

A State of Holiness: Rethinking Israeli Secularism

I am proud to be a Jew but sorry that I am not religious.

--Ariel Sharon

We are bound together only by the faith of our fathers.

--Theodor Herzl

It is common to describe Israel as a society divided between (among other fault lines) the religious and the secular, which are in a struggle over the control of the public and the political sphere.[1] The dominance of (Jewish) religion in both spheres is considered to be either the result of pragmatic political compromises or, in a more negative view, of ultrareligious groups taking advantage of their ability to tip the scale of (or pejoratively, blackmail) the political system. Although there is some truth in the negative view, in this article I would like to suggest that there is more to the relationship between religion and state than the above description suggests. Religion serves an indispensable role in consolidating and demarcating territorial boundaries and legitimating the exclusionary practices of the nation-state within the ostensible secular national system as well. When operating within the framework of a national discourse, secularism often relies on religious foundations; it has, therefore, a far more complex relationship with religion than most secularists would be willing to admit--one that often undermines an ethos of equality and freedom.

A recent survey study of religious beliefs and behavior of Israeli Jews produced some startling information, alluding to the complexity of the debate. The press release that summarized the results and was quoted on all of Israel's media channels stated:

The rhetoric of secular and religious polarization used to characterize Israeli society is highly misleading. It is truer to say that Israeli society has a strong traditional bent, with a continuum from the "strictly observant" to the "non-observant," rather than a great divide between a religious minority and a secular majority. Israeli Jews are strongly committed to the continuing Jewish character of their society, even while they are selective in the forms of their observance. They believe that public life should respect tradition, but they are critical of the "status quo" governing State and Religion.[2]

A reading of the survey findings, I suggest, reveals not only the insufficiency of the religious/secular dichotomous divide, as the authors note, but also that existing tensions disguise the strong affinities between the religious and the secular national discourse. Recognizing this, I suggest, reveals the more general problems of a secular ethos enclosed within the parameters of a national identity. In other words, since an overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews, including those who do not define themselves "religious," and even many who explicitly regard themselves secular, affirm the definition of the state as "Jewish," religion's central position is granted. This adherence to the Jewish boundaries of the nation-state, and the denial of its limitations and injuries, is indicative of the moral and intellectual limits of secularism itself.

In this article, largely drawing on William Connolly's post-secular ethos and critique,[3] I suggest that secularism in Israel falls short of the declared ambitions of its proponents, that even its theoretical articulation is problematic, and, consequently, that it needs to be refashioned in order to face new (and old) challenges of identity and difference. I begin with a discussion of the secular and postsecular to set the theoretical parameters of my work and will then offer the following arguments:

1. That much as with the role of religion in Tocqueville's Democracy in America (and Connolly's reading of it) Judaism was essential for drawing the boundaries of identity and for the legitimation of claims over territory in the process of Israeli nation building and state building.
2. That this established an ambivalent relationship between Jewish secular nationalism (i.e., Zionism) and Judaism as religion. On the one hand, nationalism negated religion, but on the other hand, nationalism was dependent upon Jewish religious symbols and Jewish collective identity.
3. That secular Zionism established its own homogenizing code of values, norms, and symbols, and its own limits and intolerance toward the "otherness" it either attempted to assimilate or excluded.
4. That secularists generally chose to blame religious orthodoxy for the unseparation of church and state and avoid the real issues, touching upon their own status and identity, that a real separation entails.
5. That unwilling to challenge the Jewish definition of the state, secularists ignore the limits of their conceptions of pluralism, democracy, and freedom in regard to non-Jews.
6. That the secularist desire to maintain the Jewish form of the state without its "metaphysical" content (i.e., religion), while still relying on religious themes to unify the nation and determine the state's boundaries, renders it unable to formulate an effective moral and intellectual response to counter religious-nationalist claims to be a renewed and authentic form of Zionism.

I will argue, therefore, that despite its apparent agenda, the secular-liberal ethos in Israel is radically limited in its capacity for tolerance, its ability to acknowledge a spectrum of religious attitudes, and its ability to create a pluralist political society. A postsecular ethic might offer fresh reflections on the meaning and requirements of freedom and democracy, open new public spaces and practices of politicization, and create an open discourse of negotiation rather than a general grammar of civil society. Transcending the secular/religious dichotomy in Israel might thus be a first step toward creating new and generous ideas of citizenship, participation, democracy, and boundaries.

Secular, Postsecular, and Zionism

A strange thing happened to Zionism, a self-declared secular rebellion against the confinement of Jewish religion, on its way to establishing a nation and a state. In the process of state building and nation building, Zionism reestablished a normative and

public standing of Jewish identity, in a secular form, and in so doing established its own set of hierarchies and exclusions rather than the open and tolerant society envisioned by some of its thinkers.

Difficulties to ground a firm, nonreligious, nonmetaphysical morality, however, are not unique to Zionism. In fact, this might be a constitutive problem of Western secularism. In the Conflict of the Faculties, Kant struggles to give "universal philosophy" a primacy over ecclesiastical (Christian) theology. This attempt to employ the "proper" division of universal life in the organization of public discourse ends up by suggesting an elevation of universal philosophy (or what he calls "rational religion") to the authoritative position previously reserved for Christian theology. Eventually, in his attempt to grant morality priority over ecclesiology, Kant's rational religion shares much structurally with that "dogmatic" religion it sought to replace, invoking its own authoritative conceptions of thinking, reason, and discourse. As Connolly suggests, those objections leveled against the arbitrary authority of ecclesiology return to haunt the critic and every attempt to secure secular authority in the public realm after Kant.[4]

