it.¹⁰ Members of Kvutsat Yavne followed this course when they rejected the stance of Rav Kook

and other rabbis regarding milking on the Sabbath.¹¹ The negation of religious authority made room for a religious-Zionist intellectual approach relying on public leaders and figures of social moral authority who played a crucial role in introducing a worthy set of norms and values—they, and not rabbis.¹² Until shortly after the Six-Day War, rabbis did not play a central role within religious-Zionism, and especially so within the RKF that, as Aryei Fishman showed, assumed that authoritative charisma lies within the community itself.¹³ Rabbis did work as teachers in religious educational institutions or as community rabbis, but their role was defined and limited. Until the 1970s, there was no rabbinic leadership at all in the Bnei Akiva youth movement. Some rabbis—R. Neriah, R. Zuckerman, R. Druckman—were active, but voiced their views as members of Bnei Akiva, not as rabbis. I was active in Bnei Akiva as a youth and I remember that rabbis were present at council meetings and conferences, but in their capacity as movement members and not to exercise rabbinic authority. The idea that Bnei Akiva and religious-Zionism are not guided by *da'at Torah* was constantly reiterated at the movement's seminars and in the instructions to the counselors. A life of Torah va-Avodah means that members realize this ideal in their own lives and, if they have specific questions, they turn to rabbis, or to scholars, or solve these issues by themselves. The educational ideal that guided Bnei Akiva members was pioneering self-realization at a kibbutz.

The turnabout occurred in the 1970s, with the settlement enterprise. Bnei Akiva then changed its stance, and only isolated individuals remained loyal to the previous classic path. As an active contemporary witness, I can determine with certainty that the messianic wave and the rise of rabbinic authority almost eliminated the other voice, which I supported (See Barlev et al. 1987, pp. 280–83). Bnei Akiva, like religious-Zionism as a whole, underwent a striking metamorphosis (See Sagi and Stern 2011). R. Zvi Yehuda Kook's appeal was dramatic, and his disciples, who took over Gush Emunim, ultimately led to a fundamental revolution in the return of charismatic authority to the rabbis. Like Haredi rabbis, religious-Zionist rabbis now convey *da'at Torah*—an indispensable truth that makes halakhic discourse redundant and turns religious-Zionists into obedient subjects who lose their autonomy.

This shift implies a displacement of the myths and ethos at the foundation of the religious-Zionist group. Sociologically, religious-Zionism went back to being a caste, constituting a closed and autonomous world of meaning connected to the mythical land and the imagined people of Israel. Rabbinic authority is a fixed anchor in the shaping of a consciousness detaching further and further from everyday life. Some religious-Zionists, who chose this approach, gather in yeshivot inspired by the metaphysics of R. Tau and his disciples, while others have become closer to the Haredi world. The result was the recreation of an enclave, whose cradle had indeed been in religious-Zionism but is now increasingly drawing away from it.

The large majority of religious-Zionists did not join this enclave. Centrifugal processes are discernible and, in their context, other sub-groups have emerged. New Hasidism is one of them. Young religious-Zionist men and women seek an answer to a religious passion that, by nature, is individual. Their search for a unique religiosity finds no answers in bourgeois religious-Zionism nor in the group supporting a patently metaphysical stance and a theology of truth. This group, which grows out of the classic religious-Zionist educational system, sheds the depth layers of its myths, ethos, and practices. Instead, it endorses an outlook drawing on Hasidism on the one hand, and on existentialist and postmodern trends on the other. One of its heroes is R. Shagar, who does not function as a representative of a commanding authority or even a charismatic one. He, and more precisely his work, is a source of inspiration for an introverted, conflicted, and extremely personal religiosity.

Other groups also have a liberal orientation. Among them is the feminist group noted above, which not only supports a specific ideology but has also created a growing number of institutions ("Kolech"), synagogues, literature, and educational materials, and broadly rejects commanding rabbinic authority.¹⁴ The expansion of Torah study among women

leads to dramatic change. Many women, and men who hold these views, refuse to be passive subjects of Halakhah. They see themselves as autonomous, empowered to operate in the world out of a personal religious commitment. When entering many religious-Zionist synagogues, we cannot avoid noticing changes in the women's attire and departure from patterns that in the past had characterized religious-Zionist women—the removal of the head covering or its reduction to a symbolic element, sleeves, pants instead of dresses, and so forth. Women today have a greater share in the management of the synagogue's religious space, culminating in various forms of participating *minyanim* (prayer quorums). Worth mentioning in this context is the increasing legitimization of the LGBT, all in contrast with the stance of religious-Zionist rabbis. These and other developments are evidence of the growing rejection of rabbinic authority in religious-Zionism. This rejection is complemented by the fact that many of those turning to rabbis to deal with halakhic questions or Torah study choose them relying on a scholarly halakhic criterion, not on their Zionist affiliation.

The history of religious-Zionism is one of rebellion against standard halakhic authority. The myth and the ethos of the religious-Zionist revolution proclaimed that, during redemption, a “holy rebellion” (in R. Yeshayahu Shapira's words) against halakhic authorities is required to act, invoking the Torah. This ethos shaped the RKF from its early days until the 1980s. Gradually, and as life's routine demanded, members of the religious-Zionist community, including the RKF, resorted to rabbis who, at first, were meant to fulfill a defined role: teach Torah and rule on halakhic questions. Gradually, however, in a kind of unwritten contract, their role expanded and they began to set “halakhot” on social, political, and statewide issues as well. They became the advocates of Gush Emunim's settlement endeavor and the new educators of religious-Zionism.

Until the end of the 1970s, most of Bnei Akiva's national board had been made up of RKF members. Even when the board had included rabbis, such as R. Druckman, they were part of it due to their previous membership in Bnei Akiva. Gradually, Bnei Akiva's national board was taken over by a new rabbinic elite, which changed the face of the movement and the face of the generation.

