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Review Article

No Left, No Right: The Jewish-Israeli Imaginary Divide

Gadi Hitman[1*]

[1]Middle East and Political Science Dept., Chair Ariel University

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***Corresponding author:** Gadi Hitman
Middle East and Political Science Dept., Chair Ariel University

Abstract

This study offers a new model (a five by four matrix) to analyze an imaginary left-right division Israel. By analyzing the historical evolution of the Zionist ideology to four core issues (territory, religion, economy, and the attitude towards non-Jews), the main findings are that there is no real difference between them in any of the issues. In practice, they also behaved similarly, almost identically, in each of these issues. The main conclusion of the article is that in Israel there exists an imaginary rift between the right and the left that serves political parties and produces a social rift.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the terms "left" and "right" in the social and political context began in France in the second half of the 18th century. In those years, Louis XVI ruled France, and during his reign, the kingdom fell into a severe economic crisis. At that time, France was a class society ruled by the king. He had an heir apparent (and other princes who did not have the status of heir), an aristocracy that enjoyed the benefits of power, a bourgeois class that mainly comprised merchants, and, at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, the workers, or as they are sometimes known, the proletariat.

This social order was preserved for hundreds of years, but at the beginning of the 18th century, there were some noblemen, such as Count Henri de Agussino, who secretly discussed a question that until then few, if any, had dared to ask: if all men were born equal in the image of God, why was society class-based? Ever since this question first came up for discussion in 1715, it has been seen regularly in the intellectual airspace. This question was not only about trying to find out what the correct social order was for the residents living in France at the time; it also touched on political aspects, the most important of which was who the sovereign is, that is, who makes the decisions on social, economic, security, health, and welfare issues, and so on (Kohn, 1944:205).

The financial crisis in France in the 1780s forced the king to adopt a policy of raising taxes, and, in the spirit of the time, he was forced to get the consent of all classes in French society for this move. The move to convene an assembly of representatives of all classes was a significant crack in the ability of the king, until then an all-powerful sovereign, to make decisions unilaterally. From then on, not only did representatives flow into the hall but so did social ideas circulating among intellectuals, which, until that moment, had remained in private rooms. Thereafter, they became part of a discourse in which all sections of society in France participated. The order of seating at that gathering (May 1789) was as follows. The representatives of the aristocracy, the king's loyalists, who enjoyed his proximity, sat on his right. They sought to preserve the existing social order as much as possible, as it served their social and economic interests. Therefore, the preservation of the status quo and their position on the right side of the hall created the equation that right means conservative. On the left side of the hall sat the representatives of the lower classes, those who asked for far-reaching reforms that would benefit them. Due to the difficult economic situation in France, there was a chance that these would harm the upper classes. The equation is simple: a paucity of resources and a more equitable distribution than has been customary will almost certainly hurt those who have previously received more. About three months later, when the representatives of the aristocracy and the representatives of the patriots (the name the change-seekers gave themselves) met in August 1789 to draft a constitution following the revolution that broke out on July 14, the seating order was the same: aristocracy on the right, revolutionaries on the left (Arian and Shamir, 1983: 139).

In early 1977, Yehuda Gottholf wrote, "concepts become confused until a person can no longer

distinguish between his right and his left" (Gottholf, 1977:126). This confusion has become a stumbling block to communication between people and prevents understanding issues thoroughly and profoundly. If this is indeed the situation, then discussing any topic has no value. In a debate, both parties (sometimes more than two parties) use the same language, but the terms they bring to the discourse, including "right" and "left," often have different meanings and interpretations for each side. In such a reality, not only is it not possible to reach agreements on the outlines of human society (laws, rules, values, regulations, norms), but it is also not possible to promote such a society according to a clear ideology or worldview.

Historically, the term "right" was preserved as having meaning for social (and political) forces seeking to preserve the existing social structure and prevent changes. On the other hand, "left" was a moniker given to anyone who sought to withhold privileges from the upper classes in society, starting with the feudal lords in the Middle Ages, through the aristocracy at the beginning of the modern era, to the upper class and the capitalists in modern times. Even so, the two terms began to lose their original meaning at the beginning of the 20th century, especially after the First World War. The noble and respectable right became associated with fascism and Nazism, while the left was pejoratively referred to as Stalinism. This was not just because of the Soviet leader's surname but because it symbolized and expressed unlimited and uncontrolled power and the use of violence for political goals. After the First World War, in Russia, the peasants asked for a piece of land, bread, and peace, and the Germans, who signed, in practice, a surrender agreement at Versailles, asked for the same thing. In Russia, the left trampled the peasants. In Germany, the right did.

If the ordinary people in two different states with completely different ideologies asked the regime for basic needs to exist, what significance, if any, does the regime's character have in the division of right and left? The historical result, seen almost 100 years later, was that Russia became a totalitarian state, as did Germany. In Russia, the left had the power. In Germany, the right ruled. And, no less importantly, the opposition in both countries was utterly wiped out, the ones who dared to think differently and propose reforms that would improve the existing situation. When there is no valuable social and political discourse between two camps – right and left, as in their original meaning – then these terms are filled with a different meaning that sterilizes the discourse if only because each side calls the other derogatory names or works to exterminate it.

Since the 18th century, new meanings have been added to the terms "right" and "left" insofar as they are used to distinguish between two camps with a clear identity, idea, and vision. In other words, if the original idea distinguished between those who wanted to perpetuate an existing social structure (in a monarchical regime) and those who wanted far-reaching reforms (which, in the 18th century, were considered revolutionary, such as the right to choose the state's political leader, women's suffrage, and the just distribution of resources and minority rights), then, as the years passed, other issues separated "right" and "left," such as being for or against abortion, for or against divorce, and for or against same-sex marriage.

Socialism and Liberalism: Between Right and Left

Socialism and liberalism are two terms that are regularly mentioned when talking about the distinction between right and left. Using them without understanding their original meaning and the parties' readiness to listen to a mutual understanding may lead to a deadlock.

If we reduce the discussion to the economic issue, researchers worldwide (and in the Israeli case) would agree with the following diagnosis. On the one hand, socialism is interested in equality between all citizens. This equality is a reform (change) in relation to the situation that was common until the French Revolution, and economic equality is therefore seen as a position of the left. On the other hand, liberalism allows for free competition in the market, minimal intervention from the state mechanisms in the market, and the possibility for every citizen to earn as much as they can. Such a position has been labeled as the "economic right."

