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On Terrorism and Nationalism: Reflections on Hanukkah in Light of the 20th Anniversary of the Rabin Assassination

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Hanukkah Holiday Webinar

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| 9. | Moshe Halbertal, "On Holiness, Sovereignty and Sacrilege," 2000 | pp. 13-15 |
| 10. | Tomer Persico, "The Love-Hate Relationship Between Zionism and the Temple Mount," 2014 | pp. 16-21 |

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1. 1 Maccabees 2:15-70

¹⁵ The king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of Modein to make them offer sacrifice. ¹⁶ Many from Israel came to them; and Mattathias and his sons were assembled. ¹⁷ Then the king's officers spoke to Mattathias as follows: "You are a leader, honored and great in this town, and supported by sons and brothers. ¹⁸ Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the people of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the Friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts." ¹⁹ But Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice: "Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to obey his commandments, every one of them abandoning the religion of their ancestors, ²⁰ I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors. ²¹ Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances. ²² We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left."

²³ When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king's command. ²⁴ When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. ²⁵ At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. ²⁶ Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu. ²⁷ Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: "Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!" ²⁸ Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town.

²⁹ At that time many who were seeking righteousness and justice went down to the wilderness to live there, ³⁰ they, their sons, their wives, and their livestock, because troubles pressed heavily upon them. ³¹ And it was reported to the king's officers, and to the troops in Jerusalem the city of David, that those who had rejected the king's command had gone down to the hiding places in the wilderness. ³² Many pursued them, and overtook them; they encamped opposite them and prepared for battle against them on the Sabbath day. ³³ They said to them, "Enough of this! Come out and do what the king commands, and you will live." ³⁴ But they said, "We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands and so profane the Sabbath day." ³⁵ Then the enemy quickly attacked them. ³⁶ But they did not answer them or hurl a stone at them or block up their hiding places, ³⁷ for they said, "Let us all die in our innocence; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly." ³⁸ So they attacked them on the Sabbath, and they died, with their wives and children and livestock, to the number of a thousand persons.

³⁹ When Mattathias and his friends learned of it, they mourned for them deeply. ⁴⁰ And all said to their neighbors: "If we all do as our kindred have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and for our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth." ⁴¹ So they made this decision that day: "Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the sabbath day; let us not all die as our kindred died in their hiding places."

⁴² Then they united with them a company of Hasideans, mighty warriors of Israel, all who offered themselves willingly for the law. ⁴³ And all who became fugitives to escape their troubles joined them and reinforced them. ⁴⁴ They organized an army, and struck down sinners in their anger and renegades in their wrath; the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety. ⁴⁵ And Mattathias and his friends went around and tore down the altars; ⁴⁶ they forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel. ⁴⁷ They hunted down the arrogant, and the work prospered in their hands. ⁴⁸ They rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles and kings, and they never let the sinner gain the upper hand.

⁴⁹ Now the days drew near for Mattathias to die, and he said to his sons: "Arrogance and scorn have now become strong; it is a time of ruin and furious anger. ⁵⁰ Now, my children, show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors.

⁵¹ "Remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations; and you will receive great honor and an everlasting name. ⁵² Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? ⁵³ Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and became lord of Egypt. ⁵⁴ Phinehas our ancestor, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood. ⁵⁵ Joshua, because he fulfilled the command, became a judge in Israel. ⁵⁶ Caleb, because he testified in the assembly, received an inheritance in the land. ⁵⁷ David, because he was merciful, inherited the throne of the kingdom forever. ⁵⁸ Elijah, because of great zeal for the law, was taken up into heaven. ⁵⁹ Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame. ⁶⁰ Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions.

⁶¹ "And so observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in him will lack strength. ⁶² Do not fear the words of sinners, for their splendor will turn into dung and worms. ⁶³ Today they will be exalted, but tomorrow they will not be found, because they will have returned to the dust, and their plans will have perished. ⁶⁴ My children, be courageous and grow strong in the law, for by it you will gain honor.

⁶⁵ "Here is your brother Simeon who, I know, is wise in counsel; always listen to him; he shall be your father. ⁶⁶ Judas Maccabeus has been a mighty warrior from his youth; he shall command the army for you and fight the battle against the peoples. ⁶⁷ You shall rally around you all who observe the law, and avenge the wrong done to your people. ⁶⁸ Pay back the Gentiles in full, and obey the commands of the law."

⁶⁹ Then he blessed them, and was gathered to his ancestors. ⁷⁰ He died in the one hundred forty-sixth year and was buried in the tomb of his ancestors at Modein. And all Israel mourned for him with great lamentation.

2. Numbers 25

- א** וישב ישראל, בשטים; ויחל העם, לזנות אל-בנות מואב.
- ב** ותקראו לעם, לזבחי אלהיהו; ויאכל העם, וישתחוו לאלהיהו.
- ג** ויצמד ישראל, לבעל פעור; ויחר-אף יהוה, בישראל.
- ד** ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, קח את-כל-ראשי העם, והקע אותם ליהוה, נגד השמש; וישב חרון אף-יהוה, מישראל.
- ה** ויאמר משה, אל-שפטי ישראל: הרגו איש אנשיו, הנצמדים לבעל פעור.
- ו** והנה איש מבני ישראל בא, ויקרב אל-אחיו את-המדנית, לעיני משה, ולעיני כל-עדת בני-ישראל; והמה בכים, פתח אהל מועד.
- ז** וירא, פינחס בן-אלעזר, בן-אהרן, הכהן; ויקם מתוך העדה, ויקח רמח בידו.
- ח** ויבא אחר איש-ישראל אל-הקבה, וידקר את-שניהם--את איש ישראל, ואת-האשה אל-קבתה; ותעצר, המגפה, מעל, בני ישראל.
- ט** ויהיו, המתים במגפה--ארבעה ועשרים, אלף. {פ}
- י** וידבר יהוה, אל-משה לאמר.
- יא** פינחס בן-אלעזר בן-אהרן הכהן, השיב את-חמתי מעל בני-ישראל, בקנאו את-
- 1** While Israel dwelt in Shittim the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab.
- 2** These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods.
- 3** So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel;
- 4** and the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them in the sun before the LORD, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."
- 5** And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you slay his men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor."
- 6** And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the tent of meeting.
- 7** When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation, and took a spear in his hand
- 8** and went after the man of Israel into the inner room, and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman, through her body. Thus the plague was stayed from the people of Israel.
- 9** Nevertheless those that died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.
- 10** And the LORD said to Moses,
- 11** "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from

קִנְאָתִי, בְּתוֹכָם; וְלֹא-כִלִּיתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּקִנְאָתִי. the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.