We are currently witnessing the progressive decline of classic rabbinic powers, which is also reflected in the rise of pre-military preparatory courses meant to provide young people with a toolbox for grappling with the world outside. Heading these courses are usually charismatic figures (not rabbinic scholars) who provide metaphysical inspiration. Not many study Talmud in the high school yeshivot or the preparatory training courses, and classic patterns of Torah study are in decline, accelerating the replacement of rabbinic authorities with charismatic ones. The power of charismatic authority, however, is extremely limited. As soon as students at the yeshivot and the training courses leave for the army or university, they gradually abandon the myths and ethos imparted by these charismatic figures. Entry into life is accompanied by a reshaping of critical thought, wherein the power of rabbinic authority, the myth, and the ethos fade out or even disappear.

2.4. Shared Canonic Texts

Anyone who studied at Merkaz Harav or its extensions points to the existence of canonic texts in this space that are considered holy, including the linking of *The Kuzari*, the writings of R. Judah Loew (Maharal), and the writings of R. Abraham Kook and their authorized commentators. In this spiritual world, these are not only canonic texts but holy texts meant to guide real life. Until today, believers in the holiness of these texts study an article that Rav Kook wrote in the early twentieth century, *Ha-dor* (the generation), viewing it as a guide to life here and now. Until today, reality is examined through the lens suggested by Maharal or by Judah Halevi. Moreover, in the period following the Six-Day War, and even more so after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Gush Emunim settlements were established, we find scholars whose learning was tied to these canonic texts. Instead of the Talmud and its commentators, they turned to the study of Jewish thought since, so it was claimed, that is the need of this generation.

Rav Kook's writings were important from the time of their publication. In religious-Zionist homes, they were found on the bookshelves beside classic canonic books, but they never became guides to life. All knew that Rav Kook is the greatest religious-Zionist rabbi, but this understanding bore no practical implications. The RKF rejected Rav Kook's ruling forbidding milking on the Sabbath and relied on rulings that did allow it. Rav Kook's stance denying women's right to vote and be elected was not accepted either. Until the Six-Day War, Rav Kook's appeal appears to have relied on his amiable personality, on the love he radiated for the people of Israel, and on the general ethos he established, which enabled sacred and secular domains to unite. His books became sacred texts only for the group of believers.

At present, shared canonic texts playing a role in the religious-Zionist world are hard to find. Generally, beyond the classic Jewish books whose canonical place is in the library and not in the living space, there are no books unique to the religious-Zionist group. The library of religious-Zionists is extremely similar to that characteristic of the socio-economic class they belong to, with the addition of holy books. The religious-Zionist scholarly elite has not created a unique library either, and its canonic books are the Jewish books relevant to the scholarly elite. The religious-Zionist bookshelf is the Jewish Israeli bookshelf and, usually, lacks any unique features.

2.5. Solidarity

A group is characterized by the close relationships prevailing within it, which constitute it as an "us" group. These relationships come forth in concern, care, responsiveness to the members' needs, and the precedence of concern for one another before showing concern for non-members—"charity begins at home". These relationships create the concrete solidarity of the group members, which establishes the "us" group. The borders of solidarity enable us to examine the borders of group membership.

People belong to different solidary groups: the family, the society they live in, their place of work (if it is not only a *gesellschaft* but also a *gemeinschaft*, in the terminology of Ferdinand Tönnies (1957)), their army unit, the people, the citizens, and more. Solidarity does not denote a static reality. The "us" community could change in the wake of social or other changes. Various solidary groups change according to their importance and evaluation among their members. Solidarity does not necessarily point to a fixed extra-historical or extra-cultural datum.

I have drawn elsewhere a distinction between two solidarity models: metaphysical and realistic.¹⁵ Metaphysical solidarity is founded on the partnership that prevails between people: we are all human and, therefore, people's suffering touches us and compels us. Solidarity embodies the good in humanity, the readiness of individuals and groups to transcend their existence and act for the amendment of human reality. It emerges when evil or a great injustice is evident and people find themselves compelled to act. The literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki, who was hidden by a Polish family during the Holocaust, describes the pure motivation behind their action: "It was something entirely different [that is, not motivated by money] and I can describe it only with grand and hackneyed words: compassion, goodness, humanity" (Reich-Ranicki 2001, p. 205). The people who sheltered Reich-Ranicki did not see him and his wife as part of an "us" community. They belonged to a different society, religion, and culture. They were alien to one another and, nevertheless, acted out of deep solidarity.

Contrary to metaphysical solidarity is realistic solidarity, which emerges from an actual connection to a living human community. Richard Rorty affirmed this solidarity and, unjustifiably, entirely rejected the metaphysical version. He illustrated his view with the following claim: "If you were a Jew in the period when the trains were running to Auschwitz, your chances of being hidden by your gentile neighbors were greater if you lived in Denmark or Italy than if you lived in Belgium". (Rorty 1989, p. 189). According to Rorty, Danes and Italians did not explain their solidarity using metaphysical arguments, such as Jews are human beings; they perceived Jews as part of the "us," while Belgians did

not see Jews as members of their community (Ibid., p. 190). Rorty pointed to the flexibility of the “us” concept—it is not a rigid signifier since the “us” group can gradually expand. Without going into the details of the process that leads to this expansion, the process itself deserves attention. Martha Nussbaum described the normative meaning of this process in exact terms:

They suggest that we think of ourselves not as devoid of local affiliations, but as surrounded by a series of concentric circles. The first one encircles the self, the next takes in the immediate family, then follows the extended family, then, in order, neighbors or local groups, fellow city-dwellers, and fellow countrymen—and we can easily add to this list groupings based on ethnic, linguistic, historical, professional, gender, or sexual identity. Outside all these circles is the largest one, humanity as a whole. Our task as citizens of the world will be to “draw the circles somehow toward the center” . . . making all human beings more like our fellow city dwellers, and so on. (Nussbaum 1996, p. 9)

Nussbaum outlines the socio-cultural process linking realistic and metaphysical solidarity. Rather than a predetermined social structuring, metaphysical solidarity traces the process of our self-transcendence power.