However, if we expand the discussion to other issues, such as the right to vote, freedom of speech, or minority rights, the boundaries between socialism and liberalism blur. The left, being an advocate of equality, supports the right to equal choice for all people and, of course, the freedom of speech that allows opinions to be voiced, even if they are contrary to those of the sovereign. On the other hand, the conservative right is not interested in granting everyone the right to vote, and certainly not in a democratic regime, where every vote matters (Rooksby, 2012: 497).

The reason for this confusion stems, among other things, from the view that increasing equality usually requires expanding the state's involvement while increasing freedom requires reducing the state's involvement. We claim that this diagnosis can be easily refuted. If the state wants to extend political rights to minorities and has the power to decide to do so, this means that its involvement has increased in a process that is essentially liberal. Hence, the term "liberalism," as originally used in the West, does not reflect the socio-political reality in different countries around the world. Liberalism, as a constructivist philosophical idea, seeks to shape society according to new values and favors intellectual freedom of thought, freedom of speech and association, freedom of occupation, and personal

freedom in everything related to faith and religion, marital relations, and social relations between the sexes. The inherent paradox is that the idea is identified with the right, and this association is at most partially true. The idea of these freedoms, certainly in allowing them to be decisive, is contrary to the worldview of the conservative right, which seeks to perpetuate the socio-political status quo (Waldron, 1987:130).

Liberalism allows intellectual freedom, freedom of speech, association, and civil liberties in general in public life. Regarding one's personal life, liberals support freedom of belief and religion, freedom in lifestyle, and freedom in everything related to sexuality, relationship matters, pornography, and drug use (Rooksby, 501-2). But these freedoms are not part of the conservative right's ideology. Ed Rooksby, who dismantles the term "liberalism" into its basic components, proposed seeing such a liberal approach as sanctifying individual freedom, but beyond this sanctity, it does not really offer the sub-system of enlightened values that the term itself seems to express. In his eyes, a liberal is nothing but an egoist who interacts with others only to satisfy his/her private interests and preferences. From this analysis, it appears that socialism embodies the idea of self-realization while demonstrating solidarity and reciprocity, while liberalism protects individual property, thus perpetuating class differences.

If liberalism is not fully resolved, then the same is true of equality in the case of socialism. The founding fathers of the Soviet Union – Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Leon Trotsky – drew a clear line between Marxism and socialism on the one hand and liberalism on the other. Trotsky spared no derogatory words for the liberal ideology, which he called "polluted," while Lenin distinguished between the ideologies of the working class and the bourgeoisie, which also had aspects of democracy. In other words, Lenin, who held the views of the economic left, was against democracy, which is a liberal value, if only because of the political right of the subjects/citizens to determine who will lead them. If so, is Lenin a leftist because of his economic stance or a rightist based on his political position? Rooksby claims that of the three (Trotsky, Lenin, and Stalin), Lenin's doctrine is the one that most influenced socialist thought.

Let us move this discussion to Israeli society, where the following question immediately arises. If a citizen supports a free economy (right) yet favors a form of democracy in which there is equality between citizens belonging to subgroups according to criteria of gender, religion, ethnicity, nationalism, and class (left), how shall we define him/her? Is he/she right-wing or left-wing? This dilemma becomes even more complicated when examining the issue of Israeli society in the context of the nature of the state (Jewish and religious, Jewish and democratic) and in the context of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Right and Left in Jewish-Israeli Discourse

Let us turn to the content of the terms "left" and "right" in the Jewish discourse (up to 1948) and in the Jewish-Israeli discourse from 1948 onward. Concretely, I wish to examine how the public and the leadership in the Diaspora, in the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, and, after 1948, in the State of Israel perceived these terms in the social, economic, and, later, security and political contexts.

It seems to us that the correct departure points for discussing the question of right and left in the Jewish and Israeli context is the appearance of the Zionist idea. The term expresses the desire to return to Zion, the ancestral land of the Jews. The reason for starting the discussion at this point is not arbitrary. It corresponds with the evolutionary development of the terms "right" and "left" with the historical closeness of time to the appearance of these terms in the late 18th century. In this case, the question refers to two intertwined elements: the human being and land. The argument that will accompany the analysis I offer is that the various currents that developed within Zionism were required to address the question of human rights and the right to land before discussing the question of an economic or social structure that would exist in the land and country where the Jews would rule. This need developed due to the constant deprivation suffered by Jews throughout Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. As such, the dispute between right and left begins with questions whose essence is nationalism and sovereignty, not just class equality and human rights in a broad sense.

My analysis based on a model consisting of four variables: land, religion, economy and attitude towards non-Jews (Arabs as a majority before 1948, Israeli/Palestinian Arabs as a minority after 1948). These four themes accompany the evolution process of the Zionist movement in its various currents. From a historical point of view, within Zionism, different currents were created that offered different solutions to the problems and difficulties of the Jews in Europe in the 19th century (and even before). I suggest a division of Zionism into five internal streams and will analyze each of them to discuss questions (and maybe also answers) regarding the right and the left. Table1 presents the model and its independent variables.

Table 1: Currents of Zionism and the independent variables

Current / Topic	Spiritual Zionism	Political Zionism	Social Zionism	Religious Zionism	Revisionist Zionism
Land					
Economy					
Religion					
Policy toward non-Jews					

The Spiritual (Cultural) Current

Asher Ginzberg (1856-1927), also known as Ahad Ha'am, is identified with the idea that a Jewish spiritual home should be established in the Land of Israel. Its main goal is to strengthen the connection between the Land of Israel and Judaism and Jews inclined to education. Avraham Levinson, who has analyzed the writings of Ahad Ha'am, says in this regard:

Nationalism according to Ahad Ha'am is the supreme being that encompasses Judaism and humanity. Religion is only one of the manifestations of nationalism and not its full formation. Religion does not create the people, but the people create their religion. The Jew who wants the revival of his people and does not acknowledge God is, in a certain sense, more Jewish than the believer because "the national pride of a believing Jew is a pride of the past … and that of the free nationalist in his views is the pride of a free man who knows the power within his soul, looks with contentment on his former great enterprise, and believes in himself as a nation for the future" (Levinson, 1956).