יב לָכֵן, אֶמַר: הִנְנִי נֹתֵן לוֹ אֶת-בְּרִיתִי, שְׁלוֹם. **12** Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace;

יג וְהִיְתָה לוֹ וּלְזָרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו, בְּרִית כְּהֵנָּה עוֹלָם--תַּחַת, אֲשֶׁר קָנָא לֵאלֹהֵיו, וַיְכַפֵּר, עַל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. **13** and it shall be to him, and to his descendants after him, the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the people of Israel."

יד וְשֵׁם אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמְּכָה, אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה אֶת-הַמְּדִינִית--זִמְרִי, בֶּן-סָלוּא: נְשִׂיא בֵּית-אָב, לְשִׁמְעוֹנִי. **14** The name of the slain man of Israel, who was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, head of a fathers' house belonging to the Simeonites.

טו וְשֵׁם הָאִשָּׁה הַמְּכָה הַמְּדִינִית, כְּזוֹבִי בֵּת-צוּר: רֵאשׁ אֲמוֹת בֵּית-אָב בְּמִדְיָן, הוּא. {פ} **15** And the name of the Midianite woman who was slain was Cozbi the daughter of Zur, who was the head of the people of a fathers' house in Midian.

טז וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. **16** And the LORD said to Moses,

יז צָרֹר, אֶת-הַמְּדִינִים; וְהִכִּיתָם, אוֹתָם. **17** "Harass the Midianites, and smite them;

יח כִּי צָרְרִים הֵם לָכֶם, בְּנִכְלִיהֶם אֲשֶׁר-נִכְלוּ לָכֶם עַל-דָּבַר-פְּעוֹר; וְעַל-דָּבַר כְּזוֹבִי בֵּת-נְשִׂיא מִדְיָן, אַחֲתָם, הַמְּכָה בְיוֹם-הַמַּגֵּפָה, עַל-דָּבַר-פְּעוֹר. **18** for they have harassed you with their wives, with which they beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the prince of Midian, their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague on account of Peor."

3. Genesis 22

- א** וַיְהִי, אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, וַהֲאֱלֹהִים, נִסָּה אֶת-אַבְרָהָם; וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי.
- 1** After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.”
- ב** וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּנֶךָ אֶת-יִחִידְךָ אִשָּׁר-אַהֲבָתְךָ, אֶת-יִצְחָק, וְלֶךְ-לְךָ, אֶל-אֶרֶץ מֹרְיָה; וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם, לְעֹלָה, עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים, אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ.
- 2** He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”
- ג** וַיִּשְׁכֶם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר, וַיַּחֲבֹשׂ אֶת-חֲמֹרוֹ, וַיִּקַּח אֶת-שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו אִתּוֹ, וְאֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ; וַיִּבְקַע, עֲצֵי עֹלָה, וַיִּקֶם וַיֵּלֶךְ, אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר-לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים.
- 3** So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.
- ד** בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת-הַמָּקוֹם--מֵרְחוֹק.
- 4** On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.
- ה** וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל-נַעֲרָיו, שְׁבוּ-לְכֶם פֹּה עִם-הַחֲמֹר, וְאֲנִי וְהַנֶּעֱר, נֵלְכָה עַד-כֹּה; וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה, וְנָשׁוּבָה אֵלֵיכֶם.
- 5** Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.”
- ו** וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם אֶת-עֲצֵי הָעֹלָה, וַיִּשֶׂם עַל-יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ, וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ, אֶת-הָאֵשׁ וְאֶת-הַמַּאֲכָלִת; וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם, יַחְדָּו.
- 6** And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.
- ז** וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו, וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי, וַיֹּאמֶר, הִנְנִי בְּנִי; וַיֹּאמֶר, הֲנִי הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים, וְאַיִה הַשֶּׂה, לְעֹלָה.
- 7** And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here am I, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”
- ח** וַיֹּאמֶר, אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה-לוֹ הַשֶּׂה לְעֹלָה, בְּנִי; וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם, יַחְדָּו.
- 8** Abraham said, “God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.
- ט** וַיָּבֹאוּ, אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר-לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים, וַיִּבְנוּ שָׁם אֶבְרָהָם אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת-הָעֵצִים; וַיַּעֲקֹד, אֶת-יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ, וַיִּשֶׂם אֹתוֹ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, מִמַּעַל לְעֵצִים.
- 9** When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

- י** וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת-יָדוֹ, וַיִּקַּח אֶת-
הַמַּאֲכָלֶת, לְשַׁחֵט, אֶת-בְּנוֹ. **10** Then Abraham put forth his hand, and
took the knife to slay his son.
- יא** וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהֵי מְלֶאֱךָ יְהוָה, מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם,
וַיֹּאמֶר, אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם; וַיֹּאמֶר, הִנְנִי. **11** But the angel of the LORD called to him
from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”
And he said, “Here am I.”
- יב** וַיֹּאמֶר, אֱלֹהֵי-תִשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל-הַנֶּעֱר, וְאַל-
תַּעַשׂ לוֹ, מְאוּמָה: כִּי עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי, כִּי-יִרָא
אֱלֹהִים אֶתְּךָ, וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת-בְּנֶךָ אֶת-יַחֲדָדְךָ,
מִמֶּנִּי. **12** He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad
or do anything to him; for now I know that
you fear God, seeing you have not withheld
your son, your only son, from me.”
- יג** וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-עֵינָיו, וַיִּרָא וְהִנֵּה-אֵיל,
אַחַר, נֶאֱחָז בְּסַבָּף בְּקַרְנָיו; וַיִּלְךָ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח
אֶת-הָאֵיל, וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹלָה תַחַת בְּנוֹ. **13** And Abraham lifted up his eyes and
looked, and behold, behind him was a ram,
caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham
went and took the ram, and offered it up as a
burnt offering instead of his son.
- יד** וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא, יְהוָה
יִרְאֶה, אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם, בְּהַר יְהוָה יִרְאֶה. **14** So Abraham called the name of that place
The LORD will provide; as it is said to this day,
“On the mount of the LORD it shall be
provided.”
- טו** וַיִּקְרָא מְלֶאֱךָ יְהוָה, אֶל-אַבְרָהָם, שְׁנִית,
מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם. **15** And the angel of the LORD called to
Abraham a second time from heaven,
- טז** וַיֹּאמֶר, בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נְאֻם-יְהוָה: כִּי, יַעַן
אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה, וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ, אֶת-
בְּנֶךָ אֶת-יַחֲדָדְךָ. **16** and said, “By myself I have sworn, says
the LORD, because you have done this, and
have not withheld your son, your only son,
- יז** כִּי-בָרַךְ אֲבָרְכֶךָ, וְהִרְבָּה אַרְבָּה אֶת-זֶרְעֶךָ;
כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְכַחֹל, אֲשֶׁר עַל-שְׂפַת הַיָּם;
וַיִּרְשׂ זֶרְעֶךָ, אֶת שַׁעַר אֹיְבָיו. **17** I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply
your descendants as the stars of heaven and
as the sand which is on the seashore. And
your descendants shall possess the gate of
their enemies,
- יח** וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּזֶרְעֶךָ, כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ, עִקְבֵי,
אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי. **18** and by your descendants shall all the
nations of the earth bless themselves,
because you have obeyed my voice.”
- יט** וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם אֶל-נַעֲרָיו, וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו
אֶל-בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע; וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם, בְּבֵאֵר
שֶׁבַע. {פ} **19** So Abraham returned to his young men,
and they arose and went together to
Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at
Beersheba.