This conceptual framework enables us to analyze the solidarity ascribed to the religious-Zionist group. In truth, the innermost ethos of this historical group led it to constantly transcend the “we religious-Zionists” group. Even when this group existed as a historical-social-cultural entity, its basic ethos directed it toward the entire society. It was founded on care for the real Jewish people and expanded with the love of the people of Israel it inherited from age-old Jewish tradition.

This foundational fact applies to the religious kibbutz that, ostensibly, created a closed group. The borders of its solidarity were drawn inwards and each specific kibbutz—Yavneh, Sde Eliyahu, Lavi, and others—was a basic solidarity group. The idea of a religious kibbutz, however, was not intended to give rise to a closed caste but was part of the general Zionist renaissance. In its context, the kibbutz conveyed a worthy idealism—cooperative life. The religious kibbutz added to this social layer the idea of a community living a fuller and ideal religious life. Solidarity within the group was as the solidarity between members of a family. It never created enclosed solidarity but rather the opposite. The religious kibbutz, like the religious-Zionist movement, saw itself responsible for the entire society. It enlisted to act where special mobilization was required—taking care of new immigrants, army service, educational systems, and so forth. The solidarity of the religious kibbutz, like the solidarity of religious-Zionism, was directed toward Israeli society. Excluding from it whoever was not part of “us” was an alien notion to religious-Zionism. In the classic historical consciousness of the religious-Zionist group, this all-encompassing Israeli solidarity traces the line that distinguishes them from the Haredim.

It is a plausible assumption that the collapse of this group is partly a result of the deep socialization process of religious-Zionism in Israeli society. One prominent expression of this socialization is the decline of the National-Religious party, with many religious-Zionists joining the broad spectrum of Zionist parties in Israel. Historical religious-Zionism realized part of the process outlined by Nussbaum. In the course of expanding and transcending the religious-Zionist group, many of its members shed its distinct particularistic element. Now they are Zionists and religious, but the foundational group—religious-Zionism—disappeared in the course of this development.

The sons and daughters of historical-social religious-Zionism belong to various solidarity communities, at times mutually contradictory. The imagined religious-Zionist solidarity plays no role in establishing the “us” group that overrides other solidarity communities. At times, we do find solidarity within marginal “religious-Zionist” groups such as, for example, graduates of Yeshivat Har Hamor or Merkaz Harav students. These groups, however, have long ago detached themselves from real entities and constitute themselves as an imagined “us” community, which has long ago abandoned the cultural-social backbone of the religious-Zionist group. The gap between the shaping of unique, set apart “us”

communities points not only to the process that religious-Zionism experienced but also, and mainly, to the distancing of these extreme groups from religious-Zionism. At times, members of these groups convey their distance from imagined religious-Zionism, viewing it as a stage in the metaphysical process of establishing the ideal Jewish people.

2.6. Self-Consciousness

The existence of a religious-Zionist self-consciousness is one of the widespread arguments for claiming that there is a group possessing this consciousness. This argument's starting assumption is that consciousness generally, and self-consciousness in particular, relates to the object to which it applies. The object is always the primary datum that consciousness relates to and, therefore, the existence of a religious-Zionist self-consciousness attests to the existence of this group.¹⁶

An implicit assumption about consciousness underlies this claim, whereby self-consciousness is passive and, therefore, if something appears within it, this implies that it exists independently of it. This claim reflects a naïve stance that has long ago been dismissed in the thought about self-consciousness. Even if we assume the passivity of consciousness, we cannot infer that a datum appearing in it exists in the socio-cultural world independently of it. Some datum, though possibly appearing in consciousness, is not an entity that exists outside of it. This critique rests on the assumption that a consciousness related to some object cannot guarantee the object's existence independently of consciousness. Consciousness may imagine a datum, but this datum does not necessarily exist. Hence, we can claim that religious-Zionist self-consciousness imagines a datum and does not necessarily reflect its independent existence in consciousness itself. The intentional conscious object, then, religious-Zionism, does not transcend its existence as a conscious datum that is there for the person thinking it but not necessarily outside it. In other words, we cannot draw inferences from an epistemic determination made by consciousness about the state of affairs in the world.

This critique points out that consciousness has an active role. It does not necessarily represent the world but, above all, constitutes it. Many thinkers hold that self-consciousness plays an active role. The self's conscious reflection is an ongoing process that, rather than returning to a datum existing "out there" in the world, is its act of creation. People constitute and create themselves through their consciousness.¹⁷

Applying these determinations to the study of religious-Zionism is crucial. We cannot assume the existence of religious-Zionism only because people describe their self-consciousness as religious-Zionists. The widespread use of the signifier "religious-Zionism" in the discourse is not evidence of its connection to a concrete signified. A linguistic signifier is not a necessary condition and certainly not a sufficient one for the existence of this group. A self-consciousness whose object is "religious-Zionism" points to the possible existence of such a group, but cannot be an answer to the question about its actual existence.

From the perspective of the study of discourse, we need to examine the context wherein the signifier "religious-Zionist" appears. An analysis of this signifier will offer answers to the question about the meaning ascribed to this term and about its very use in the discourse. Hegemonic groups—rabbis, politicians, or media people—that use this term attempt to convey through it the validity of certain beliefs and values they hold and wish to impart. The political-public dimension of this use is obvious: hegemonies do not deal with the question of whether their approach is linked to the historical-social-cultural group signified by the term "religious-Zionism". In their discourse, they express and represent religious-Zionism; they or their insights are its concretization. The language of the hegemonic discourse is entirely synchronic and transmitted through the statements of these spokespersons. If diachronic components appear in their discourse, they will be literary-canonic ones, such as the writings of Rav Kook and so forth, but never the concrete social-cultural history of religious-Zionism, which indeed they reject through the pastoral voice characteristic of their discourse. They are the bearers of truth and of religious-

Zionism's redemptive knowledge.¹⁸ This shift to the synchronic dimension proclaims religious-Zionism's lingering death.