Western secularism, in fact, is bound up with more generic characteristics of Christian culture than most of its proponents are willing to acknowledge. Secularism presents itself in a historical narrative of a *modus vivendi* between different sects of Christianity that ended in the secularization of public life, securing private freedom, pluralistic democracy, individual rights, public reason, and the primacy of the state. The above story prevailed according to Connolly because it "presented a picture of a self-sufficient public realm fostering freedom and governance without recourse to a specific religious faith." [5] As such, secularism sought "to dredge out of public life as much cultural density and depth as possible so that muddy 'metaphysical' and 'religious' differences don't flow into the pure water of public reason, procedure and justice." [6]

Religious critics of secularism, however, claim that it lacks the ability to come to terms with the sources of morality most citizens endorse, and that it is unable to provide a firm moral ground. Religion, claims one source examined by Connolly, creates "the most loyal of citizens." [7] Loyalty to a nation, state, and religious belief, I would argue, have very much in common in their conception of purity, boundaries, and order. It is exactly the affinity between the moral order demanded by religion and the one demanded by the state that makes national secularism either hostile to the competition from religion or, many times, defer to religion, which reads the national-secular mode as a weaker version of itself, lacking the perseverance religion has over its subject. In relation to issues of territoriality, religion and secular-nationalism may nevertheless find a common ground of understanding and a mutual interest in protecting boundaries and punishing deviant or disloyal behavior. Hence, the "flirtation" between Israeli secular nationalists employing a discourse of security and religious nationalists employing a discourse of holiness to justify the exclusive right of Jews over occupied territories. Or to use another example, the mega-reverend Billy Graham was described by a Johnson White House aide as representing "a basic kind of patriotism in this country--an unquestioning, obeying patriotism, a loyalty to the authority of the president. Billy was

always uncritical, unchallenging, unquestioning." [8] Those affinities between the national and the religious discourses are expressed also in the nostalgia invoked by various authors, troubled by current political uncertainties, such as Samuel Huntington in the Clash of Civilizations, for the Christian moral order of the United States of the nineteenth century. [9]

Secularism, in its liberal-national version, ends up many times either redrawing the boundaries set by religion or invoking religion to demarcate a territory. At the deepest levels, fundamentalisms of self-identity, religious faith, ethnic identification, and the nation replicate each other. In Connolly's words: "Each externalizes threats to fixed identities threatened by new evidence of their contingency and lack of self-sufficiency; each deflects pressures to renegotiate relations with which they are implicated. The fundamentalism of the self and religion asserts itself in relation to others within domestic politics; the fundamentalism of the nation asserts itself in relation to the foreign inside and outside the state." [10] The secularist attempt to divide labor between "religious faith" and "secular argument" suppresses complex registers of persuasion, judgment, and discourse operative in public life. In refusing to acknowledge that secularism is a political settlement rather than an incontestable dictate of public discourse itself, secularists limit possibilities of an ethic of cultivation, a generous ethos of engagement and critical responsiveness. Therefore, as Connolly asserts, the counterreligious liberal concept of pluralism remains "too stingy, cramped, and defensive for the world we now inhabit." [11]

The secularism that Connolly's work addresses refers to a specific context of a Western or US political culture and its institutional arrangements. In a different political system, in which state and religion are, de jure and de facto, unseparated, as in Israel, secularism has a different interpretation and significance that I will later address. In both cases, however--a country in which religion and state were separated and a national movement with a secular ethos--religion has played a larger role than secularists are willing to admit. Moreover, in both cases it appears that liberal-secularism falls short of its aspiration and, hence, could use the "nudge" of new modes of thought.

Tocqueville, Herzl, and Territoriality

Issues of territoriality, specifically exclusive claims over it, illuminate the affinities between religion and the nation/state discourse and practices. One way to examine these affinities and their political consequences is to compare the conceptualization of religion in Tocqueville's and Herzl's thought. Both of these authors professed a separation between religion and state, whether in observation (Tocqueville) or program (Herzl), yet in both accounts religion reappears at strategic points to help legitimate the exclusion of dangerous "others." It is religion's status as absent-present that characterizes both thinkers as well as contemporary articulations of Israeli secularism. I will therefore begin by examining Tocqueville's thought, compare it with Herzl's idea of Zionism, and then examine the degree to which these strategies and exclusions are reproduced by contemporary modes of Israeli secularism.

For Alexis de Tocqueville, America was a true example of the sovereignty of the people.[12] This democracy, he asserted, is based upon the commonalities people share, their religion, language, and mores (p. 112). Hence "Maine and Georgia separated by a thousand miles are more naturally united than Normandy and Brittany" (p. 163). Not simply material interests, but ideas and feelings are what makes the United States a homogeneous civilization with no religious contentions, no class animosities, and no exploitation (p. 177); a country in which differences of view are a matter of nuance (p. 194).

This harmony, according to Tocqueville, is guaranteed by the bounding overarching Christian morality. America, he writes, "is still the place where Christian religion has kept the greatest power over men's souls ... by regulating domestic life it helps to regulate the state" (p. 291). The moral world (of religion) and the political world (of the modern state) thus complement each other: "In the moral world everything is classified, coordinated, foreseen and decided in advance. In the world of politics everything is in turmoil, contested and uncertain. In the one case obedience is passive, though voluntary; in the other there is independence, contempt of experience, and jealousy of all authority ... religion is considered the guardian of mores, and mores are regarded as the guarantee of the laws and pledge for the maintenance of freedom itself" (pp. 54-55). Religion, therefore, provides the moral ground and what operates above this ground of agreement is mostly "nuance."