This is a foundational text not just because it connects the past and the future and differentiates them but because it discusses the question of Jewish nationalism, which must be brought to the Land of Israel with an emphasis on Jews inclined to education. Hence the questions, will Jews who are not inclined to education not come to the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*)? Assuming that this is indeed Ahad Ha'am's approach, should it be placed on the right (religious-national) or the left (modern education)? Einat Ramon has pointed out the complexity that exists in Ahad Ha'am thought, which constantly oscillates between national religious conservatism and releasing the burden of mitzvahs (Ramon, 2014).

If this is so, then it can be said that he was a Zionist Jew, well-versed in matters of religion and nationality, who created his own order of priorities regarding the immigration of Jews to the Land of Israel. During the period in which he was active (he visited the Land of Israel in 1891 as a reporter for the *Shiloh* newspaper), it was widely believed that although most of the land was unpopulated, it would not be possible to house all the Jews. If a person believes that Jews cannot be settled in a desert land, is such a position expressive of the left or right? My answer is that such a position does not express one side or the other. It reflects a realistic-pragmatic assessment of the situation that asks for a solution to the situation of the Jews in Europe, provided that this solution is feasible.

The discussion on Ahad Ha'am thought has not yet offered a real answer to the question, was Ahad Ha'am right-wing or left-wing? In order to try and answer it, we must consider another central component in his writing: national morality. Ahad Ha'am does not see national morality and religion as synonymous. His explanation was that religion does not change but national morality does. It expands and takes on content and meaning according to the spirit of the time and is also related to universal morality, the one that distinguishes, for example, between good and evil. Thus, he writes, for example, that actions that were moral in the past are no longer so in modern times. Ahad Ha'am national morality is intertwined with the national redemption of the people of Israel; as Levinson notes, it is messianism. That is, next to the messianic perception, he advocates for national morality connected to universal morality. During his visit to the Land of Israel in 1891, in an article entitled "Truth from the Land of Israel," Ahad Ha'am wrote about the immoral behavior of Jews toward the local non-Jews: "Slaves were in the land of their exile, and suddenly they find themselves with unlimited freedom, wild freedom, as always happens to a slave when he rules, and they walk among the Arabs with enmity and cruelty and reach their limit without justice." (Goldstein, 2011). At the same time, Ahad Ha'am held Jewish ethnocentric positions (he refused to allow his family to marry a Christian) and supported redemption in the style of the coming of the Messiah. He wrote: "Israel's salvation will come not from diplomats but from prophets." Is a person who holds such positions a rightist or a leftist?

The Political Current (Political Zionism)

The political current, or political Zionism, is commonly thought to have been founded by Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl. This stream sought to use diplomatic ways to establish a national home for the Jewish people. This current began with Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Aryeh Leon Bivas (1782-1852), who was one of the first to call for the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. Bivas also combined conservative and progressive thought. Yael Weiler Israel wrote that Bivas saw the verses of the Bible as a tool for understanding the national and political reality. His interpretation of these verses led him to declare that the Jews must change their curriculum and add a science curriculum to the sacred studies. He also spoke about the necessity for a

sufficiently strong and sophisticated Jewish military force that would be able to eradicate the Ottoman authorities ruling the country (Weiler, 2015). This position does not allow Bivas to be placed on an axis between right and left in relation to the four components proposed above. Like those who came after him, he called for initiatives, the establishment of a protective force, and the integration of traditional and modern studies.

While the original idea was Bivas', it was realized by Herzl. He initiated the Zionist Congress and established a series of Jewish institutions through which he sought to promote the idea of a national home for Jews. Herzl preferred that this national home be in the Land of Israel. From 1896 to 1898, he tried to get a concession from the Ottoman Empire for Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, and he met the Ottoman Sultan for this purpose. In 1898, Herzl met the Emperor of Germany in Jerusalem and proposed to him that the Jews accept the correction of the financial situation of the Ottoman Empire in exchange for the sultan's relinquishment of his rule in the Land of Israel and his consent to the establishment of an independent Jewish state. Under these circumstances, he was willing to compromise on a colony in Africa (6th Zionist Congress, 1903) as a temporary default. During that gathering, Herzl announced that the British proposal/agreement to allocate territory to the Jews in East Africa did not change the ultimate goal of settlement in the Land of Israel. A commotion broke out in the hall, especially among the delegates from Russia, who saw this as treason in the Land of Israel. Herzl declared before them that he would not stop his efforts to achieve the Land of Israel for a single moment, and it was and will always be the goal of Zionism (Knesset website, Herzl). Yehuda Reinhart distinguished between two approaches in Herzl's philosophy, specifically about Judaism as a religion and socialism as an idea of order for society and the economy. Herzl believed that the realization of Zionism, i.e., immigration to the Land of Israel, would allow socialists to realize their ideas of an egalitarian society. At the same time, he believed that although religion has no place in the affairs of the state, it is proper to respect the traditions of Israel, and perhaps there would be a place to help the rabbis when necessary (Reinhart, 1993).

These historical developments about Herzl's basic concept regarding the Land of Israel and the place of religion in it, as well as his political activity for the realization of the Zionist idea, almost automatically raise the question, was Herzl right-wing or left-wing? In the circumstances of the spirit of the times in which he worked to fulfill his vision, he did not compromise on his vision to bring about Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. Many (probably most) Jews worldwide shared the same vision. Is the willingness to compromise with Great Britain and accept from it an estate (that is not the land of the ancestors) in East Africa a compromise of a right-wing person, a left-wing person, or a statesman who is aware of his inferiority vis-à-vis the powers and is ready to accept any piece of land at a given moment, provided that he can give the Jews a type of sovereignty that will free them from the tyranny of the regimes in Europe?

Let us go one step further and analyze Herzl's position regarding the Arabs. In 1898, Herzl wrote:

> In the settlement areas that will be assigned to us, we will gradually hand over private property. We will try to move the poor population across the border without them noticing by creating jobs in the transit countries but preventing them from getting any work in our own country. Wealthy residents will move to us. The purchase operations, like taking them beyond the border of the poor, must be done gently and with a soft hand. The owners of the real estate properties must believe that they are piling us up, that they are selling us at a high price. But we don't sell anything back (Herzl, 1997: 119-120).