Religious-Zionist self-consciousness, however, is present not only in the hegemonic discourse and appears among various individuals and groups as well. Many describe themselves as religious-Zionists and, therefore, the possible meanings conveyed by this consciousness discourse deserve analysis, which will reveal the concept of "religious-Zionist" as polysemic. Several widespread meanings can be pointed out: a "religious-Zionist" consciousness conveys negation—not Haredi, not secular. Thus, for example, people choosing to pray at a religious-Zionist synagogue will say they favor it over a Haredi synagogue. The positive meaning latent in this form of expression is clear: a religious-Zionist life space means one where religious commitment is not an exclusive commitment that rejects other contexts of activity. "Religious-Zionism" is thus a modern religiosity mostly known as "Orthodoxy," but this characteristic is also subsiding. Frequently, a "religious-Zionist" consciousness means the combination of religion and the upholding of some form of Zionism. In this discourse, people declare that they are religious as well as Zionists, but they are not necessarily committed to the notion that their Zionism derives from a religious metaphysical stance. People using the term in this fashion belong to two different language communities, the Zionist and the religious one, and do not necessarily create a third, independent one.

Often, a consciousness of belongingness to religious-Zionism conveys belongingness to memory, to the past, to childhood, to family, to a realm of yearning and longing, perhaps conveying a link to the past and not necessarily to the present. People do not necessarily belong to a real community in the present but, above all, to a community of memory. Sometimes, the signified "religious-Zionism" denotes passion, an attempt to hold on in the present to what had been in the past. More than once, this passion led to the invention of new religious-Zionist heroes. Thus, for instance, in the late 1980s, the Torah va-Avodah movement discovered R. Haim Hirschensohn.¹⁹ His spiritual world enabled it to rethink itself.²⁰

As a religious-Zionist consciousness rises, so does the craving for a concrete signified. But my analysis suggests that, in this discourse, the concrete signified is elusive, appears, and vanishes. This discourse, seeking to go beyond language, relies on memory, a story that was, figures from previous generations or remnants from present ones. Holding on to the religious-Zionist discourse as a basis for determining an entity's existence resembles a drowning man's hold onto a plank from a ship that went under. There was a ship and the drowning man had been on it. Now it is driftwood. The plank may save him and lead him to a "safe haven". But what is the safe haven that religious-Zionist consciousness will lead to? Does not its signified recede further and further the longer this conversation goes on?

This analysis points out that the argument from religious-Zionist self-consciousness is not enough to validate an assumption about the present existence of a religious-Zionist group. Family resemblance, discussed above, is currently too meager to substantiate this hypothesis. To reiterate: it is an indisputable fact that, in the past, a religious-Zionist group had established itself as a discernible entity. At present, we are witnessing the progressive decay of its remnants. The religious-Zionist movement that existed in the past had many educational and cultural institutions. How can we explain that it has vanished from the landscape of our life? I claim that its disappearance is one result of this group's dramatic success: its deep entry into the web of Israeli life. To analyze this development, we must return to the question of identity in general and religious-Zionist identity in particular.

3. On Identity and Religious-Zionist Identity

The lifestyle of religious-Zionism was characterized by mediation between different and contradictory sets of values. Its integration into the Israeli web of life is ostensibly a story of success in various areas. Take, for example, the political realm: the power of the National-Religious party declined until the party disappeared altogether. This drop does not reflect the decline of the community defined in the past as the religious-Zionist group, which the National-Religious party purported to represent. Demographically, the

religious-Zionist group has not become smaller. The drop in the party's power probably indicates that large segments within the religious-Zionist community no longer feel a need for a political "home" to represent their specific interests. Most probably, these interests have not melted away. Many religious-Zionists, however, see no need for uniting around them and join other political parties, conveying their growing identification with the values and interests of Israeli society. No longer united around particularistic concerns, religious-Zionists are part of Israeli society.

The religious-Zionist community has also become closely integrated into the range of occupations typical of Israeli society and its members are found in every sphere: academia, economy, law, the army, and so forth. In all of them, they have assumed successful leadership roles organizing their lives in patterns typical of contemporary life.

This claim, seemingly banal, could prove crucial in a deeper analysis of these patterns. People, particularly in our time, function within a variety of contexts. Our lives are loaded with dense networks—family, work, state, nationality, and others—which establish different practices given that, for example, practices in the family differ from practices in the workplace. Furthermore, each network has a characteristic meaning that is constituted by a set of practices and creates new ones. The practices and the meanings expressed through them shape unique human dispositions since people are affected by the networks of meaning within which they operate and are not found in them as merely impenetrable objects. Some of these networks create communities with unique features. Thus, for example, people are not only influenced by the activity typical of their workspace but also create associations with other people active within it, which lead to communities (See also [Mautner et al. 1998](#)).

In our time, people participate synchronically in more than one network of practices and meaning. They belong to more than one community and they develop more than one typical disposition, in an expression of their being multicultural creatures. Existential multiculturalism, as I have referred to it elsewhere ([Sagi 2006](#), pp. 187–88), reflects the fact that we live in more than one culture and, therefore, our orientation in the world is complex, dynamic by nature, and open to change.

People had lived in several contexts of meaning and practices in previous eras as well but, in the present, these circumstances have shaped a new consciousness. In pre-modern times, even when people were active in several contexts of meaning, one network—usually the religious one—was assigned decisive importance in constituting their world. This network shaped a hierarchical attitude to all the others and was the one that determined the person's true "place". In this perception, other networks were interpreted and justified in light of the central one, which decided on the space to be allocated to them.