What is interesting is not only how Tocqueville tells a story of harmony in a country that had its fair share of animosities, contentions, and exploitation, but that he himself provides his readers with the sympathetic description of slavery and the "Indians." His sympathy for the "Blacks" and the "Indians," however, is sidetracked into different chapters and does not disturb the metastory of harmony and agreement. Issues of race, oppression, expulsion, and genocide remain unrelated to other dimensions of US life and to the foundation of the so-called homogeneous society, constructed to a large extent out of the encounters with, and over the backs of, the racialized "other." What Tocqueville's Democracy in America does, then, is to evade and mask struggles, and to superimpose a narrative of homogeneity and egalitarianism that is relevant only to a limited group of individuals.

Religion is the moral ground of harmony, but also the demarcation that excludes those elements that threaten harmony. To begin with, like many other Europeans coming to the so-called New World, Tocqueville is able to describe North America as an "empty continent, a deserted land waiting for inhabitants." Empty, according to European terminology, would describe a place in which territoriality was not established by means of dividing land between "owners" who establish property rights through agriculture. The inhabitants of this "empty land" must therefore give way to the "triumphal progress of civilization across the wilderness" and those acknowledged injustices toward the "other" seem to be almost inevitable. The religious discourse of Christianity would go hand in hand with the discourse of progress, the frequent use of the term wilderness has a decidedly biblical connotation, referring to a place of which its inhabitants are not

yet redeemed and summoned to live under god's sanction.[13] Therefore, it is progress and Christianity (as a redemption) that legitimate the conquering of the land and that make the injuries inflicted upon the native population unfortunate and regrettable, but inevitable. The Indian then becomes "the first Other of the civi-territorial complex, the first sign of violence inscribed in its boundaries, and the first marker of how violence is obscured or forgotten by the complex that requires it." [14]

In the American "civilization drive," Christian monotheism provided the "cultural glue binding the civi-territorial complex." [15] True belief in the Christian faith, as Tocqueville noted, was of little importance, what matters is a recognition of it as the underlying foundations and its entrances into the "reason" and "mores" that bind people together. The separation of church and state does not render the state neutral toward religion, but rather ascribes religion a moral authority and establishes a "zone of tolerance" from which the belief system of Native Americans is excluded. Those (Christian) mores of civilization precede, ground, pervade, and restrict politics; they set the boundaries of pluralism; and by separating church and state, Christian monotheism eventually forms a political institution above politics. [16] Christian religion, then, is the gatekeeper that provides the most important material for the foundations of the country's freedom; it regulates politics by shaping ideas, expectations, characters, forms of discourse, and passions that are allowed entrances to the political arena. [17] It is little surprise, then, that the current politics of nostalgia, referring to Tocqueville's America and lamenting the loss of Christian values, seeks to impose a tight oppressive grid on the contemporary cultural landscape. It is even less of a surprise that the profiles of American lives that are figured into this nostalgia are drawn from a narrow (white and middle-class) spectrum, or that the range of lives and political subjectivities that such authors deem legitimate or desirable is far narrower still. [18]

While Theodor Herzl's vision of the Jewish state was a modern and secular idea (and Herzl himself was far from religious), [19] "Zionism was never detached from Jewish religion even when it sought to transform and replace it. Scholars make a valid analytical distinction between Judaism and Jewishness, relating the former to religion and the latter to culture, ethnicity, and a historical sense of belonging to the Jewish people." [20] The two, however, overlap, and as such, very much like Christianity in Tocqueville's America, Judaism would function as the binding glue and as a source for mobilization and legitimation from which Zionism would borrow its symbols and legitimate its territorial claims through a divine promise of redemption. Despite the mutual disdain between Zionists and the traditional religious Jews in Europe, Zionism was first and foremost a movement of the Jewish people with specific territorial claims and collective boundaries. In maintaining close affinities to the content and the form of Jewish religion, Zionism would, on the one hand, remain dependent upon Jewish religion and, on the other, would be replicating its quest for purity and uniformity, only changing their codes, replacing "God" by the nation and the state endowed with divinity.

Interestingly, the title of Herzl's *The Jewish State*, the book in which he outlines a program for establishing a state, would be more accurately translated as "The State of the Jews." The English translation of the title pinpoints the yet unresolved problem: a state of the Jews, or a Jewish state? The former would be a secular form of state with Judaism as a primarily cultural and/or ethnic identity, while the latter would be a more theocratic state of believers. The state of the Jews, claim contemporary secularists, was the book's intended message, and is (or should be) the foundation for separating religion and state. However, even in the secular idea of "the state of the Jews," Jewish religion would have a larger role than Zionists were willing to attribute to it and contemporary secularists are willing to acknowledge.

Herzl's ideas seem to resonate with the claims of current secularists and inadvertently to expose their weaknesses. His statehood plans explicitly envision a secular entity in which religion is confined within its own sphere. As he explains: "Shall we end by having a theocracy? No, indeed. Faith unites us, knowledge gives us freedom. We shall therefore prevent any theocratic tendencies from coming to the fore on the part of our priesthood. We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks." [21] Faith would therefore serve as a binding glue, but would nevertheless be kept separated from politics ruled by "Knowledge." As in Tocqueville's *America*, Herzl's secular state and its freedoms would be dependent upon religion establishing the moral ground; labor is divided between the faith that unites and determines the belonging and the knowledge that gives freedom, but this division could never be complete.

The desire to maintain faith in the private domain raises a major problem that Herzl cannot resolve; if Jewishness remains a private matter, why would the Jews need a state of their own? One answer would be necessity. Assimilation offered by Western European states, which many Jews were willing to accept, brought with it a resurgence of anti-Semitism. The situation was even worse in Eastern Europe. "Where will our presence be desired," Herzl asks, "as long as we are a homeless nation?" (p. 123). Jewishness being other-defined, the solution to the "problem of the Jews" (which is not necessarily a "Jewish problem") is a "normal" existence in the form of a nation-state. But individual-collective survival is a limited explanation or argument for a state, as the choice of the majority of Jews to emigrate to the United States has proven. On another level, therefore, Herzl would grant religion a somewhat larger role, though evading a full acknowledgment of its importance and distancing himself from its metaphysics: "Our community of race is peculiar and unique, for we are bound together only by the faith of our fathers." [22] Faith, therefore, does not have to be "our" faith in order to be a historical force, and the material upon which nation and state would be built.