Here, too, there is a difficulty in determining whether Herzl had a distinctly left-wing or right-wing attitude. Derek Penslar, cited scholars with a revisionist view who claim that Herzl conceived the idea of the transfer by seeking to settle the poor population (mainly peasants) beyond the borders of the Jewish state. It is possible that the background to this position of Herzl's is rooted in his childhood: he grew up in a wealthy home with wealthy parents and, as an adult, moved around the circles of high society. Therefore, it is natural that he wanted to keep wealthy Arabs in the territory of the future Jewish state. In the Israeli discourse, support for the transfer represented the positions of right-wing parties in the second half of the 20th century. On the other hand, Herzl supported wealthy Arabs remaining in the territories of the Jewish state and their integration into its institutions, just as Ze'ev Jabotinsky proposed later (see below). If this is so, why is Jabotinsky seen as distinctly right-wing and Herzl not?

The Socialist Current

In the second half of the 19th century, there was a need to respond to social and economic changes occurring in Europe at that time, including increasing secularism, capitalism, modernization, and anti-Semitism. The basic idea was to create an egalitarian society that would allow the Jews, who were a minority religious group in Europe, to find their place and receive rights as Jews or equal citizens before the law. Zionists such as Nachman Syrkin, Dov Ber Borochov, and Moshe Hess, and later Haim Arlozorov and Berl Katznelson, thought more in terms of a workers' society and less in terms of a state. In this sense, the socialist current is perhaps the best example that illustrates the existing confusion between left and right as perceived in the

Israeli discourse. The explanation is simple: nationalism contradicts the principles of socialism because it divides humanity on an ethnic (and sometimes also religious) basis, but socialism divides human society according to class without ethnic affiliation. As Borochov wrote:

The Jews in the Diaspora were always considered foreigners, with social, mental, and especially physical characteristics (accent, face, appearance, movements, way of walking). They lacked property and territory, and the attitude towards them was based on the fact that they were Jews. The hatred of Israel was seen as enmity towards the Jew just like that, without any guilt or justification, which arose from the material, and general living conditions of society. Even the intellectual progress of those layers of society imbued with hatred of Israel did not weaken the hatred, but on the contrary increased it. As progress improved the condition of the population, it gave the residents the right to vote, courts of judges and juries, and as the differences between the upper and lower layers of society weakened, so the hatred of Israel from above merged with the hatred of Israel from below and from the sides, highlighting the Jews as a group of foreigners (Borochov, 1955: 36-37).

Here is another paradox. If Borochov supported the establishment of a just and egalitarian society only in the Land of Israel, that is, he was a Zionist (return to the land of the ancestors) and a socialist (a just society), is he a man of the right or the left?

Borochov is not alone in this sense. Moshe Hess wrote as early as 1862 about returning to the land of the ancestors, creating a working life, and establishing a society in which the means of production and the treasures of nature would belong to the whole and in which there would be equality in the spirit of the prophets of Israel. In 1897, the "Bond" movement arose in Russia, whose founders believed that the immigration of masses of Jews to the Land of Israel was not realistic and would not solve the Jewish problem. Instead, it supported the granting of national cultural rights within the framework of autonomy to Jews as a minority living in Russia. Where, therefore, do we place Hess on the continuum from right to left? If he dreamed of a society in the spirit of the vision of the prophets of Israel, is he a religious Zionist? If he favored an egalitarian society where the means of production belong to everyone, is he located on the left side of the continuum, being a socialist whose economic views are identified with the left? Hess was not talking about the borders of the Land of Israel in 1862, but if he was referring to its borders during the time of the prophets, then he is a man of the Land of Israel, that is, in today's terms, is he a "complete rightist" based on the primordial approach? According to this attitude, God had promised land to the Sons of Israel in the Bible on four different occasions, though its size varies from promise to promise.

Socialist Zionism led at the beginning of the 20th century to the establishment of the Zion Youth Movement, which established Hapoel Hatz'air (The Young Worker) as a national labor movement in 1905. Its leader, Aharon David Gordon, devoutly called for the redemption of the Jews – as individuals and as a nation – through manual labor in the Land of Israel. In modern terms, this is a form of nationalism that combines primordial elements and territory, in which religious Zionists also believe. Gordon grew up in a religious home and was later nicknamed the "secular *tzaddik*. (Righteous)" Even after he was stabbed and shot by Arabs in Jaffa in 1908, he continued to believe that the moral right of the Jews to the Land of Israel was bought through labor and production, not by force of arms. After the Battle of Tel Hai in March 1920, he said that it would be desirable for the Jews to have peaceful and friendly relations with the Arabs, but this was not the time, nor was violence the way.

Gordon also believed in the secularity of religion, that is, he rejected the assumption that religion was given by divine revelation. At the same time, he did not deny his Jewish roots as someone who grew up in a religious home. In his view, the individual does not stand alone in the world but is dependent on and identifies with the group. Therefore, Gordon's view was that religion (like nationalism) is a creation of human beings. Hence, Gordon believed that everyone takes a subjective position in relation to the laws and *mitzvot* of religion (Katz, 2001: 466-467). An attempt to place Gordon, according to the lines of his life's trajectory and views, between the poles of right and left is a real intellectual challenge because his personality, socio-political beliefs, and actions combine the two poles as they are interpreted in the Israeli discourse today. Gordon, Sirkin, and Borochov, three of the spiritual fathers of Poale Zion (Workers of Zion), also influenced prominent political figures in the early 20th century, including David Ben-Gurion and Ze'ev Jabotinsky (see below).

There is another angle that must be considered in this analysis of socialist Zionism before this stream can be identified as left or right in the Jewish-Israeli context. The difficulty in doing so stems from the position of the leaders of Mapai (Workers' Party of the Land of Israel, founded in January 1930) regarding the treatment of Arabs. Discussions on this question have been a regular part of the discourse of the Jewish community since the beginning of the 20th century, and it became clear that quite a few of the party's leaders supported the idea of a transfer, that is, the removal of the non-Jewish population beyond the borders of the Jewish state they sought to establish. During the Zionist Congress convened in the summer of 1937 in Zurich, Switzerland, it became clear that there were two camps within the socialist current. One supported the removal of the Arabs from the country based on precedents of population exchange as a solution to create distance

between rival groups. Mapai Supporters of the transfer justified their position by mentioning that the Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen had received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922 for his work to resolve conflicts by repatriating populations. The other camp, which included figures such as Golda Meir, Yitzhak Tabenkin, and Ya'akov Hazan, opposed the transfer, mainly due to their assessment that the chances of realizing it were low (Oren, 1997: 76-77).