The claim that religious-Zionists are multicultural creatures appears as a conclusion warranted by the structuring of human existence in the current era. Like everyone else, religious-Zionists live in various networks of practice and meaning and no longer in the one-dimensional world of the religious one. Indeed, even people living solely within the religious network of meaning, as do some segments of Haredi society, are forced to act in the context of additional ones. Thus, when dealing with health issues, they will usually act according to the practice and meaning rules typical of the medical network. And yet, significant differences still prevail between their way of life and that adopted by members of the religious-Zionist community. Haredim stumble upon other networks of meaning randomly, in line with their life circumstances. Furthermore, in the context of the one network that they consciously follow in their lives, the status of the other, "external," networks is predetermined. A protective wall is thus erected around the one network fundamental to their lives. For Haredim, then, a gap emerges between their conduct in real life and their consciousness: even if life takes place in several contexts, the consciousness that organizes and shapes the life of the self is constituted by one single element—the religious one.

The situation of religious-Zionists differs from this course. They do not randomly stumble into other networks of meaning and according to life circumstances coerced upon

them. They a priori organize their lives in the context of various networks of meaning. Indeed, integration into various networks was part of religious-Zionism's fundamental ethos and is the constitutive element of their distinction from the Haredi world.

Some of these networks dominate most of their participants' time. Business people, academics, army personnel, and others spend most of their day in their context and allocate only part of their time to other networks, including the religious one, even if it is prominently significant to them and often more valuable than all others.

The prolonged stay of religious-Zionists within these networks of meaning entails sociological and psychological implications, affecting the shaping of their worldview as well as their dispositions and orientations. Were members of the religious-Zionist community instructed to assign a lower ranking to non-religious networks of meaning, they would fail at this task, if only because they willingly and consciously spend most of their time in them. Expecting individuals or groups choosing to spend most of their time within a specific network of meaning to endorse a view of it as not really, if at all, important seems implausible. Religious-Zionists do not live compartmentalized lives and, as is common among people living in various networks of meaning, they transfer values, expectations, and interpretations from one to another. Probably, then, religious-Zionist jurists or scientists will shift values, interpretations, and practices from their professional life sphere to the religious one and vice-versa, just as people whose world view is liberal or feminist will probably transfer values from these worlds to their religious one and will shape mediating contexts between them. The claim that religious-Zionists live in various networks of meaning, however, does not warrant the conclusion that all are of equal standing. If we assume the existence of a core identity that serves religious-Zionists as a vantage point for judging and evaluating the practices prevailing in the various networks within which they function, the standing of each one of them is patently determined by their status within this core identity.

Given the variance between their perceptions and evaluations, life in different networks of meaning is marked by a basic tension. Thus, a religious-Zionist jurist acts, as a jurist, within a rational and critical setting characterized by defined logical relationships. By contrast, the religious network of meaning may require the renunciation of this rational and critical approach in the name of values such as obedience and religious humility. Participation in networks with contrasting sets of values thus requires some form of coordination between them. This is a fundamental question that religious-Zionism has been grappling with since its very beginning: how to reconcile the affirmation of practices and of membership in communities creating different networks of meaning while preserving and protecting the religious world and its place in the life of religious-Zionists. This question is the foundation nurturing the concrete manifestations of the religious-Zionist way of life.

The principle guiding the answer to the question of coordination between the networks enables us to distinguish between the types of identity that evolved within the religious-Zionist group. Through most stages of its existence, the prevalent answer was that religious-Zionism means "and" (or a hyphen), bringing together religion and other contexts of life. This is the nature of religious-Zionism—to join networks. This joining was not only not random but indeed a reflection of religious-Zionism's basic identity. To be a religious-Zionist means removing compartmentalization from human life: you are a Zionist because you are religious; you act in the service of the society, the people, and the state because that is the nature of your religiosity. The religiosity that was at the basis of religious-Zionism endowed the various networks within which its members operated with deep religious meaning. These networks realized religiosity itself, even if the activities took place in a secular space.

Religious-Zionist activity within these social and cultural networks in the past and the present is not fundamentally different, except for the increasing prominence of religious-Zionists in areas they had not penetrated in the past. This wider spread, however, is not necessarily a sign of a deep transformation. The distinction between the past and the present is related to the location of religious-Zionism within personal identity—"religious-

Zionism,” which had functioned in the past as a primordial identity, no longer does so in the present.

The concept of “primordial identity” requires a separate discussion, which will enable the distinction I wish to emphasize between “identity” as characterizing a general lifestyle and “primordial identity” (See [Sagi 2016](#), pp. 59–87). The term “identity” denotes the network of socio-cultural contexts of human activity. These contexts convey the horizontal-synchronic aspect of identity. Identity, however, is a complex web of synchronic and diachronic aspects, which include memory, history, and myth. Both constitute the story of identity that, ultimately, is by nature narrative, a reconstruction of “materials” coming together as a story. Although this story is at times formulated in explicitly conscious terms, usually it is implicit. People’s actions are driven by a certain understanding, an implicit consciousness that guides their orientation toward the world, but they are not necessarily the philosophers of their own lives. Only rarely, and particularly during crises, this implicit consciousness becomes explicit. The concept of “primordial identity,” which I introduced elsewhere (*Ibid.*, p. 60), will help to clarify this issue:

Primordial identity denotes a primal existence that, though related to some cultural-social context, is not contingent on a thick version of it. It is primordial in the sense that it is connected to a specific culture and relates to it as its own whether or not it accepts it but does not necessarily bear all of it as a way of life. Formally, the primordial identity is embodied in the initial rejection of what is outside it—“to be something is always not to be something else”. ([Laclau and Mouffe 2001](#), p. 128)

Concrete cultural-social-historical identity is dynamic, while primordial identity conveys the deep and fixed element delimiting the bounds of options available to the real identity. Primordial identity is not a metaphysical, extra-historical element since identity is always historical. It does function, however, as the element that judges, evaluates, and confers value on various possibilities of human life.²¹ It bears emphasis that primordial identity need not signify one exclusive element, but everything denoted by this term functions in similar ways. Thus, being a Jew can convey a primordial identity without implying it is the sole element of identity for a person who views Jewish identity as primordial ([Sagi 2016](#), p. 67, and the discussion pp. 66–69).