Engagement with issues of territoriality exposed Herzl to the dependence of his ideas upon religion. Although preferring Palestine, Herzl was willing to accept any territorial solution for the Jews and was toying with the idea of receiving a "charter," an immediate grant of sovereignty by the European powers in one of their colonies. But the attempt to bring the idea of settlement in Uganda to the Jewish Congress was a

complete failure that threatened to split the movement. Herzl was called a traitor to his face, and another Zionist leader who supported the Uganda idea was almost killed. In his closing speech, worried about the fate of the Zionist movement, Herzl reaffirmed his commitment to Palestine, stating: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither."^[23] Secular Zionists have quickly learned, therefore, that the "Land of Israel" (Eretz Israel) is the only territory that could evoke sentiments among a critical mass of Jews, sentiments mediated through traditional-religious symbols.^[24] With the commitment of the Zionist movement to restoring the old homeland in Palestine, religion would become more than the mobilizing instrument Herzl thought it would be. The Jewish past and religion will be rewritten and at times reinvented in order to legitimate modern national claims, entrenching religion's status in the future state.

While secular Zionists would refrain from referring to God, they did invoke historical rights based upon the Bible to establish territorial claims, combined with ideas of progress and modern nationalism. Like many other European settlements outside of Europe, Palestine was described by Zionists as an empty land and a wilderness, and thus "a land with no people for a people with no land." Reestablishing Jewish historical rights over Palestine/Israel would also bring progress, as Herzl explained: "We should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism."^[25] In *The Jewish State*, Herzl calls for tolerance toward those of different nationalities who go to live among the Jews in their state, but ignores the Arabs, already living there. Their presence is acknowledged in his utopian novel *Altneuland*; his solution, very much motivated by the universalistic, humanistic ethos of the novel, proposes that all Arab inhabitants could join the new society as equal members. But not only does he not explore the possibilities and problematics of such equality within a Jewish state, he overlooks the possibility that Arabs might wish to establish their own national movement.^[26] Zionism would follow this line of thought. When turning to practice, it would encounter difficulties accounting for actual Arab presence, but would, nevertheless, establish a discourse of Jewish rights to the land, superseding all other claims, by describing the land as empty and waiting for the return of its true owners.

Common Ground

Critics of Herzl within the Zionist movement asserted that the body politic could not be created out of thin air or diplomatic maneuvering, and that a sociocultural infrastructure is a necessary condition for political life. The conceptual framework in which most Zionist thinkers operated (especially those who emigrated to Palestine) was molded by historical, cultural, and romantic nationalism; and, beneath their thin veneer of secularism, a Jewish tradition^[27] never ceased to exist.^[28] While many of the Jewish settlers in Palestine carried with them universal socialist and secular ideas, in both theory and practice they became secondary to the idea of Jewish nationalism. Zionism has developed the classic features of organic nationalism, producing its own cult of ancient, biblical history, the contact with the soil and the desire to strike roots in it, and the "sanctification" of the territory where the ancient biblical heroes lived and fought.^[29]

Religion was perceived by the large majority of Zionists as unfit for the purpose of nation and state building. First, its symbol system and worldview was fit for the individual member of a powerless nation rather than a modern state; second, its ultimate source of authority was God and not the nation or the state; and, third, because traditional religion had lost its appeal for the many Jews in Europe who preferred assimilation.[30] Nevertheless, since religion had a symbolic value and a potential to function as a source of identity, Zionism, like many other national movements have done, attempted to incorporate religion without its metaphysics,[31] and create a "civil religion" with a unifying moral code and a system of belief. Civil religion, however, cannot avoid its own "metaphysics." Lacking the authority of "God," it can only order the environment and shape the experiences for those whose personal identities are merged with the common or collective identity; hence, its objective becomes the sanctification of the society in which it functions through processes of integration, legitimation, and mobilization.[32]

Israeli civil religion adopted and transformed aspects of Jewish tradition and religion for its own purposes and according to its interpretation. In essence, civil religion attempted to replace Judaism (as religion) by Jewishness. The two, however, were closely intertwined. Traditional symbols that were associated with the Temple periods in which Jews lived on their land and biblical stories were selected to establish Zionism as the ancestor of its heroes. The attitude toward the intermediate period of two thousand years of exile, and the rabbinical tradition it produced, on the other hand, was generally negative. Jewish holidays such as Passover and Hanukkah, which celebrate victories of the Jewish people, were reinterpreted no longer as religious holidays (the nation saved by God) but as holidays of national revival (a victory of the spirit of the nation), setting an example to the present life of the nation (courage and vigorousness). Another process was "linguistic secularization"--the use of idioms and phrases derived from religious sources and detached from their original meaning. Religious terms such as Kedusha (holiness), mitzva (commandment), brit (covenant), and korban (sacrifice) were often employed in the nationalist discourse to describe the relation to the territory.[33]

The active pioneer (Halutz), not the passive religious Jew, was perceived as the bearer of the Jewish national mission and the model for the new belief system. While the Halutz did not believe in God, he believed in the sanctity of the land and the nation. Accordingly, his work was described in religious terms: his engagement with physical agricultural labor, his attachment to the land, and his asceticism were conceptualized as the "religion of labor." While Zionism was critical of religious Jews, not taking an active part in its mission, its dependence on history and religion created spaces that allowed those religious Jews in favor of nationalism to bandwagon. While their numbers and impact were relatively small, they would grow and assume importance, especially after the establishment of state and the 1967 war.