It is worth considering the spirit of the things that dominated the references of Mapai members, who were socialists in the socio-economic sense but not people of reform in the national-political sense, certainly not when it came to relinquishing land or when the subject of the discussion was the removal of Arabs from the territory intended for the Jewish State of Israel. David Ben-Gurion wrote the following to his son Amos on October 5, 1937:

My assumption is – and that is why I am an enthusiastic supporter of the state, even if it involves division at this point – that a partial Jewish state is not an end but a beginning. When we purchase a thousand or ten thousand *dunams*, we are happy, and the feeling is not hurt that we did not thereby purchase the whole land. Because the purchase is important not only for its own sake – through it, we also increase our power. And every reinforcement helps to acquire the whole country. The establishment of the state – even partially – is a maximum reinforcement of power during this period. And it will serve as a powerful lever in our historic efforts to redeem the country in its entirety (Ben Gurion, 1968: 211).

In other words, Ben-Gurion saw his acceptance of the Peel Commission's proposal (1937) as a tactical move that would allow him to increase Jewish power (the Jews would have territory), and then they would continue to work for the liberation of the entirety of the Land of Israel. This position allows us to conclude that Ben-Gurion does not meet the parameters of left or right if these terms are examined according to the four elements proposed above: economy, land, position toward non-Jews (who will be a minority in the future), and religion.

How did it happen, then, that Ben-Gurion is labeled in the Israeli discourse as a "leftist"? While he agreed to the proposal of the Peel Commission in 1937, he did not give up 80% of the land of Israel since the Jewish settlement did not have sovereignty over the entire area at that time. The answer I offer is simple: he was conceptualized as being on the left side of the spectrum compared to the positions of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who proposed an uncompromising approach toward the Arabs.

Arthur Rupin, a senior member of Mapai, expressed a similar position regarding the transfer of the Arab population:

First, suitable land must be prepared in the Arab country for the farmers, and only then should one try to bring them there, as much as possible out of a desire and only if no other way is found – through expropriation [i.e., forcefully]. Without the relocation of the Arabs, the new Jewish state will have enormous difficulties with them from the point of view of internal politics (the protection of minorities), from the point of view of external politics (the relations of the Arabs in the Land of Israel with Arab countries), and from the economic point of view - since we will then be forced to give them equal rights (Morris, 1996).

In other words, Rupin never thought of giving rights to minorities since he conceptualized a country where the Jews are the owners of the house and are entitled to special rights. How, for example, is this different from the platform of the right-wing parties that ran in the elections for the 25th Knesset in November 2022? On a conceptual level, there is no difference between the discussions held in 1938 and 2022 regarding the Arab transfer. Even if the possibility of such a transfer in 1938 was weak to non-existent due to the British Mandate, such discussions nevertheless took place, and perhaps the fact that they had no possibility of succeeding strengthens the claim. Ideologically, this reflects the same wishful thinking of Mapai and right-wing parties in the 21st century.

In 1937-1938, these discussions led to the establishment of a committee within the Jewish Agency for Israel, whose role was to discuss the technical aspects of moving the Arab population outside the borders of the Jewish state, as recommended by the Peel Commission. Theoretically, it can be argued that the support for the idea of transfer originates from an attempt to adjust the Jewish position to that of Britain since the Peel Commission recommended population exchange, but this is a one-point argument that does not reflect the full picture. The discussions on the transfer of the Arabs of the Land of Israel continued for about a decade after the publication of the Peel Commission's conclusions, illustrating the interest of the Jewish leadership in promoting this idea. Moreover, an attempt was made to move Bedouins from the Ghazuya tribe from the Beit Shan valley to the eastern side of the Jordan. This began in 1938 and ended only in 1947, indicating the difficulty of realizing the transfer – forced or voluntary – of Arabs in the country (Yaffe, 1992). These positions of senior Mapai members illustrate the vitality of the idea within the party. It also puts a significant question mark on the statement that Mapai is a left-wing party. At most, the socialist Zionist current until 1948 can only be called "left" in a socio-economic context due to its pursuit of equality for all in contrast to the divergent right-wing

position that arose when a disagreement emerged between those who sided with the continuation of the old social order and those who sought a revolution.

These positions received a practical expression after the establishment of the State of Israel when Mapai became the ruling party. One of the first decisions made by the interim government was that refugees who left the country were not allowed to return to it. In September 1948, a military government was imposed on the Arabs of Israel, who became the minority community. Ben-Gurion refused to end military rule, despite pressure from the left and the right in the 1950s, until the end of his term in 1963. On November 8, 1966, his successor, Levi Eshkol, notified the Knesset of his intention to abolish the military government, but this was done only in January 1968 because of the fear that Israeli Arabs would become a fifth column if war broke out, as indeed happened in June 1967 (Hitman and Moskovitz, 2019).

Israel's decisive victory in the June 1967 war incentivized Mapai's leadership to present its security positions concerning landholding, which is one of the variables through which I seek to argue for an artificial mix between left and right. At a meeting of the Israeli government on August 20, 1967, the discussion was aimed at determining the government's policy regarding the future of the West Bank, which had been occupied during the war. The Minister of the Interior, Haim-Moshe Shapira, a religious Zionist, said: "I accept the proposal of Defense Minister Moshe Dayan that in some places, it is necessary from a security point of view for us to resettle our army. We will set up an army, but not for settlement." Eshkol, the Prime Minister, noted that "even Mr. Begin does not want a million and a half Arabs among us, and if it were up to us, we would take all the Arabs to Brazil." (Israeli Government meeting, 1967). Subsequently, Eshkol shared with his ministers his view of the land located in the West Bank:

We received information that if we cross the border of Jordan, on the border there is an area of 150,000 state *dunams*, and it is said that there is also land in the Dotan Valley, which, although it is private, it is possible to concentrate 250,000 to 300,000 *dunams* of land there. If it is possible to lease this land, it will be possible to settle Jews there. The question is who we will settle in these areas (Israeli Government meeting, 1967).