- כ** וַיְהִי, אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, וַיִּגַּד לְאַבְרָהָם, לְאִמְרָתוֹ: הִנֵּה יֹלְדָה מִלְכָּה גַם-הוּא, בְּנִים-- לְנַחֲוֹר אָחִיו.
- 20** Now after these things it was told Abraham, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor:
- כא** אֶת-עוֹץ בְּכֹרוֹ, וְאֶת-בוֹז אָחִיו, וְאֶת-קִמּוֹאֵל, אָבִי אָרָם.
- 21** Uz the first-born, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram,
- כב** וְאֶת-כֶּשֶׁד וְאֶת-חֲזוֹ, וְאֶת-פִּלְדָּשׁ וְאֶת-בְּתוּאֵל.
- 22** Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel."
- כג** וּבְתוּאֵל, יָלַד אֶת-רִבְקָה; שְׁמֹנֶה אֵלֶּה יֹלְדָה מִלְכָּה, לְנַחֲוֹר אָחִי אַבְרָהָם.
- 23** Bethu'el became the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.
- כד** וּפְלִגְשׁוֹ, וְשִׁמְהָ רְאוּמָה; וַתֵּלֶד גַּם-הוּא אֶת-טֶבַח וְאֶת-גַּחַם, וְאֶת-תַּחַשׁ וְאֶת-מַעַכָּה. {פ}
- 24** Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

4. Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 81b

MISHNAH. IF ONE STEALS THE KISWAH, OR CURSES BY ENCHANTMENT, OR COHABITS WITH A HEATHEN [LIT. SYRIAN] WOMAN, HE IS PUNISHED BY ZEALOTS. IF A PRIEST PERFORMED THE TEMPLE SERVICE WHILST UNCLEAN, HIS BROTHER PRIESTS DO NOT CHARGE HIM THEREWITH AT BETH DIN, BUT THE YOUNG PRIESTS TAKE HIM OUT OF THE TEMPLE COURT AND SPLIT HIS SKULL WITH CLUBS. A LAYMAN WHO PERFORMED THE SERVICE IN THE TEMPLE, R. AKIBA SAID: HE IS STRANGLERED; THE SAGES SAY: [HIS DEATH IS] AT THE HANDS OF HEAVEN.

R. Hisda said: If the zealot comes to take counsel [whether to punish the transgressors enumerated in the Mishnah], we do not instruct him to do so. It has been stated likewise: Rabbah b. Bar Hana said in R. Johanan's name: If he comes to take counsel, we do not instruct him to do so. What is more, had Zimri forsaken his mistress and Phinehas slain him, Phinehas would have been executed on his account; and had Zimri turned upon Phinehas and slain him, he would not have been executed, since Phinehas was a pursuer [seeking to take his life].

משנה. הגונב את הקסוה, והמקלל בקוסם, והבועל ארמית - קנאין פוגעין בו. כהן ששמש בטומאה - אין אחיו הכהנים מביאין אותו לבית דין אלא פרחי כהונה מוציאין אותו חוץ לעזרה ומפציעין את מוחו בגזירין. זר ששמש במקדש, רבי עקיבא אומר: בחנק, וחכמים אומרים: בידי שמים.

אמר רב חסדא: הבא לימלך - אין מורין לו. איתמר נמי, אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן: הבא לימלך - אין מורין לו. ולא עוד אלא, שאם פירש זמרי והרגו פנחס - נהרג עליו. נהפך זמרי והרגו לפנחס - אין נהרג עליו, שהר רודף הוא.

5. Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82a

R. Hisda said: If the zealot comes to take counsel [whether to punish the transgressors enumerated in the Mishnah], we do not instruct him to do so. It has been stated likewise: Rabbah b. Bar Hana said in R. Johanan's name: If he comes to take counsel, we do not instruct him to do so. What is more, had Zimri forsaken his mistress and Phinehas slain him, Phinehas would have been executed on his account; and had Zimri turned upon Phinehas and slain him, he would not have been executed, since Phinehas was a pursuer [seeking to take his life]. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor. Thereupon the tribe of Simeon went unto Zimri ben Salu and said unto him, 'Behold, capital punishment is being meted out, yet you sit silent [i.e., inactive].' What did he do? He arose and assembled twenty-four thousand Israelites and went unto Cozbi, and said unto her, 'Surrender thyself unto me.' She replied, 'I am a king's daughter, and thus hath my father instructed me, "Thou shalt yield only to their greatest man"'. 'I too,' he replied, 'am the prince of a tribe; moreover, my tribe is greater than his [Moses], for mine is second in birth, whilst his is third.' He then seized her by her coiffure and brought her before Moses. 'Son of Amram,' exclaimed he, 'is this woman forbidden or permitted? And should you say, "She is forbidden", who permitted thee Jethro's daughter?' At that moment Moses forgot the halacha [concerning intimacy with a heathen woman], and all the people burst into tears; hence it is written, and they were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And it is also written, And Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it. Now, what did he see? — Rab said: He saw what was happening and remembered the halacha, and said to him, 'O great-uncle! Did you not teach us this on thy descent from Mount Sinai: He who cohabits with a heathen woman is punished by zealots?' He replied, 'He who reads the letter, let him be the agent [to carry out its instructions]'. Samuel said: He saw that 'There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord': whenever the Divine Name is being profaned, honor must not be paid to one's teacher.