Religious Zionists such as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook attempted not simply to follow but to close the gap opened between religion and the new nationalism. They bestowed a

religious meaning to the national project. Kook saw the return to Zion as an immediate imperative for every Jewish person, as a redemptive act. Moreover, while secular Zionists operate under their own set of beliefs (political-secular), according to Kook, they are actually acting within a cosmic scheme of a divine will and are tools in the hands of divine providence. Zionism, which secularized religious symbols, was thereby sanctified by the religion it sought to negate.

The State's Quest for Purity

Establishing a democratic community in a manifestly undemocratic world requires basic agreement and homogeneity that do not preexist prior to the establishment of the community. This "paradox of sovereignty" is usually resolved by violence--by acts of founding that suppress or reconstruct what seems to stand in the way of democracy and that are concealed after the founding is established.[34] In the case of Israel, the foundation of a nation and a state was established through a civil religion that produced a unifying code of inclusion for Jews and a system of exclusion for non-Jews.

Although the pre-state period has allowed some divergence and coexistence of competing groups (in large part due to a lack of sovereignty and means of coercion), "statism," the new form of civil religion, affirmed the centrality of state interests and the centralization of power at the expense of a public sphere and cultivated the idea of the sanctity of the state.[35] Taking upon itself the role of "normalizing" the Jewish people, and facing a new reality of a mass immigration, the state enacted an active process of assimilation to "correct" all deviancies from its unifying code.

Elevating the state to sanctity was dependent upon the symbols drawn from Jewish tradition, but religion, or any other allegiance, could not stand above the state, as the political elite perceived the de facto state boundaries to be a function of the power and homogeneity of its society. Immigrants whose culture and tradition were not in line with the civil religion were expected to assimilate. This was especially pertinent to non-European Jews (Mizrachiim), whose tradition was perceived as blurring the boundaries between Arab and Jew, and their religiosity as an obstacle to successful integration. Using its exceptional power and showing little respect or tolerance for their traditional values, the state attempted to transform the immigrants. We must, wrote David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister and the architect of Israeli identity, "uproot the geographical, cultural, social and lingual barriers separating the different parts (of society) and bequeath them with one language, one culture, one allegiance, new rules and new laws." [36]

Labor-Zionism, the overarching ideology that shaped civil religion, has constituted a scale of "good citizenship," measured by individual contribution to the state through military service, physical labor, and pioneering. Shafir and Peled delineate three citizenship discourses coexisting in Israel's "incorporation regime" [37] and examine their effect on social stratification. [38] Labor Zionism, located at the overlap between the Jewish ethnonational and the republican citizenship discourses, they maintain, combined the two by constituting an ethnorepublican community, with a "civic virtue" at its core--the active participation in the Zionist colonizing missions. Whereas the

ethnonationalist discourse incorporated all Jews, the republican discourse divided and stratified them. Civic virtue (or "good citizenship") entitled the European veterans, with their national-secular ideology and pioneering ethos, a leading status, while relegating non-European immigrants (and women) to a secondary status.

What is telling, however, is the ambivalent stance toward religious orthodox Jews, whose active contribution to state building (hence, their "good citizenship") was marginal, but their affirmation was perceived as critical to the legitimacy of the state. Orthodox Jews were privileged not only with a cultural autonomy, but also with control of key aspects of Jewish life in the country.[39]

Religion, the State, and the Secular

Although Israeli civil society might be seen as having a larger atheist content within it than the US one, a separation of church and state has never materialized in Israel. Those inherent tensions between its secular and religious foundation are evident in the declaration of independence. Like Herzl's notion of the "faith of our fathers," the declaration circumvented the issue, declaring: "By virtue of our natural and historic rights and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations assembly [we], hereby, declare the establishment of a Jewish state." [40] This duality manifested itself in the state granting Orthodox Jews a monopoly over key aspects of civil life (such as marriage and divorce, burials, and so on), has ordered Jewish dietary rules (Kashrut) in all government and army institutions, and established the Jewish holidays as official state holidays. In addition, since the law of return has granted automatic citizenship to all Jews, the decision over who is a Jew, after a debate, was done according to the more strict demands of the religious parties.[41]

Although the power that is given to the religious parties is often explained as resulting from short-term political considerations, the importance of religious elements is actually due to a much larger structural interest and need of the nation-state: its own legitimacy. First, because the *raison d'être* of the state was to represent all Jews, non-Zionist religious parties were approached for support and cooperation. Coalitions with religious parties had, therefore, a significant symbolic value: they entitled the state to speak for the "Jewish people." Therefore, threats of religious leaders that secular marriage would split the Jewish people (and break up the coalition) were taken seriously by secular leaders afraid to lose this source of legitimacy. Second, the political elite was concerned over what would be the unifying tradition for the new state, which as shown before was to be largely dependent upon religious sources. Third, the religious groups were respected as the guardians of Jewish tradition, especially outside of Israel, and as such were important for the state to maintain its relationship with the Diaspora. Fourth, Orthodox Judaism was instrumental in legitimating the state boundaries. Ben-Gurion and others expressed admiration for the coherence and preservation of Orthodox Judaism,[42] and as one politician from the labor-Zionist camp explained: "What moral and historical value does our claim of our undisputed right over this land, which most of it is now, thank God, in our own hands, if this claim does not rely upon the bible?"[48]

The upshot of the duality described above is that most secularists would accept Jewishness (ethnicity) as defining rights and boundaries, but would object to Judaism (religion) constraining their personal freedoms. This accounts for the outright rejection of non-Zionist ideas questioning the identity of the state, as well as to the intolerance toward religious non-Zionist (Haredi; Haredim in the plural) groups. The Haredim are often demonized in the secular discourse since many of them do not serve in the army and, in that, do not conform to the civic virtue; they thus are easily blamed for the tensions between religious and secular. Proposals to draft Haredim and cancel their exemption are often invoked by politicians and enjoy popular support. Similarly, the demands of Haredim that roads in their neighborhoods be closed for the observance of Shabat, or religious protests against archeological grave digging, evoke intolerant responses from secularists, who argue that their liberal rights are violated by any compromise. This onslaught on the Haredim mostly reflects the inability of secular leaders to touch the real issues of separating religion from state, which entails a wider distribution of rights and freedoms, a breakdown of hierarchies and privileges, and a renegotiation of their own identities.