The Minister of Police, Eliyahu Sasson, a member of Labor (an offshoot of Mapai), warned against the formation of a binational state and the security threat posed to the State of Israel based on the following demographic calculation: "There are 2.3 million Jews in Israel and about 1.5 million Arabs if you add the number of Israeli Arabs, the Arabs of Gaza, the Arabs of the West Bank, and those living in East Jerusalem. In such a situation, all Jews will have to mobilize to defend the Jewish state." Zeev Sharf, the Minister of Commerce, and Industry and also a member of Labor, was troubled by the internal Arab threat within the borders of the State of Israel when he estimated that the country would be constituted of about 30% Arabs, potentially translating to 36 Knesset members.

The conclusion from these statements that Eshkol, the man at the head of the political system, thought aloud about the settlement of civilians in Judea and Samaria shortly after these areas came under Israeli control. The ministers were not in a hurry to propose a territorial compromise, and the impression is that there was consensus that the homeland had returned to its historical owners. The concern was about the Arabs living in the territories now controlled by Israel. Therefore, the land variable places Mapai (and then Labor) far from the position of the left as is understood in the modern public discourse of Israeli society.

These attitudes soon translated into demographic changes in Judea and Samaria. With the encouragement of the Labor party, Jewish settlement in these territories began as early as 1968. In 1971, work began on the construction of Kiryat Arba/Hebron District, and later, Jews entered Beit Hadassah in the city of Hebron. In 1975, the first nucleus of the Elon Moreh settlement was founded in Samaria. The settlement's official website states, "They aspired to settle around the city of Nablus, the place of the beginning of the settlement in Israel by Avraham Avinu. […] Supporters of the struggle came from members of the labor movement [the Labor Party], members of *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* (Ein Harod, Ein Vered, Ram On, Hanita, and more), members of the Knesset, writers and professors from all universities, students and members of youth movements." (Kedumim, 2023). This is a clear expression of the labor movement's attitude to the land aspect and expresses a continuous line of thought that began with Mapai, continued in the Labor Party, and then in Likud regarding the need for Jewish settlement in Samaria. In the same context, it is worth mentioning the statement of Moshe Dayan, a member of Mapai, in 1956, according to which "Sharm al-Sheikh without peace is better than peace without Sharm al-Sheikh," expressing the attitude to national territory on a primordial and historical basis. (Jewish Telegraph Agency, 1971). Consequently, from any point of view, this party cannot be classified as a leftist party according to the territorial component of the model.

Looking on the opposite direction, Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister from 2001-2006, led the process of disengagement from the Gaza Strip (August 2005), which, by any measure of the Labor Party, was one of the places that must be settled by Jews. Sharon was the leader of Likud, a right-wing party (according to Israeli public discourse). Nevertheless, his position regarding disengagement and its implementation, at least

regarding the settlement of all the homeland's territories, does not reflect a right-wing view.

The Religious Current

This stream of religious Zionism supports the idea that Judaism combines religion and nationality, and the establishment of the State of Israel as a home for the Jewish people, in the sense of a community seeking sovereignty, is in fact an obligation arising from the Torah (Aviad, 1975). The roots of this movement lie in the thought of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874), who, in his book *Derishat Zion* (*Making of Zion*), wrote that the beginning of redemption, that is, a return to the land of the ancestors, depends on the initiative of human beings. His book was a milestone in the history of Zionism because he suggested moving from waiting for the coming of the Messiah to taking responsibility and making moves that would advance redemption.

Rabbi Eliyahu Guttmacher called for agricultural settlement in the Land of Israel, and Rabbi Yehuda ben Shlomo Chai Alkalai, who lived in Serbia, dedicated his life to settlement in the Land of Israel and even composed a political plan for the immigration of Jews to Israel and the establishment of a Jewish home in the mid-19th century. These three rabbis and their students combined three components in their thinking that they considered inseparable: the Land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the Torah of Israel. Ruth Winkler has described how Alkalai met Bivas and was influenced by his perception that Jews should be brought to Israel. She also pointed out that Alkalai drew from the teachings of Eliezer Papo, who wrote in *Pele Yoetz* (*Wonder of Counsel*): "Her virtue is known because it is great […] and it is necessary for every person to have his eyes and heart there all the days […]. Well, let him try with all his might to establish his residence in the Land of Israel." (Papo, 1870: 33).

The writings of those philosophers and intellectuals who belong to religious Zionism, as well as those who studied their opinion regarding the Land of Israel, do not express the concepts of "right" and "left" in relation to politics or security. Strange as it may sound, the terms "left" and "right" are not mentioned by the generation that came after Kalischer and Guttmacher either. We can assume that when they thought of the need for proactive action to bring Jews to the land of their ancestors, the territory they were thinking of was the Land of Israel within its biblical borders. Even so, there is no mention of borders in their writings because religious Zionism dealt with the return to Zion without referring to the territory's integrity or the possibility of conceding part of it. At this point, it is worth asking the following question: if it is agreed that all currents of Zionism supported the immigration of Jews to the Land of Israel, then can the land variable distinguish between the left and right in the early Zionist movement?

A reinforcement for this argument can be found in the foundation of the Mizrachi movement in 1902, which occurred in an era when political Zionism was already visible and discussed continuously from the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897. This chronological closeness is not accidental: while Herzl and his school strove for a secular political Zionism, the religious school sought to preserve the affinity to religion. The idea of giving Zionism religious support came in 1893 from Shmuel Mohlever. The demand raised at the Fifth Zionist Congress (Basel, December 1901) to allocate resources to secular education hastened the decision among the Orthodox stream to establish a movement that would preserve the principles of the Jewish religion (Luz, 1985: 304). The debate about Jewish settlement in Uganda and the cooperation between Herzl and the Mizrachi movement did not deal with economic, social, political, or security issues linked in terms of right and left but only with the question of bringing Jews to Israel and the temporary alternative of Uganda as an autonomous territory but not a national home.