R. Isaac said in R. Eleazar's name: He saw the angel wreaking destruction amongst the people. And he rose up out of the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand; hence one may not enter the house of learning with weapons. He removed its point and placed it in his undergarment, and went along leaning upon the stock [of the spear, into which the pointed blade is inserted], and as soon as he reached the tribe of Simeon, he exclaimed, 'Where do we find that the tribe of Levi is greater than that of Simeon? [i.e., I too wish to indulge]. Thereupon they said, 'Let him pass too. He enters to satisfy his lust. These abstainers have now declared the matter permissible.' R. Johanan said: Six miracles were wrought for Phinehas: — [i] Zimri should have withdrawn [from the woman] but did not; [ii] he should have cried out [for help], but did not; [iii] he [Phinehas] succeeded [in driving his spear] exactly through the sexual organs of the man and woman; [iv] they did not slip off the spear; [v] an angel came and lifted up the lintel; [vi] an angel came and wrought destruction amongst the people. Then he [Phinehas] came and struck them down before the Almighty, saying, 'Sovereign of the Universe! Shall twenty-four thousand perish because of these.' even as it is written, and those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. Hence it is written, then stood up Phinehas, and

executed judgement [wa-yefallel] R. Eleazar said: [wa-yispallel] [he prayed] is not written, but wa-yefallel, as though he argued with his maker [on the justice of punishing so many]. Thereupon the ministering angels wished to repulse him, but He said to them, 'Let him be, for he is a zealot and the descendant of a zealot; a turner away of wrath and the son of a turner away of wrath.' The tribes now began abusing him: 'See ye this son of Puti [= Putiel] whose maternal grandfather fattened [pittem] cattle for idols, and who has now slain the prince of a tribe of Israel!' Therefore Scripture detailed his ancestry: Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the Priest. [Moreover,] the Holy One, blessed be He said to Moses, 'Be the first to extend a greeting of peace to him', as it is written, Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace; and this atonement, [that Phinehas has made] is worthy of being an everlasting atonement.

א"ר חסדא הבא לימלך אין מורין לו איתמר נמי אמר רבה בר בר חנה א"ר יוחנן הבא לימלך אין מורין לו ולא עוד אלא שאם פירש זמרי והרגו פנחס נהרג עליו נהפך זמרי והרגו לפנחס אין נהרג עליו שהרי רודף הוא (במדבר כה, ה) ויאמר משה אל שופטי ישראל וגוי הלך שבטו של שמעון אצל זמרי בן סלוא אמרו לו הן דנין דיני נפשות ואתה יושב ושותק מה עשה עמד וקיבץ כ"ד אלף מישראל והלך אצל כזבי אמר לה השמיעי לי אמרה לו בת מלך אני וכן צוה לי אבי לא תשמעי אלא לגדול שבהם אמר לה אף הוא נשיא שבט הוא ולא עוד אלא שהוא גדול ממנו שהוא שני לבטן והוא שלישי לבטן תפשה בבלוריתה והביאה אצל משה אמר לו בן עמרם זו אסורה או מותרת ואם תאמר אסורה בת יתרו מי התירה לך נתעלמה ממנו הלכה געו כולם בבכיה והיינו דכתיב (במדבר כה, ו) והמה בוכים פתח אהל מועד וכתוב (במדבר כה, ז) וירא פנחס בן אלעזר מה ראה אמר רב ראה מעשה ונזכר הלכה אמר לו אחי אבי אבא לא כך לימדתני ברדתך מהר סיני הבועל את כותית קנאין פוגעין בו אמר לו קריינא דאיגרתא איהו ליהוי פרוונקא ושמואל אמר ראה שאין (משלי כא, ל) חכמה ואין תבונה ואין עצה נגד ה' כל מקום שיש חילול השם אין חולקין כבוד לרב ר' יצחק אמר ר"א ראה שבא מלאך והשחית בעם ויקם מתוך העדה ויקח רומח בידו מיכן שאין נכנסין בכלי זיין לבית המדרש שלף שננה והניחה באונקלו והיה נשען והולך על מקלו וכיון שהגיע אצל שבטו של שמעון אמר היכן מצינו ששבטו של לוי גדול משל שמעון אמרו הניחו לו אף הוא לעשות צרכיו נכנס התירו פרושין את הדבר א"ר יוחנן ששה נסים נעשו לו לפנחס אחד שהיה לו לזמרי לפרוש ולא פירש ואחד שהיה לו לדבר ולא דבר ואחד שכוון בזכרותו של איש ובנקבותה של אשה ואחד שלא נשמטו מן הרומח ואחד שבא מלאך והגביה את המשקוף ואחד שבא מלאך והשחית בעם בא וחבטן לפני המקום אמר לפניו רבש"ע על אלו יפלו כ"ד אלף מישראל שנאמר (במדבר כה, ט) ויהיו המתים במגפה ארבעה ועשרים אלף והיינו דכתיב (תהלים קו, ל) ויעמד פנחס ויפלל אמר רבי אלעזר ויתפלל לא נאמר אלא ויפלל מלמד כביכול שעשה פלילות עם קונו בקשו מלאכי השרת לדחפו אמר להן הניחו לו קנאי בן קנאי הוא משיב חימה בן משיב חימה הוא התחילו שבטים מבזין אותו ראיתם בן פוטי זה שפיטם אבי אמו עגלים לעבודת כוכבים והרג נשיא שבט מישראל בא הכתוב ויחסו פנחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן א"ל הקב"ה למשה הקדם לו שלום שנאמר (במדבר כה, יב) לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום וראויה כפרה זו שתהא מכפרת והולכת לעולם

6. Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 34a

אר"ש בן שטח אראה בנחמה אם לא ראיתי אחד שרץ אחר חבירו לחורבה ורצתי אחריו ומצאתי סייף בידו ודם מטפטף והרוג מפרפר אמרתי לו רשע מי הרגו לזה או אני או אתה אבל מה אעשה שאין דמך מסור בידי שהרי אמרה תורה (דברים יז) על פי שנים עדים או שלשה עדים יומת המת אלא המקום יפרע ממך אמרו לא זזו משם עד שנשכו נחש ומת

R. Simeon b. Shetah said: May I not see the consolation [of Zion] if I did not see a man running after his neighbor into a ruin, and I ran after him, and found him with a sword in his hand with the blood dripping, and the victim writhing in agony. I said to him: "Wicked one! Who killed this man? I or you? But what can I do, since your blood is not given into my hand, for Scripture says, 'At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is to die be put to death' (Deuteronomy 17:6). But the Omnipresent will exact retribution from you!" It is said, they had not yet moved from there, when a serpent bit him, and he died!

7. Babylonian Talmud Yoma 23a

It is taught (in a *baraita*): It once happened that two equal *kohanim* were running to ascend the ramp. When one of them arrived before the other within four cubits [of the altar], the other took a knife and thrust it into his heart. R' Tsadok stood up on the steps of the Hall and cried out: "Brothers! House of Israel, Listen! Behold, it says: *If an unidentified dead body is found in your land, your elders and judges must go out [to offer an eglah arufah - a red heifer - as atonement]* (Deut 21:1-2). What about us? Upon whom does the responsibility now fall? Is it upon the residents of the city of Jerusalem? Or is it the *kohanim*, who preside over this Courtyard?" Hearing this, all the people burst into tears. The father of the boy who had been stabbed came and found him still writhing and convulsing. He said: 'Behold, he'll be an atonement for you. My son is still in convulsions and the knife has not yet become *tamei* (ritually impure).' This comes to teach that they took more seriously the ritual purity of their utensils than the spilling of blood. Thus it is also said: Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had fled Jerusalem from one end till the other.