The Other from Without

According to the Guttman Report, almost all Jewish Israelis (98 percent) have a Mezuzah on their house door. The mezuzah, which symbolizes Moses's marking the houses of Jews in Egypt in order to spare them from the wrath of God, demarcating Jews and non-Jews, may itself be a metaphor to the significance of Judaism for modern Israelis. Secular Israelis would often articulate their demands not as universal civic rights and freedoms but as rights emanating from "good citizenship." This rendering of rights not only allows secular Zionist prominence over Jewish orthodoxy, but more significantly maintains the exclusion of non-Jews from the sphere of rights. Thus, Benjamin Shalit, an atheist Jew married to a non-Jewish woman, appealed to the supreme court to order the state to register his children as Jewish under the rubric of Leom (nationality) and as persons without religion. What is telling is the argument used. Shalit (who being a naval officer appeared before the court in his military uniform) reminded the court that state law had enabled a Palestinian member of Al-Fatah (the predecessor of the PLO) to register as a Jew, while he "a native of [the] country, and my wife who regards herself [a] Jewess in all respects, may not register our children as Jews?"[44] Shalit won his case.

The liberal discourse through which Palestinian citizens of Israel are incorporated entitles them to individual rights (which have gradually increased), but exclusion from the ethnic and the republican discourses maintains their secondary status. This has led to what Yiftachel describes as "ethnocracy," a regime in which, despite several democratic features, ethnicity rather than territorial citizenship is the main organizing logic for allocation of state resources and that is dominated by a "charter group" that enjoys a privileged position.[45]

Shortly after independence, the Jewish status of the state was constituted as the Law of Return (1950), and the Citizenship Law (1952) granted every Jew an immediate

citizenship upon arrival in Israel. The Arabs who remained within the territory (those who had not fled or were not driven out), on the other hand, were put under a military administration that was abolished only in 1966; those who fled or were deported were forbidden from returning. Both decisions were justified by the security concerns of the state. Hence, what was established at that stage was a discourse and a practice of security closely intertwined with ethnicity: on the one hand, a Jewish state and its citizens; on the other, those who were not Jewish and who were regarded a "security concern" to the state. What was purposefully avoided was acknowledging that "ethnocracy" and security intertwine, as the very definition of a Jewish state produces a set of ideas about security, subjects of "security threats," and a discourse legitimating the violence inflicted upon them.

The establishment of the state was accompanied by territorial restructuring of the land through an all-encompassing and expansionist Judaization (or de-Arabization) program that was adopted by the new state. Israel rushed to settle the towns and villages whose Palestinian inhabitants (close to 800,000) had fled or were expelled during the war.[46] The idea of the Jewish people's exclusive rights over territory was put into practice. Confiscated Arab land became "Jewish land," giving organizations based in the Diaspora statutory power over land that is withheld from local Palestinians.[47] As in Tocqueville's America, religion has confined the discourse and prevents certain issues that might disturb harmony from arising. Thus, despite headway having been made by Palestinians, in 1995 an Arab-Israeli appealed to the supreme court against his not being allowed to lease state land in the Israeli village of Katzir on the grounds of his not being a Jew. After a long deliberation, the supreme court has called for a temporary deferral of the proceedings and urged the sides to find a personal solution for the appellant.[48] The Israeli supreme court, often championed for its protection of secular-liberal values, shied away from transcending the limits of the territoriality/security discourse and acknowledging its injustices.

Although the citizenship rights of Israeli-Palestinians had expanded since 1948, especially after the military administration was removed, the Arabs' secondary status was reaffirmed again by law in 1985. An amendment to the law governing elections to the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) forbade participation in elections by parties that either negate the democratic character of the state or negate the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people. Ironically, an attempt to prevent a racist anti-Arab party from being elected, by making racism illegal, was "counterbalanced" by an elimination of an Arab party and by the exclusion of the discussion of the Jewish character of the state from the political discourse.

The overarching definition of a Jewish state practically prevents non-Jewish citizens from fully participating in politics and is accepted by a majority of Jewish-Israelis as just (historical rights) or necessary (security concerns). By definition, the possibility that an Arab may become a "good citizen" is extremely limited. All governments, left and right, have attempted to include Jewish non-Zionists in their coalition, but have refrained from incorporating Arab parties. Only 38.8 percent of leftist Jewish voters agree

unconditionally to the inclusion of Arab parties.[49] Secular Zionists attempt to maintain the Jewish character of the state that privileges Jews over non-Jews, but at the same time they want this character to be "cleaned" from all religious metaphysics limiting liberal freedoms. This is not only a weak moral claim, since its call for freedom is limited to Jews, but it is also intellectually weak. It rejects the imposition of the "metaphysics of religion" as a binding moral code, while embracing an abstract idea of common ancestry as valid for determining civil rights.