This analysis enables us to determine that, in the past, the signifier “religious-Zionism” had functioned as a primordial identity that judged, evaluated, affirmed, or negated options enabling its realization. Therefore, in the past, religious-Zionists could not have adopted values or norms typical of the Haredi world and, similarly, they also rejected certain secular norms and values. Religious-Zionist identity was extremely valuable to them, and it was in that capacity that they affirmed or denied various possibilities.

At present, the group signified by the term “religious-Zionism” has no shared primordial identity at all. Some are Zionists as other Jews are Zionists; the myth and the basic ethos of religious-Zionism do not denote the borders of the possible and the legitimate. The borders with others—Haredim and secular Jews—collapsed long ago. The only space remaining seems to be the synagogue marked as religious-Zionist. A large segment within the religious-Zionist group will prefer “religious-Zionist” synagogues. This preference, however, stems from their life context, their ease with the prayer style, the dress code, and the moderate religious approach rather than from its being a religious-Zionist synagogue.

It is hard to find a value issue or a normative question that religious-Zionists will decide on out of a primordial religious-Zionist identity. The elements pointed out above as leading to the disappearance of religious-Zionism indicate that a group defined by a collective primordial religious-Zionist identity no longer exists. This disappearance is evident in particularly important life contexts, which enable us to see what has remained of it. Unquestionably, religion has survived, but its conscious and practical interpretation within the religious-Zionist group is more equivocal than in the past. Contexts of meaning and values create diverse perceptions of religion, whose border is unclear: on the one hand, a Haredi outlook and, on the other, secularization and liberalism. These borders

create various models of religion and religiosity entirely detached from the religious-Zionist context. The centrifugal pressure on identity is not exerted solely by cultural, normative, and social forces, but from inside. If something remains of religious-Zionism, it is precisely the element that classic religious-Zionism erased and, more precisely, created a false self-consciousness in order to erase—the recognition of human autonomy and responsibility. Autonomy is the depth-construct that enabled the religious-Zionist project and the structuring of religious-Zionist life, and also its negation.

This claim is not merely theoretical. The conscious-literary moment when autonomy shifted from being an organizing principle of religious-Zionism and turned into a critique of it can easily be pinpointed. Yeshayahu Leibowitz was a prominent figure among the young members of *Brith Halutzim Datiim* (Alliance of Religious Pioneers) and played a vital role in shaping the RFK as well as the outlook of many religious-Zionists. His thought and his writings accompanied the religious-Zionist movement and he was admired and respected by its members. From the 1950s, however, when he began to emphasize autonomy as the basis of religious life, his thought had a corrosive effect on the core of classic religious-Zionist identity. Invoking a personal religious commitment, he rejected the state as a value and was critical of his comrades, the religious-Zionist pioneers.

Unintentionally, then, Leibowitz paved the way for the hidden autonomous element to enter the core of conscious religious life in the religious-Zionist group. His conscious release of this element fitted the processes that affected classic religious-Zionism. The socialization of its members in a multicontextual and multicultural setting gradually pushed out religious-Zionism's particularistic foundation from the core of the primordial identity.

The disappearance of religious-Zionism is thus related to the two conflicting processes noted above: one centrifugal and the other centripetal. The centrifugal process conveys the growing integration of its members in Israeli society, as a secular society in the technical sense of the term, that is, a society whose ways of life, social arrangements, and value approaches do not necessarily draw on the religious realm or the religious-Zionist world of meanings. Religious-Zionists who became multicultural gradually cast off the religious-Zionist component both from their primordial identity and from their socio-cultural identity. After this component became irrelevant in the socio-cultural space, it was progressively marginalized within the primordial identity as well. Religion and Zionism separated from one another and began creating a broad spectrum of social contexts and phenomena. Religious-Zionism remained alive in the language, in some life remnants, in the synagogue, in childhood friendships, and so forth, and particularly as a defiant stance.

Against it, a centripetal process, of isolationism and gathering inward, has long been brewing. Its beginning is in the growth of one-dimensional Zionists for whom the Land of Israel became the be-all and end-all and its ending in the creation of a religious world of meaning entirely divorced from reality in general and, particularly, from the spectrum of identities that emerged among religious-Zionists.

4. On the Resurgence of Religious Communities

As told here, the story of religious-Zionism has a singular implication: the term "religious-Zionism" no longer signifies a specific group that exists "out there" in reality, independently of the linguistic signifier. The analysis enables us to see the reawakening of particularistic communities to replace what is signified by this term. These communities emerge against the background of participation in one context of human life that is not total and not necessarily part of the "primordial identity," but is still relevant to its socio-cultural shaping. The forms of participation behind these groups are quite diversified. Many organize around a shared history in formal and informal educational settings: schools, youth movements, and so forth, and will appear here under the rubric of "communities of biographical partnership". The existence of such communities is unquestionable and their members meet one another with varying frequency. A specific family resemblance is evident among them, related to their way of life in the present and their connection to their past. But these communities are fluid and tell in very precise terms the story

of the death of religious-Zionism. Rather than being organized around the elements of religious-Zionism's family resemblance analyzed above, these communities convey primary childhood relationships and, therefore, include individuals whose ways of life are no longer religious. The web of associations that emerges in them is one of personal closeness, entirely unrelated to religious-Zionist myths, ethos, and consciousness and not much more than the memory of a shared education. The foundation is not what determines the association and is indeed entirely irrelevant to it. An outside observer could mistakenly imagine that this community is one among the many involved in the realization of religious-Zionism, but that is not the case. These communities are contingent, biographical, and unrelated to others or to the religious-Zionist group.