ת"ר מעשה בשני כהנים שהיו שניהן שוין ורצין ועולין בכבש קדם אחד מהן לתוך ארבע אמות של חבירו נטל סכין ותקע לו בלבו עמד רבי צדוק על מעלות האולם ואמר אחינו בית ישראל שמעו הרי הוא אומר (דברים כא, א) כי ימצא חלל באדמה ויצאו זקניך ושופטיך אנו על מי להביא עגלה ערופה על העיר או על העזרות געו כל העם בבכיה בא אביו של תינוק ומצאו כשהוא מפרפר אמר הרי הוא כפרתכם ועדיין בני מפרפר ולא נטמאה סכין ללמדך שקשה עליהם טהרת כלים יותר משפיכות דמים וכן הוא אומר (מלכים ב כא, טז) וגם דם נקי שפך מנשה [הרבה מאד] עד אשר מלא ירושלים פה לפה

8. Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 21b

מאי חנוכה דתנו רבנן בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאוים ימים טובים בהלל והודאה

תנן התם גף היוצא מתחת הפטיש ויצא והזיק חייב גמל שטעון פשתן והוא עובר ברשות הרבים ונכנסה פשתנו לתוך החנות ודלקה בנרו של חנוני והדליק את הבירה בעל הגמל חייב הניח חנוני את נרו מבחוץ חנוני חייב רבי יהודה אומר בנר חנוכה פטור אמר רבינא (משום דרבה) זאת אומרת נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה בתוך עשרה דאי ס"ד למעלה מעשרה לימא ליה היה לך להניח למעלה מגמל ורוכבו ודילמא אי מיטרחא ליה טובא אתי לאימונעי ממצוה :

What is [the reason of] Hanukkah? For our rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of Hanukkah, which are eight, on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. ...For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and Thanksgiving.

We learnt elsewhere: If a spark which flies from the anvil goes forth and causes damage, he [the smith] is liable. If a camel laden with flax passes through a street, and the flax overflows into a shop, catches fire at the shopkeeper's lamp, and sets the building alight, the camel owner is liable. R. Judah said: In the case of a Hanukkah lamp, he is exempt. Rabina said in Rabbah's name: This proves that the Hanukkah lamp should [in the first instance] be placed within ten. For you should think above ten, let him say to him, 'You ought to have placed it higher than a camel and his rider.' 'Yet perhaps if he is put to too much trouble, he may refrain altogether from the [observance of the] precept.'

9. Moshe Halbertal, "On Holiness, Sovereignty and Sacrilege," 2000

The Israeli-Arab conflict comprises three spheres. The outer sphere, which is widest in scope and therefore most alarming, contains the conflict between Islam and Judaism; the middle sphere contains the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors; and the inner sphere comprises the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The peace process attempted to focus on the volatile core and isolate it from the two outer spheres.

Israel has promoted the process in the belief that the conflict should not turn into a comprehensive religious battle between Judaism and Islam. It had very good reason to believe such a battle was completely uncalled for. Turkey, an Islamic country par excellence, is a true friend to Israel. Israel also has ties with other Muslim countries in the Far East and in Africa. The conflict with the Arab world, which is the second, more limited sphere, is perceived by Israelis as a border dispute that is gradually unraveling. Peace agreements have been signed between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Jordan, and intensive talks to resolve the border dispute with Syria commenced, although this process came to a deadlock.

The internal logic of the process is such that it should focus on the most sensitive, existential issue, namely, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since the Oslo Accords were signed, an attempt has been made to tackle the components of this conflict without allowing it to spill over into the irrelevant, much broader outer spheres.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a border dispute. It is a feud over a homeland, over a single piece of land, and the only way to settle it is by compromise. It took years of effort to separate the core conflict from the external, broader spheres, but paradoxically and in complete contradiction with the internal and political logic of the process, just when we reached the last mile, the dispute spread out to encompass the broadest scope possible.

Shifting the focus of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the small, symbolic holy rock of Temple Mount means turning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious struggle between Judaism and Islam. Such a clash would send shockwaves through the entire region. Political conflicts over interests such as water, land and refugees may be difficult, but can be resolved through compromise. Land and water can be divided, but can the same be done with symbols?

In the evolving religious debate, both parties are making a similar, baseless argument, linking sanctity and sovereignty. "If the place is holy to us, it is ours," is the claim made by many rabbis, qadis [Muslim leaders] and politicians, as well as by the average man on the street. The Chief Rabbinate, for example, announced that handing over sovereignty over Temple Mount would constitute desecration of the Jewish people's holiest of holies, as though sanctity and sovereignty were inseparable by definition. In fact, the relation between holiness and sovereignty is quite the reverse. It is actually places, times and people that cannot be controlled, which become holy.

Halacha instructs believers not to engage in any creation on holy days. This prohibition is the primary marker of holy days. On the Sabbath, man is forbidden to engage in any creative or sovereign activities. It is not manual labor that is barred – religious Jews are allowed to carry heavy objects from one end of the room to the other; but any attempt, as minute as may be, to alter the surroundings, constitutes desecration of the holy day.

On regular days, on the other hand, man is free to govern and control. On regular days man creates and conquers, and on the Sabbath he must treat nature as a gift that must not be tampered with. This perception of holiness, under which sovereignty and sanctity are a contradiction in terms, is evident in all Halachic definitions of sanctity.

This year is a shmita year [every seventh year, in which the land must be left fallow]. Produce from this year may be consumed, but must not be processed. For example, it may not be used to make medicine. Sanctity is that realm that is inaccessible and that cannot be controlled. This is why it is not allowed to use holy sites for any other purpose outside religious practice. One of the manifestations of the holiness of a synagogue is that people are not allowed to use it as a shortcut, as the Mishnah says: “He shall not enter Temple Mount with his cane and his shoes and his money belt and the dust on his feet, and shall not make it into a shortcut”. The essence of holiness as it emerges from the Jewish Halacha is about surrendering power, and it is designed to limit man’s governance and sovereignty.