Facing the Challenge

The civil religion of Labor-Zionism was unable to maintain its dominance for long. Its attempt to impose a unifying system of belief and denouncement of the tradition of the new immigrants, together with the social and economic disparities between European and non-European Jews, caused much resentment toward the old elite. Another important undercurrent was the rise of Jewish religious nationalism after the Six Day War of 1967; this military victory might be the marker of the decline of secular Zionism.

The victory of the war and the new territories conquered evoked mystical feelings among secular Israelis. There arose a new discourse of historical rights, with new and strong affinities with religion. Israeli control of the holy sites, like the Wailing Wall, Rachel's tomb, and the graves of the patriarchs, now seemed, despite the Arab population, "natural" to most Israelis. It seemed to them to be their inheritance. The capture of the old city of Jerusalem, divided during the war of 1948, and its "unification" were especially significant. One soldier, a secular kibbutz member, explained: "At this point I felt it. I became one with the House of David, the Kingdom of Solomon, and the Temple. This is my inheritance. I feel as if a curtain has been lifted, and the very letters of the very eternal book [have] sprung to life, familiar and immediate. I am no longer a stranger; suddenly I am a son of my people, with stronger and deeper roots." [50]

The infatuation of secular Israelis with the holy sites and the evocation of historical rights enabled a new movement of young religious Israelis to attempt, and to a large extent succeed, to appropriate the national discourse. What is telling is the weakness that secular Zionism was exposed to in confronting the challenge of a new movement that saw itself as a fresh and vital version of Zionism and that has "religionized" the secular and the national sources of legitimacy. A circle was completed. First, in its rebellion against religion, Zionism borrowed its symbols and secularized them. Then a counterrevolution has not only reinstilled religion into those symbols but has transformed the symbols of secular Zionism (hiking across the land, settlement, and even clothing style) and its value system (collectivism, sanctity of the land, self-reliance, honor, and so on) and has endowed them with religious significance. In so doing, this new movement declared itself the true bearer of Zionism and took pride in its coherent value system, beliefs, and legitimation of the nationalist drive.

For the new movement, Gush Emunim, which took upon itself to settle the occupied territories in order to establish Israeli control, questions of rights over land were self-evident. According to the teaching of Rabbi Kook, the Jewish people and the land of

Israel in its entirety are one,[51] and, therefore, the Six Day War was no chance turn of events but another stage in the long messianic process that began with the birth of modern Zionism. This movement presented a powerful intellectual and moral challenge to Zionist socialism, claiming to be not only more Jewish (and real Jewish) but also more true to the essence of Zionism itself.

The success of the movement in its ability to settle the occupied territories is explained by Sprinzak as their being the tip of a "serious social and cultural iceberg"--the religious public at large.[52] This explanation would be incomplete without, to continue the metaphor, understanding that the iceberg is not foreign to the water in which it floats. In other words, the fact that Gush Emunim's rhetoric resonates much of the ethos that national secularists identify with--pioneering, commitment, and purity--has awarded them in the early stages wide support and sympathy. Their colonization project has recreated the mythical frontier of the pre-state and the early state. The sanctification of nation and territoriality was used again: *aliya la-karka* (ascent to the land); *geualat ha-karka* (redemption of the land); and *Hitnachalut* (the biblical term for Jewish settlement). Only this time, the religious terms were in fact religious.

Unlike the old religious parties that concentrated upon preserving the Jewish character of the state and sectorial demands, Gush Emunim was about a national revival that it perceived secular Zionism could no longer maintain. Our aim, they said, "is to bring about a large movement of reawakening among the Jewish people for the fulfillment of the Zionist vision in its full scope, with the recognition that the source of the vision is Jewish tradition and roots, and that its ultimate objective is the full redemption of the Jewish people and the entire world." [53] Whereas the early challenges of traditional Judaism could be deflected by Zionism's vitality and civil religion, the new religious nationalism posed a stronger challenge. Not only was secular Zionism criticized for being a weak, and untrue to itself, form of Judaism, but it was said to have lost its national drive and its commitment to the land. Challenging Labor-Zionism, Gush Emunim has amplified (and, some claim caricatured) the Zionist discourses of Jewish redemption, nationality, and claims to a territory, and has appropriated the republican notion of "good citizenship."

Secularism, as Connolly argues, is opening at the seams.[54] Secularism in Israel, while dominating the process of nation building and state building, could effectively narrate itself as a complete departure from Jewish religion and refuse to recognize its debt, dependence, and affinities with religion, as well as avoid engaging with its own limitations, hierarchies, and exclusions. Facing new challenges and demands, however, secularism as we know it seems to be losing its moral and intellectual coherence, as well as its political effectiveness. This is not to argue that secular struggles for women rights, gay rights, religious pluralism, civil marriages, and other worthy causes are unimportant. On the contrary, I would argue that for those struggles to be effective, secularism must step "outside the warm, protected spaces of the normal individual and the territorial state." [55]

A distinction, though, must be made between the US context in which Connolly's work operates and the Israeli context in which church and state are unseparated, and religion and nationalism are intertwined. Connolly argues for the inclusion of religion in the political and civil spheres and advocates engagement rather than the separation of state and church, investing in domains that exceed the scope of secular self-representation and "install generosity and forbearance into ethical sensibilities in a world of multidimensional pluralism,"[56] thus substituting an "ethos of pluralization" for an entrenched pluralism.

In Israel, unlike in the United States, the engagement of religion and state is institutionalized and is translated into practices of exclusion and discrimination, contrary to both pluralism and pluralization. Moreover, the coming together of religion and territoriality has produced a dangerous nationalist ethos that not only deplores any concepts of generosity and pluralism, but restricts any real possibility of engagement or generosity beyond its boundaries. In Israel, then, the secular ethos and the separation of church and state are preconditions for the possibilities of engagement--because only such separation could allow an equal voice for non-Jews and a plurality of Jewish practices. Pluralism, despite its limits, might therefore be a good starting point. Such pluralism would require, first, a separation of church and state, but, second, would have to advance its generosity beyond the boundaries and limitations of the nation-state and open itself to new possibilities.