The turning point of religious Zionism, which transformed it into a political framework with a right-wing ideology in the territorial context (the complete Land of Israel), came a few weeks before the outbreak of the June 1967 war: an effort to construct and practice a new reality (constructivism) in one of the major religious schools in Jerusalem (Mercaz HaRav *yeshiva*), founded by Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook. The main points of the concept were that Israeli control over the territories that belonged to the Land of Israel in the Bible is a necessary condition for the process of redemption that Israel will go through. At the end of that process, the people of Israel, the Jewish people, will live safely in their land and borders. This would also be a political-security reality that would realize the coming of the Messiah. In a speech called "Psalm 19 of the State of Israel," given on the eve of Independence Day in 1967, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the son of the *yeshiva*'s founder, said:

Where is our Hebron – we forget it?! And where is our Nablus – we forget it?! And where is our Jericho – we forget that?! And where is our Transjordan?! Where is every piece of land? Every part of the four corners of the Land of God?! Did we manage to give up a millimeter of them? God forbid, have mercy and peace! (Kook, 1967).

Quite a few of Rabbi Kook's students see these words as a prophetic revelation that led to an awakening and a feeling that the Messiah's coming would be soon. However, it is important to remember that this concept, which sees the territories of the biblical Land of Israel as the surface of the State of Israel in modern times, refers only to the territorial aspect and connects it with the religious component. There is no reference to minorities

or economic aspects, which are used to separate the right from the left.

Rabbi Shlomo Goren, who served as chief military rabbi from 1948 to 1971 and chief rabbi of Israel from 1972 to 1983, wrote an article entitled "Problems of religion and state." In this article, Goren presents a clear position according to which there is no alternative to a Jewish state according to the principles of the Torah of Israel and states that "the democratic principle does not apply to the fundamental laws of the Torah." Addressing the question of nationalism, he believed that it complements the Jewish religion and creates the uniqueness of the people of Israel, the Jewish people, on the basis of religion in contrast to other nations, who built their nationalism on the basis of "race, origin, language, and character" (Goren, 1975).

Researchers of nationalism would associate Rabbi Goren with the primordial approach because of the importance of religion (Judaism) and its basic principles as a factor that produces collective identity. However, Goren proposes other primordial elements - race, language, origin, and character, for the formation of other nationalities. Contrary to the Jewish case, he does not add the aspect of land (territory) for those nationalities. Is Goren's position that of the left or the right?

Shifra Mishlov has sought to trace the Zionist views of Rabbi Goren claiming that although he grew up in ultra-Orthodox educational institutions in Hebron and Jerusalem, Goren was a Zionist. Analyzing his book, *The Theory of Philosophy*, Mishlov points out that he stated that one of the steps to redemption is the conquest of the land, and at the same time, "the Jewish political idea is based on the freedom of man in any form and full equality of rights for people in all areas of life and property." Goren does not talk about the extent of the territory to be conquered (exactly like Gordon's socialist philosophy early in the 20th century), and he has a liberal view when it comes to equal rights (like Jabotinsky, see below). Goren does not see a possibility for the State of Israel unless it exists as a Jewish state according to the principles of *halacha* (the Jewish way of life). Only after the June 1967 war did Goren concretely refer to the territorial aspect when he pointed to the liberation of areas such as the Golan Heights or Sinai. In 1993, Rabbi Goren opposed the Oslo Accords, not because he declared himself a right-wing person but because he thought that biblical homelands should not be handed over to the sovereignty of non-Jews.

It can therefore be stated that Rabbi Goren had a right-wing view regarding Israeli control over territories that were in the Jews' possession during the biblical period, but this was only part of his thought, not the framework of a systematic philosophical vision to which to aspire (Mishlov, 2012: 85-87; 91-92). It can also be concluded that there is no real opportunity to define Goren as a leftist or a rightist based on an analysis of the economic variable or his attitude toward non-Jewish minorities.

The Revisionist Current

The current began in the 1920s, when its founder, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, sought a change in the activity patterns of the World Zionist Organization. When his proposals were not accepted, Jabotinsky resigned from the Histadrut in 1923, mainly because he believed that the conciliatory and moderate path of Chaim Weizmann, the chairman of the Histadrut, was wrong when it came to the policy that the Jewish community had to adopt in the face of the British Mandate for Palestine. Subsequently, Jabotinsky founded the Revisionist Zionist Union in 1925 and poured into this framework an activist sub-group whose principles concerning religion, land, and economics were as follows:

a. The Political-Territorial Field:

A combined political and military struggle until the establishment of a Hebrew state in the Land of Israel on both banks of the Jordan River. In regarding the territorial aspect of the Land of Israel, it seems that the distinction between right and left sharpened for the first time in the late 1920s. Jabotinsky wrote his poem "The East of the Jordan" in 1929 as a protest to criticize the British decision to divide the territory and establish the Hashemite Kingdom on the east bank of the Jordan River. In the first stanza of his poem, Jabotinsky writes:

As a bridge is held up by a pillar,
as a man is kept erect by his spine,
so Jordan, the Holy Jordan,
is the backbone of my Israel (www.savisrael.com)

The poem's lyrics give a dimension of sanctity to the river, which extends for the full length of the territory, as its second stanza makes clear. If the poem had ended here, it could be concluded that the revisionist current, which viewed all the territory subject to British rule as Israel's future sovereign territory, is a political right. My argument here is that it is an arbitrary association for two reasons: first, right and left were not originally divided according to one's attitude toward the land; and second, as we have already seen, the socialist current also supported and promoted Jewish settlement in all parts of the country.

However, in the third stanza, the author suggests that the heavenly waters of the holy river (the Jordan) will also be used by "the Arab, the Christian, and the Jew, for our flag is a pure and just one." In other words, Jabotinsky advocates an egalitarian (socialist) view of the distribution of natural resources. The paradox here is simple: socialism as a socio-economic concept belongs to the revolutionaries, such as those who sat on

the left side of the hall where the National Assembly was held in France in 1789 (Jabotinsky, 1930). No less surprising is the fact that some of the members of Ahdut HaAvoda ("Unity of Labor"), which was not a revisionist movement, supported the annexation of the eastern part of the Jordan to the territory of the future Jewish state. These members were not seen as right-wing because their socio-economic view was socialist.