According to most Halachic scholars, because of the holiness of Temple Mount Jews nowadays are not allowed to enter this site. But then how can one stake a claim to ownership over a place that one is not even allowed to enter? Indeed, during the times of the Second Temple, starting with the Maccabees and through to the zealots, there was always strife surrounding the control of the Temple’s compound. But these conflicts had to do with Judaism’s battle against idolatry and against the Greek and Roman Imperialistic attempts to place statues and icons – forbidden by Jewish Law – in the Temple.

Muslims, on the other hand, are also forbidden to make icons, and – following Maimonides’ definition – are completely monotheistic. There is no doubt that the immense efforts invested by both Jews and Muslims alike in order to have their national flags atop the Mount are tantamount to placing an icon in the Temple and to turning the holy site to a battlefield in a war between the nations. Muslims and Jews who worship the same God have turned his temple, Temple Mount, into a Moloch-like site of human sacrifice. People who call themselves servants of the Lord and who appropriate the holy traditions of both sides, are willing to sacrifice the entire younger generation for the sole purpose of controlling the holy site. “God in heaven shall laugh, he shall mock them,” was said of those people exactly. Bloodshed at holy sites is not a new concept. Sanctity has always been a magnet to defilement.

The Tosefta in the Yoma tractate tells of an incident that occurred shortly before the Second Temple was destroyed ...While competing for the right to work at the Temple, one hot-headed priest slew another at the holy site itself. Rabbi Tsadok, who was present at the site, talked to the people and compared between that incident and the story of eglarufa [the method of communal atonement performed when a murdered body was found out in the fields] in the

Book of Deuteronomy. In this biblical story, the body of a murdered man is found outside the town. The elders of the nearby town, responsible for the safety of that passerby, are to bring a calf and propitiate their sin while saying: "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it." However, Rabbi Tsadok asks, since the murder took place within the Temple itself, what should the calf be used to atone for – the Temple or the hall that is near the site of the murder? Rabbi Tsadok's listeners burst out crying because they realized how severe his rebuke is. Atonement is possible when the purity of holiness is maintained, but when the Temple itself is desecrated and defiled by the murder, how can atonement be possible?

The story does not end with Rabbi Tsadok's earth-shattering reproach. While Rabbi Tsadok and the people mourn the murder that took place at the holy site, the father of the slain priest arrives in haste and sighs with relief: "My son is still alive and the knife is not impure." The knife with which the priest killed his colleague was one of the tools used in the Temple, and it is a law that the presence of the dead makes tools impure. Unlike Rabbi Tsadok, the priest's father is not concerned that the Temple might be defiled by the act of murder, neither is he fearful for his son's life – his only concern is with the purity of the knife, the same knife used to take his son's life. According to the father, as long as the son is dying but not dead yet, the knife that is stuck in his body can be saved from defilement. To the storyteller, this behavior of the father of the murdered priest is not unusual. With intense criticism and bitterness he uses the father's response to illustrate the cultural situation on the eve of the Second Temple's destruction: "This story shows that the people of Israel viewed the impurity of a knife more seriously than they did bloodshed." This piercing observation of the atmosphere of the days before the fall of the Second Temple may actually be the most insightful explanation of the Temple's ruin and the demise of Jewish society in that era.

Since quite a lot of blood has been shed on Temple Mount in recent months and since the parties are willing to turn the Mount into a Moloch sacrificial site for the youths of Israel and Palestine, the story in the Tosefta can be attributed to contemporary Jewish and Muslim spiritual leadership just as well. Those who demand ownership over holiness and want to reside in the house of the Lord for the rest of their days must know that divine spirit has abandoned the place once before because of bloodshed. In all probability, God has already moved house. In order to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, some hard yet legitimate political questions must be answered. Do the Palestinians want peace or not? What are Israel's security needs and how can they be reconciled with the Palestinians need for a dignified solution that will give them sovereign territory? Can a Jewish democratic State be sustained under the present demographic conditions without having to divide the land?

Jewish affiliation to Temple Mount also pertains to the sensitive question of Palestinian recognition of the Jewish people's national and historic right to its homeland and to allowing Jews access – in practice and not only in principle – to the holy sites. These debates are important. But anyone who upholds that the question of sovereignty is part and parcel of these legitimate issues is doing nothing short of desecrating holiness.

10. Tomer Persico, "The Love-Hate Relationship Between Zionism and the Temple Mount," 2014

There is one overriding question that accompanies the Zionist project, wrote Gershom Scholem, the scholar of Jewish mysticism – "Whether or not Jewish history will be able to endure this entry into the concrete realm without perishing in the crisis of the messianic claim, which has virtually been conjured up." The entry into history to which Scholem refers is the establishment of the state and the ingathering of the exiles, borne, as they were – notwithstanding their secular fomenters and activists – on the wings of the ancient Jewish messianic myth of the return to Zion. However, when Scholem published the essay "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in 1971, the adjunct to the question was the dramatic freight of Israel's great victory in the Six-Day War, four years earlier.

It was a period of euphoria, as sweeping as it was blinding. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, the religiously observant public intellectual, immediately warned the country's leaders against the dangers of ruling by force a population of more than a million Palestinians. Scholem, though, was more concerned about the danger of a physical return to the Temple site. While Leibowitz lamented the mass Sabbath desecration caused by buses filled with Israelis coming to view the wonders of the Old City (and buy cheap from its Arab vendors) – Scholem was far more concerned by the sudden intrusion of Mount Moriah into the Israeli political arena. Possibly, as a scholar of Kabbalah, he had a better grasp than Leibowitz of messianic eros and of Zionism's susceptibility to its allure.

From its inception, the Zionist movement spoke in two voices – one pragmatic, seeking a haven for millions of persecuted Jews; the other prophetic, attributing redemptive significance to the establishment of a sovereign state. Whereas the shapers of Western culture, from Kant to Marx, perceived individual liberation in an egalitarian regime as the proper secularization of religious salvation, for the Jewish collectivity, this turned out to be a false hope.

Against the background of surging anti-Semitism, at the end of the 19th century, many Jews discarded the message of emancipation in favor of an effort to create a national home for the Jewish people. This solution, however, bore messianic implications, for it is precisely the founding of an independent Jewish kingdom that is the salient sign of Jewish redemption. The Christians received their deliverance, and the Jews – including those who would rather leave their religion in the museum of history – will receive theirs.

Well aware of the messianic implications of their efforts, the shapers of the Zionist movement tried to neutralize them from the outset. In his Hebrew-language book "Zion in Zionism," the historian Motti Golani reveals the ambivalent attitude toward Jerusalem harbored by Zionist leaders. Theodor Herzl himself, the founder of modern political Zionism, was not convinced that the establishment of a Jewish political entity in Palestine would best be served by Jerusalem's designation as its capital; and even if it did, he wanted the Holy Basin to function as an international center of religion and science.

Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, went even further. He maintained that if the holy places were under Israeli sovereignty, Zionism would not be able to design its capital

according to its progressive worldview. He espoused the partition of Jerusalem in order to preclude Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount. When such Zionist leaders such as Menachem Ussishkin and Berl Katznelson assertively took the opposite stance, Ben-Gurion retorted, "To our misfortune, patriotic rhetoric surged in Jerusalem – barren, hollow, foolish rhetoric instead of a productive national project." Years later, in the Six-Day War, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan hesitated at length before ordering the capture of the Temple Mount. "What do I need all this Vatican for?" he said, expressing the classic Zionist approach to the subject.

From the start, though, there were voices that demanded not only sovereignty over all of Jerusalem, but also the completion of the redemptive process by force of arms. Before Israel's establishment, such calls emanated from the fascist wing of the Zionist movement (fascism wasn't yet a curse word but a legitimate ideology). In the 1930s, figures like the journalist Abba Ahimeir and the poet Uri Zvi Grinberg, the founders of Brit Habiryonim (Union of Zionist Rebels), toiled not only to bring Jews into the country and to acquire arms for an armed struggle against the British. They also staged demonstrations in which the shofar was blown at the Western Wall at the end of every Yom Kippur (just as it is in the synagogue), a custom that was later continued by the Irgun underground militia led by Menachem Begin.

Grinberg, a poet who was considered a prophet, wrote mythic works that sought to fashion an organic conception of a nation that had been resurrected around its beating-bleeding heart, namely, the Temple Mount void of the Temple. Grinberg tried "to renew our people's ancient myth," the literary scholar Baruch Kurzweil would write years later. Kurzweil understood well that despite the superficial secularization to which the Zionist movement had subjected the Jewish tradition, the imprint of the ancient beliefs continued to reside within it, like a dormant seed awaiting water. Grinberg's poetry was like dew that brought those seeds to life in those who were ready for the transformation. The revival of the myth in Grinberg's poetry, Kurzweil observed, "does not bear only an aesthetic or religious-moral role. The actualization of the myth bears salient political significance."

That political import was given explicit expression in "The Principles of Rebirth," which Avraham "Yair" Stern wrote as a constitution for the Lehi, the pre-state underground organization he headed. The full document, published in 1941, set forth 18 points that in Stern's view would be essential for the Jewish people's national revival – from unity, through mission, to conquest. The 18th and final principle calls for "building the Third Temple as a symbol of the era of full redemption." The Temple here constitutes a conclusion and finalization of the process of building the nation on its soil, in pointed contrast to the path of Herzl and Ben-Gurion.

Mythical Zionism

A point very much worth noting is that these modern proponents of a rebuilt Temple were not themselves religiously observant, at least not in Orthodox terms. They aspired not to a religious revival but to a national one, and the mythic sources fueled their passion for political independence. For them, the Temple was an axis and a focal point around which "the people" must unite.

In a certain sense, they simply took secular Zionism to its logical conclusion – and in so doing, turned it topsy-turvy. As noted above, Jewish redemption, including its traditional form, is based largely on a national home and on sovereignty. According to the tradition, one measure of this sovereignty is the establishment of a Temple and a monarchical government descended from the House of David. Zionism wanted to make do with political independence, but the stopping point on the route that leads ultimately to a monarch and a temple is largely arbitrary, based as it is on pragmatic logic and liberal-humanist values. For those who don't believe in realpolitik and are not humanists, the push toward end times is perfectly logical.

Mainstream Zionism, in other words, wished to make use of the myth as far as the boundary line of its decision: yes, to ascend to the Holy Land, and yes, to declare political independence, but no to searching for Messiah Ben David and no to renewing animal sacrifices. Ahimeir, Grinberg, Stern – and Israel Eldad after them – were not content with this. They believed that the whole vision must be realized. Less religious than mythic Jews, they wanted to push reality to its far end, to reach the horizon and with their own hands bring into being the master plan for complete redemption. And redemption is the point at which hyper-Zionism becomes post-Zionism.

As Baruch Falach shows in his doctoral thesis (written in 2010 at Bar-Ilan University), one ideological-messianic line connects Ahimeir, Grinberg, Stern and Eldad to Shabtai Ben-Dov and the Jewish underground organization of the early 1980s, which among other things wanted to blow up the Dome of the Rock, the Muslim shrine on the Temple Mount.

In the figure of Ben-Dov – a formerly secular Lehi man who became an original radical, religious-Zionist thinker – the torch passes from messianic seculars to the religiously observant. It was Ben-Dov, who became religious himself, who ordered Yehuda Etzion, a member of the Jewish underground, to attack the third-holiest site in Islam, in order to force God to bring redemption. “If you want to do something that will solve all the problems of the People of Israel,” he told him, “do this!” And Etzion duly set about planning the deed.

This apocalyptic underground messianism differs from the messianism of Gush Emunim (“Bloc of the Faithful,” the progenitors of the settler movement), as conceived by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of British Mandatory Palestine and the founder of Mercaz Harav Kook Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Gush Emunim, loyal to the teaching of Rabbi Kook and of his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, developed a *mamlakhti* (“state-conscious”) approach, according to which, even though its activists alone understand the political reality and its reflection in the upper worlds, it is not for them to impose on the nation of Israel measures that the nation does not want. As settler-activist Ze’ev Hever put it, after the underground was exposed, “We are allowed to pull the nation of Israel after us as long as we are only two steps ahead of it... no more than that.”

Accordingly, the settlement project in Judea and Samaria is considered pioneering but not revolutionary. And, indeed, we should remember that the settlement enterprise had the support of large sections of the Labor movement, as well as of such iconic cultural figures as the poet Natan Alterman and the composer-songwriter Naomi Shemer. This was not the case with Temple matters, which are far more remote from the heart of the people that dwells in Zion. In

addition, Kook-style messianism shunned the Temple Mount for halakhic (Jewish-legal) reasons. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, like his father, ruled that it is forbidden to visit the mount. Here, too, Ben-Dov and Etzion followed a radically different path.

Furthermore, before 1967 – and afterward – all the leading poskim (rabbis who issue halakhic rulings), both ultra-Orthodox and from the religious-Zionist movement, decreed as one voice that it is forbidden to visit the Temple Mount, for the same halakhic reasons. This was reiterated by all the great rabbinic figures of recent generations – Rabbis Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Ovadia Yosef, Mordechai Eliahu, Eliahu Bakshi Doron, Moshe Amar, Avraham Shapira, Zvi Tau and others.

The halakhic grounds have to do with matters of defilement and purification, but even without going into details, it should be clear that in the most fundamental sense sanctity obliges distance rather than proximity. The holy object is what's prohibited for use, fenced-off, excluded. Reverential awe requires halting prior to, bowing from afar, not touching and not entering. "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us saying, 'Set bounds about the mountain and sanctify it,'" Moses asserts in Exodus before he – and he alone – ascends the holy mountain to receive the Torah.