The fact that secularists, speaking in the name of freedom, are unwilling to acknowledge or seriously engage different ideas of freedom--unwilling to examine their own set of biases and hierarchies and to acknowledge that their own ideas of freedom are limited by an ethnonationalist discourse--renders their arguments weak, both morally and intellectually. The secular ethos needs to be reconfigured in order to become more open, engaging, and effective. Since fundamentalisms of religion and state replicate each other, they need to be tackled together. A postsecular ethic would not settle for separating church and state, but attempt to stretch its concepts of rights and freedom, its discourses of incorporation, and models of citizenship beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. It may be early yet for the variety of faiths to "double over in laughter," in a common recognition of their mutual contestability,[57] but institutional change combined with secular generosity might indeed offer new forms of identity and new channels of participation.

Notes

I would like to thank William Connolly, Siba Grovogui, Paul Saurette, and Oren Yiftachel for their helpful critical comments.

1. The Sharon epigraph is from Maariv, March 10, 1986; quoted in Charles Liebman, "Religion and Democracy in Israel," in Deshen, Liebman, and Shokeid, eds., *Israeli Judaism* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1995).
2. Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinson, and Elihu Katz, "Beliefs, Observances, and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews--the Guttman Institute Report," in Liebman and

- Katz, eds., *The Jewishness of Israelis: Responses to the Guttman Report* (New York: SUNY Press, 1997).
3. William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Editorial, *First Things* (January 1997).
 8. Robert Sherill, "Preachers to Power" *Nation*, July 13, 1998.
 9. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
 10. William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 120 (my emphasis).
 11. Ibid.
 12. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, George Lawrence, trans. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), p. 58.
 13. Michael Shapiro, "Bowling Blind: Post Liberal Civil Society and the Worlds of Neo-Tocquevillean Social Theory," *Theory and Event* (1997).
 14. Connolly, note 10, p. 171.
 15. Ibid., pp. 168-169.
 16. Ibid., p. 170.
 17. Mark Reinhardt, *The Art of Being Free: Taking Liberties with Tocqueville, Marx, and Arendt* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 74.
 18. Ibid., p. 26.
 19. Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (New York: American Zionist Emergency Council, 1946/1988).
 20. Charles Liebman and Bernard Susser, "Judaism and Jewishness," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 555 (January 1998): 15-23.
 21. Ibid.
 22. Ibid.
 23. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972).
 24. Baruch Kimmerling, "Religion, Nationalism, and Democracy in Israel," *Zmanim* 50-51 (in Hebrew).
 25. Herzl, note 19, p. 96.
 26. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism* (New York: Basic, 1981), pp. 98-100.
 27. As I argue throughout this article, it is very difficult to separate Jewish tradition from religion. This is all the more true in the pre-state period.
 28. Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

29. Ibid., p. 16.
30. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
31. Ibid., p. 57.
32. Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehia, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 9.
33. Ibid., p. 38.
34. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau contemplates the problem of the founding of a general will as a problem of substituting cause and effect; hence, "social spirit, which should be the result of the institution, would have to preside over the founding of the institution itself; and men would have to be prior with the laws what they ought to become by means of laws." For a discussion of the paradox of politics, see: Connolly, note 10, pp. 137-140; and Reinhardt, note 17, p. 37.
35. Liebman and Don-Yehia, note 32, p. 84.
36. *Israel State Yearbook*, 1952.
37. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, "Citizenship and Stratification in an Ethnic Democracy," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 3 (1998).
38. The liberal version views citizenship as rights bestowed upon the individual to protect his private sphere from encroachment by others. The republican (or communitarian) version is a critique of the liberal version, arguing that citizenship must include a participation in the search for a common good and the establishment of a moral community. The ethnonationalist version limits citizenship to those believed to belong to a homogeneous descent--their membership in the group being ascribed from birth.
39. Shafir and Peled, note 37.
40. Israel's declaration of independence (emphasis mine).
41. This yet unresolved debate over "who is a Jew" points to the fact that tensions also exist in the relations between the state and religion. This debate was between Zionists (who were interested in a large number of Jews and were willing to accept that a Jew could be "any person declaring in good faith that he is a Jew") and the religious (who were concerned over the Jewish character of the state and demanded, and won, that a Jew was only a person born to a Jewish mother). Zionist demography prevailed in 1970 when it was decided that one Jewish grandparent would suffice to entitle a person and spouse to enjoy the privileges granted by the law of return. See S. N. Abramov, *Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State* (Rutherford, NJ.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976); and Shafir and Peled, note 37.
42. Yonathan Shapiro, *Politicians as an Hegemonic Class: The Case of Israel* (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1997), pp. 57-63.
43. Ibid., p. 60.
44. Abramov, note 41, p. 300. The Palestinian, whose mother was Jewish, was tried and sentenced by an Israeli court.

45. Oren Yiftachel, "Israeli Society and Jewish-Palestinian Reconciliation: 'Ethnocracy' and its Territorial Contradictions," *Middle East Journal* 51, no. 4 (1997): 505-525.
46. Oren Yiftachel, "Ethnocracy or Democracy? Israeli Territorial Politics," *Middle East Report* 27 (1998): 8-14.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Sammy Smooha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2 (1997).
50. Abramov, note 41.
51. Ehud Sprinzak, "The Iceberg Model of Extremism," in D. Newman, ed., *The Impact of Gush Emunim* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985).
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.; quote at p. 30.
54. Connolly, note 3.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.

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