The territorial aspect of holding both banks of the Jordan river was not Jabotinsky's sole consideration. Granting rights to minorities, which is a significant issue concerning the division of right and left in Israeli society today, is another real difficulty when presenting Jabotinsky as right-wing. In the constitutional outline he proposed, section 4 stipulates: "There will be no objection to the appointment of an Arab as the head of state, and there will be no objection to him bearing the title of 'Emir' if a Jewish prime minister with powers is appointed" (Naor, 1997). If we were a majority in the country, we would first of all create a situation of complete equality of rights here. Jew or Arab or Armenian or German, there is no difference before the law – all roads are open to him, he could even become prime minister." He also suggested that "we would offer each and every nation an autonomous organization, with its own 'national council,' with the right to collect taxes, with the right to arrange all its internal affairs as is good in the eyes of its members, with the right to create schools from kindergarten to university. This will be an example to the whole world of how a multinational state should be run." (Doar hayom newspaper, 1930).

Total equality of rights and a multinational state are not part of the agenda of right-wing elements, as their view has developed since 18th-century France. In Israel in late 2022 and early 2023, such a position that supports complete equality of rights and a multinational state cannot be associated with ideological and political factors that associate themselves with the right. How, therefore, is Jabotinsky placed between right and left? The answer I offer is that he expressed positions of the political right and the social left because he combined Jewish nationalism with universal liberalism. Colin Shindler claims that the Third International Beitar Conference in 1938 was the turning point where nationalism prevailed over liberalism, mainly because the national bloc within the revisionist current, with members like Menachem Begin, Uri Zvi Greenberg, and Avraham (Yair) Stern, became dominant (Shindler, 2015).

Revisionism and the Economy

At first glance, it seems that the economic outlook of the revisionist current, founded by Jabotinsky, supports a free and liberal economy. In fact, the picture is much more complex, and it is difficult to categorize this view as being on the right of the socio-economic (and political) spectrum. Jabotinsky admitted to various influences that shaped his own position, which ranged between socialism, communism, and liberalism. For example, in an article from 1910 titled "I don't believe," he wrote that "the nationalization of the means of production is a necessary and desirable result of the social process, and I admit that the subject of the revolution is the working class" (Jabotinsky, 1954: 86). Jabotinsky continued to adhere to this line even in the 1920s. In 1925, he published an article called "Left," in which he praised the contribution of the working class to the building of the country and defined their work as "great activity and dedication" (Jabotinsky, 1953: 16). The explanation for this is simple: he saw the endless effort of the workers as a contribution to the national struggle for the Land of Israel, that is, he connected socialism with nationalism. Even when he went to study law in Rome with Enrico Peri and Antonio Labriola, he continued to adhere to socialist thinking and even wrote that his teachers influenced him in this regard.

The Religious Aspect

What was the attitude of the founder of the revisionist movement toward the role of the Jewish religion in the life of the state? Here, too, those seeking to understand his position will find it difficult to do so, as there were changes in Jabotinsky's view of the status of religion over the years. Eliezer Don-Yehiya has proposed dividing Jabotinsky's view in this regard into three different periods. The first lasted about twenty years (1905-1925) and was characterized by criticism and reservations about religion. These were the years when Jabotinsky began to stand out in his public activity. The second period lasted for about a decade (1925-1935), during which there was a certain moderation in his attitude toward religion. The third period (1935-1940) was one of a positive attitude toward religion. Nevertheless, Don-Yehiya states that in no way can Jabotinsky be defined as a religious or God-fearing person (Don-Yehuya, 2004: 60).

CONCLUSIONS

Over the years, there emerged five currents of Zionism, the practical meaning of which is to bring Jews to the Land of Israel and establish a state for them. Each stream offered its own course for a long list of topics. Of these, this study has focused on four significant ones that relate to attitudes toward land, religion, economy, and attitudes toward non-Jewish. The main conclusion is that basing the division into right and left on an economic worldview in the Jewish society of the Land of Israel from the end of the 19th century until the establishment of the state is only partial and does not present the complexity of the issue. For example, the socialist movement, which supported an egalitarian society and economy did not support Arabs remaining in the future Jewish land. Some, including senior officials, spoke openly about the transfer of Arabs as a necessary solution. In the opposite direction, the revisionist Zionists, who were standard-bearers for a complete Land

of Israel, were ready to grant equal rights to the non-Jewish minorities who would live in the State of Israel. Moreover, Jabotinsky and his student, Menachem Begin, did not propose a transfer as a solution to the Arab question, as some "leftists" of Mapai did.

This conclusion is also valid for ultra-Orthodox Zionist parties, such as Shas, which was established in 1984 and did not express its objection to Zionism. Shas cannot be placed between right and left. The reason for this is simple. On the one hand, it supports a socialist economy – the state's distribution of budgets at increased rates to the ultra-Orthodox student society instead of encouraging them to work and be part of the productive economy. According to this parameter, it belongs to the left in the spirit of the values of the French Revolution (equality for all). In universal terms, this is a position of the economic left. In Israeli terms, this is differential socialism, which distinguishes between Torah students and the secular society of students.

On the other hand, Shas has undergone a change in relation to its attitude toward land: its spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (1920-2013), supported a territorial compromise, but his successors, led by Aryeh Deri, oppose it. The political (but not ideological) paradox is this: though economically a left-wing party, Shas allies with Likud, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, which is seen in Israel as a right-wing party. Likud uses the instruments of an egalitarian (socialist) economy to maintain its political power thanks to this alliance with an ultra-Orthodox party.

Another conclusion is that the terms "left" and "right" are not relevant to the mapping of political forces in Israel either ideologically or sociologically (socially). In the Israeli discourse, the terms distinguish between two camps, classified as such by leaders of public opinion (who call themselves right-wingers). The first is a national camp that supports a complete Land of Israel (although, as we have seen, this is also a correct definition for an economically and socially leftist party such as Mapai). At the same time, this camp supports a harsh and uncompromising policy against Arabs, without distinguishing between Arabs who are citizens of Israel and Palestinians. This camp also tends to attribute a closer connection between land and religiously based primordial foundations and justifications, but this does not distinguish the two camps much either because Labor began the return to Hebron, the city of the ancestors, immediately after the June 1967 war. The second camp, standing against the national camp, according to this division, includes the leftists, a term that refers to anyone who is supposedly ready for a territorial compromise, for peace with the Arabs at any cost, and for the separation of religion and state.

The explanation this study offers for this paradox is that the camp that defines itself as right (national-religious) attributes itself to a holy territory because it is the land promised by the Holy One. In this way, two camps were indeed created in Israel, but these are not left and right but split according to the division between state and religion.

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