Exalted totem

It is not surprising, then, that the first group advocating a change in the Temple Mount status quo did not spring from the ranks of the religious-Zionist movement. The Temple Mount Faithful, a group that has been active since the end of the 1960s, was led by Gershon Salomon, a secular individual, who was supported – how could it be otherwise? – by former members of the Irgun and Lehi. It was not until the mid-1980s that a similar organization was formed under the leadership of a religious-Zionist rabbi (the Temple Institute, founded by Rabbi Yisrael Ariel) – and it too remained solitary within the religious-Zionist movement until the 1990s.

Indeed, in January 1991, Rabbi Menachem Froman could still allay the fears of the Palestinians by informing them (in the form of an article he published in Haaretz, "To Wait in Silence for Grace") that, "In the perception of the national-religious public [... there is] opposition to any ascent to the walls of the Temple Mount... The attitude of sanctity toward the Temple Mount is expressed not by bursting into it but by abstinence from it."

No longer. If in the past, yearning for the Temple Mount was the preserve of a marginal, ostracized minority within the religious-Zionist public, today it has become one of the most significant voices within that movement. In a survey conducted this past May among the religious-Zionist public, 75.4 percent said they favor "the ascent of Jews to the Temple Mount," compared to only 24.6 percent against. In addition, 19.6 percent said they had already visited the site and 35.7 percent that they had not yet gone there, but intended to visit.

The growing number of visits to the mount by the religious-Zionist public signifies not only a turning away from the state-oriented approach of Rabbi Kook, but also active rebellion against the tradition of the Halakha. We are witnessing a tremendous transformation among sections of this public: Before our eyes they are becoming post-Kook-ist and post-Orthodox. Ethnic nationalism is supplanting not only *mamlakhtiyut* (state consciousness) but faithfulness to the Halakha. Their identity is now based more on mythic ethnocentrism than on Torah study,

and the Temple Mount serves them, just as it served Yair Stern and Uri Zvi Grinberg before them, as an exalted totem embodying the essence of sovereignty over the Land of Israel.

Thus, in the survey, the group identifying with “classic religious Zionism” was asked, “What are the reasons on which to base oneself when it comes to Jews going up to the Temple Mount?” Fully 96.8 percent replied that visiting the site would constitute “a contribution to strengthening Israeli sovereignty in the holy place.” Only 54.4 percent averred that a visit should be made in order to carry out “a positive commandment [mitzvat aseh] and prayer at the site.” Patently, for the religious Zionists who took part in the survey, the national rationale was far more important than the halakhic grounds – and who better than Naftali Bennett, the leader of Habayit Hayehudi party, serves as a salient model for the shift of the center of gravity of the religious-Zionist movement from Halakha to nationalism?

A substitution of the focal point of messianic hope

How did the religious-Zionist public undergo such a radical transformation in its character? A hint is discernible at the point when the first significant halakhic ruling was issued allowing visits to the Temple Mount. This occurred at the beginning of 1996, when the Yesha (Judea, Samaria, Gaza) Rabbinical Council published an official letter containing a ruling that visiting the Temple Mount was permissible, accompanied by a call to every rabbi “to go up [to the site] himself and guide his congregation on how to make the ascent according to all the restrictions of the Halakha.”

Motti Inbari, in his book “Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount”, draws a connection between the weakening of the Gush Emunim messianic paradigm, which was profoundly challenged by the Oslo process between Israel and the Palestinians, and the surge of interest in the mount. According to a widely accepted research model, disappointment stemming from difficulties on the road toward the realization of the messianic vision leads not to disillusionment but to radicalization of belief, within the framework of which an attempt is made to foist the redemptive thrust on recalcitrant reality.

However, the final, crushing blow to the Kook-based messianic approach was probably delivered by the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, in 2005, and the destruction of the Gush Katif settlements there. The Gush Emunin narrative, which talks about unbroken redemption and the impossibility of retreat, encountered an existential crisis, as did the perception of the secular state as “the Messiah’s donkey,” a reference to the parable about the manner in which the Messiah will make his appearance, meaning that full progress toward redemption can be made on the state’s secular, material back.

In a symposium held about a year ago by Ir Amim, an NGO that focuses on Jerusalem within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Haviva Pedaya, from the Jewish history department of Ben-Gurion University in Be’er Sheva, referred to the increasing occupation with the Temple Mount by the religious-Zionist movement after the Gaza pull-out.

“For those who endured it, the disengagement was a type of sundering from the substantial, from some sort of point of connection,” she said. “For the expelled, it was a breaking point that created a rift between the illusion that the substantial – the land – would be compatible with the symbolic – the state, redemption.” With that connection shattered, Pedaya explains,

messianic hope is shifted to an alternative symbolic focal point. The Temple Mount replaces settlement on the soil of the Land of Israel as the key to redemption.

Many religious Zionists are thus turning toward the mount in place of the belief in step-by-step progress and in place of the conception of the sanctity of the state. The Temple Mount advocates are already now positing the final goal, and by visiting the site and praying there they are deviating from both the halakhic tradition and from Israeli law. State consciousness is abandoned, along with the patience needed for graduated progress toward redemption. In their place come partisan messianism and irreverent efforts to hasten the messianic era – for apocalypse now.

And they are not alone. Just as was the case in the pre-state period, secular Jews are again joining, and in some cases leading, the movement toward the Temple Mount. Almost half of Likud's MKs, some of them secular, are active in promoting Jewish visits there. MK Miri Regev, who chairs the Knesset's Interior and Environment Committee, has already convened 15 meetings of the committee to deliberate on the subject. According to MK Gila Gamliel, "The Temple is the ID card of the people of Israel," while MK Yariv Levin likens the site to the "heart" of the nation. Manifestly, the division is not between "secular" and "religious," and the question was never about observing or not observing commandments. The question is an attempt to realize the myth in reality.

Assuaging Ben-Gurion's concerns, Israel remained without the Temple Mount at the end of the War of Independence in 1948. Not until the capture of East Jerusalem in 1967 did it become feasible to implement the call of Avraham Stern, and the ancient myth began to sprout within the collective unconscious. After almost 50 years of gestation, Israel is today closer than it has ever been to attempting to renew in practice its mythic past, to bring about by force what many see as redemption. Even if we ignore the fact that the top of the Temple Mount is, simply, currently not available – it must be clear that moving toward a new Temple means the end of both Judaism and Zionism as we know them.

The question, then, to paraphrase Gershom Scholem's remark, with which we began, is whether Zionism will be able to withstand the impulse to realize itself conclusively and become history.