Other typical communities are formed in synagogues. They can be identified because of their many differences from Haredi synagogues in the prayer style, the attire, the various forms of women's participation, and so forth. Synagogues are not only places of prayer, and communities sometimes emerge around them. The communal character of synagogues is entirely unrelated to religious-Zionism and various activities emerge in its context: Torah lessons, shared outings, trips in Israel and abroad, and so forth. These communities, too, are built around a shared way of life. They are neither total nor ideological, and the foundational myths of religious-Zionism are irrelevant to them. True, most of the people who come to pray at these synagogues grew up in the state-religious educational systems, in youth movements such as Bnei Akiva, Ezra, or Ariel. The educational process they underwent certainly left a mark on their lives, but this socialization is above all communal and concerned with communal activities. In any event, membership in this community is limited and not part of its members' primordial identity.

Other communities are ideological, such as those involving women's participation or that of Torah va-Avodah followers. Participatory prayer communities are built around ethos and myths unrelated to religious-Zionism. Their underlying platform is religious feminism, that is, the adoption of a feminist stance as religiously compelling. Quite obviously, feminism did not originate in any religion. Indeed, it defies classic religious traditions, which are fundamentally chauvinistic. Religious feminism is characterized by the ongoing heroic attempt to offer a religious justification for feminism and to establish synagogues and a religious lifestyle compatible with it.

Most members of participatory communities are graduates of the religious-Zionist state educational system who have stepped beyond this movement's borders. Their breakthrough covers the entire space of the religious-Zionist family resemblance, which is enclosed within its myths, its authority, and its consciousness.

The story of the Torah va-Avodah trend requires a separate discussion, and I will confine myself here to a brief analysis and description. This movement, which developed in the 1980s under the leadership of Yehezkel Cohen, Abraham Nuriel, and their comrades, was established as a struggle against Haredi approaches that had begun to erode religious-Zionism. They sought to create an alternative tradition, which they described as readily available, and did so by publishing books, periodicals, and the *De'ot* journal, which were meant to convey the return to an imagined reality that had been and was no longer. As an outside observer, though one closely attuned and empathetic to its founders, I saw this movement as part of the collapse of religious-Zionism. It failed to create an actual religious-Zionist group but, in some way, it still exists. Ultimately, its concern is modern Orthodoxy rather than religious-Zionism, and to be a modern Orthodox one need not be a religious-Zionist, as discussed above.

Fundamentally, this movement sought to renew the "holy rebellion". It, therefore, endorsed the ethos of the RKF and rejected the idea that rabbis should lead the movement. Eventually, this rejection faded and rabbis became the movement's spokesmen. Contrary to its past concerns, *De'ot* does not deal today with the classic questions of religious-Zionism and does not even confine itself to issues of modern religiosity. Its present focus is on the life of a contemporary person living in Israel and in the world. The combination of rabbis as central figures and the concern with questions that are marginal from a religious-

Zionist perspective points out the extent to which this movement is a romantic remnant of something insufficiently defined, beyond being not viable.

These and other examples expose the depth of the centrifugal process within religious-Zionism. In the context of this process, burning embers of religious-Zionism now remain alive in the language and the imagination of one large group called “religious-Zionism,” which brings together various communities wholly detached from it.

5. A Personal Summary

This is a personal essay. It is the story of my life as the scion of a prominent religious-Zionist family. To stand at this movement’s grave means to acknowledge the death of ideals that have guided my family over several generations. As a reflective witness equipped with a suitable toolbox, I can examine the course of my life and the life of generations in the country. I deeply appreciate the religious-Zionist enterprise, which was vital to the nation’s renaissance in this land. But I know it is time to admit that this group has ended its life as one whose values are integrated into the life of the Jewish people in Israel, and at times in the Diaspora as well. I look at my library, which includes works by generations of religious-Zionists. I see these books as telling the story of a group whose greatest success is its full integration into the Jewish people and its exit from a strenuously built imagined ghetto, whose collapse began with the harbingers of religious-Zionism. The time has come to bid farewell to the dream, because a fully realized dream must not replace the flourishing reality that has emerged. With unique sensitivity, Amos Oz wrote, “He who is in love with his dreams let him not try to realize them. He who tries to realize them should know that the price of their realization is to compromise . . . And I speak of compromise in the deepest sense—a compromise with reality” (Oz 1998, p. 14).

Classic religious-Zionism chose to renounce or delay its dreams, not out of a compromise, but as a foundational stance that placed the actual Jewish people at the center of its commitment. This choice enabled it to integrate into the life of the Jewish people and to view the concrete State of Israel as a suitable realization of the dream, at least for now.

At the margins of the camp, however, some continued to hold on to another big dream. They dreamt but without separating from those who had chosen a life of partnership. The ancient dream, whose scattered sprinkles had always been present in religious-Zionism, erupted anew the more the movement proved successful. The price, however, was clear: choosing another dream to replace that of classic religious-Zionism. More precisely, choosing a dream rather than real life. Whoever chose to dream instead of entering the market of life in Israel may be joining a process that will endanger our life here in Israel. The absolute preference for the land over the people and the state that is evident in centrifugal groups could lead the Jewish people to disaster—the disappearance of the state and the crumbling of the society into disconnected sub-units. Responsibility for the concrete Jewish people is an important value taught by religious-Zionism. In many variations, it taught that this value does not contradict commitment to the Torah and the commandments because there is no place for the Torah and the commandments in a world without a concrete people. Should the people collapse, its Torah will collapse with it.

Nostalgia and childhood memories are important. Browsing through pictures of our youth and our parents’ youth, our family and our friends are important. We should not erase our memory, but should a real or imagined memory take over our life it will be lost, and we with it.

Whoever grew up in a religious-Zionist home wistfully bears the remembrance of childhood landscapes, the joy of renewal that prevailed, but we must not let these memories obscure what is. In his well-known article, “On the ‘Vision’ of Apostasy,” Joseph Haim Brenner fiercely attacks grand ideas and clinging to frozen Jewish institutions. This admonishment, which gave rise to what came to be known in Hebrew culture as the “Brenner Affair,” is important because it calls on us “to toil for our free national culture . . . and to wage our war for survival in any form it might take”.²² Action and participation in the web of real life and its shaping are preferable to a theoretical midrash, certainly to a

metaphysical one. Liberation from the essentialist myth of “religious-Zionism” is a vital part of the toil that will build Israeli society.

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Notes

- ¹ On this matter, the difference between the study of an actual group existing in the world—the religious-Zionist group—and the textual study of its literature merits attention. Studies of religious-Zionism deal mainly with texts and not necessarily with its actual reality, a research choice that at times serves as an alternative to social analysis. The texts are set before the reader and their study affords access to the consciousness embedded in them. This hermeneutical activity occurs solely in the context of the text–reader relationship, but ideological texts do not lead to inevitable inferences about a specific social reality. Conceptual texts do not necessarily reflect reality. At times, they convey constitutive ideas and descriptions of ideal patterns of existence. They can also compensate for and amend an existing reality and, therefore, contradict it. Often, they are a basis for delaying concrete action. Furthermore, texts are not a social product but a creation of their writers. We have no external criterion for measuring how abstract texts fit reality. Classic religious-Zionist texts were written by the hegemonies of this movement but they do not necessarily express the members’ views. This note affirms the need for taking a critical attitude toward texts used to analyze a culture and a society. Unquestionably, there are many such texts. In the study of religious-Zionism as a concrete entity, there is room for the analysis of texts that are part of the public discourse—the press, minutes and decisions of meetings involving religious-Zionist groups, responsa literature dealing with day-to-day questions in the life of religious-Zionists, and more. This research is indeed a study of discourse but also records modes of life and social changes, as illustrated by the book by Yakir Englander and myself, *Sexuality and the Body in the New Religious-Zionist Discourse* (Englander and Sagi 2015). In the study of actual religious-Zionism, members’ testimonies play a significant role and the present essay is my personal testimony, as someone who grew up and lives within it.
- ² Two works date the change as having taken place over the last thirty years or from the beginning of the early 1990s. See Schwartz (2009). A preliminary description of the collapse of “veteran” religious-Zionism appears in Sheleg (2000). At that time, Dov Schwartz and I edited the anthology *A Hundred Years of Religious Zionism* (Schwartz and Sagi 2003), and we had not yet realized that this was a new landmark in the life of religious-Zionism. The three volumes in this collection were not only a record of one hundred years of religious-Zionist activity but also a requiem for it.
- ³ For further discussion of this issue, see Sagi (2018, pp. 47–78).
- ⁴ On this issue, see Sagi (2016, pp. 59–87).
- ⁵ See, for example, Schwartz (1999).
- ⁶ Dov Schwartz analyzed these myths in his works. In particular, see Schwartz (2018). For a brief summary, see (ibid., p. 10).
- ⁷ On sacred history, see Sagi and Schwartz (2019, chp. 2).
- ⁸ This issue is discussed at length in Shapira (2002, pp. 108–50).
- ⁹ On this issue see, in detail, Sagi and Schwartz (2019).
- ¹⁰ On this issue, see Sagi and Safrai (1997). As one of the editors of this anthology, I can attest that the book’s intent was to curb increasingly strengthening trends within religious-Zionism that undermined its basic ethos. It was in this spirit that I wrote the article “Halakhah and Discretion, Responsibility, and Religious-Zionism” (pp. 195–217), which conveys the classic religious-Zionist ethos. The anthology also includes three articles suggesting a critical analysis of the *da’at Torah* concept: Gershon Bacon, “*da’at Torah* and the Birthpangs of the Messiah” (pp. 84–94). The next two are Hebrew translations: Jacob Katz, “*da’at Torah* and the Unqualified Authority Claimed for Halakhists,” *Jewish History* 11 (1997): 41–50 and Lawrence Kaplan, “*Daas Torah*: A Modern Conception of Rabbinic Authority” (pp. 105–45) in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, ed. Moshe Sokol (Northvale, NJ, 1992) pp. 1–60. When editing the book, we naively held that this analysis would serve to undermine trends supporting the endorsement of the Haredi view of *da’at Torah*. Already then, however, we both sensed that we were witnessing an overpowering reversal wave, which did ultimately undermine the religious-Zionist group. Classic religious-Zionist tradition crumbled under the new developments, which culminated in the rise of a rabbinic hegemony that negated the religious-Zionist ethos and its authority principle.
- ¹¹ On this issue, see Peles (1985). See also Brukhi (1970).
- ¹² The term “intellectuals” I use here reflects Antonio Gramsci’s interpretation. For an analysis of Gramsci’s position on other approaches, see Gramsci (2011).

- 13 For further detail, see Fishman (1992).
- 14 On models of halakhic authority, see Sagi (2007, pp. 192–205).
- 15 See, for example, Sagi (2017, pp. 171–83).
- 16 On religious-Zionism as consciousness, see Schwartz’s detailed analysis in *The Shift in Religious-Zionism* (Schwartz 2018).
- 17 On the complexity of this phenomenon, see Sagi (2000, pp. 54–56).
- 18 On the pastoral aspect, see Englander and Sagi (2015, pp. 26–77).
- 19 Yehezkel Cohen, among the movement’s founders, published a booklet titled “Torah and Life,” including a collection of quotes from R. Hirschensohn.
- 20 See, in particular, Zohar (2003).
- 21 For a more complete analysis, see the sources in Sagi (2007).
- 22 My book *To Be a Jew: Joseph Chayim Brenner as a Jewish Existentialist* discusses this question. For the quote from Brenner’s “On the ‘Vision’ of Apostasy,” see Sagi (2011, p. 176). On the article and its meaning, see (ibid., pp. 165–201). On the “Brenner affair,” see Govrin (1985).

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