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ISRAEL AFTER RABIN

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A Generation Loses its Innocence / Succumbing to a False Conception / Soul-Searching and Witch-Hunting / Peres Picks Up the Pieces / Possible Long-Term Changes / A Changing Israel: What It Suggests for the Future

A Generation Loses its Innocence

On the night of November 4, 1995 — the 12th of Heshvan 5756 — Israel lost another piece of its innocence when Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. The description of nations and peoples losing their innocence has become a characteristic of twentieth century commentary on the impact of dramatic events. In fact, there are two problems with that conceptualization. One is that it seems that nations lose their innocence in every or at least every other generation, which means that it is not the nations but the generations that are losing that innocence, and, because both new generations and traumatic events come along with some frequency, there is something of a pattern to the loss of innocence.

Second, unlike a maiden's innocence which can only be lost once in one fell swoop, nations lose their innocence piecemeal. So it is with Israel. Compared to Americans, for example, Israelis had lost their innocence about the larger world long before Rabin's assassination. Indeed, one of Yitzhak Rabin's major tasks was to restore a sufficient amount of confidence among Israelis — the kind

that normally comes from innocence — to bring them to take the risks for peace that he understood to be necessary and that he had become convinced were acceptable ones.

The innocence that Israelis lost on November 4th had to do with their assessment of the limits of what Jews would or could do to each other. In that respect, the assassination of the prime minister by a young, religious Jew, a man who had an exemplary military record and who was studying both secular law and Jewish religious texts, was horrendous. It struck right at the heart of what Israelis believed that being Jewish demanded of us all.

The self-confessed assassin, Yigal Amir, did not look or seem to be crazy. Indeed, what came out in the immediate aftermath of the assassination was that perhaps the best way to describe him was that he had become crazed by his understanding of the peace process as a disastrous one and had decided to strike out. Moreover, it soon became apparent that he had signaled us several times before that he had been thrown off balance and that

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had the system worked as it should, he would have been picked up by the authorities much earlier or at the very least would have been excluded from that parking lot adjacent to the peace rally that evening.

Succumbing to a False Conception

Sober Israelis learned once again that Israel's greatest security problem (and in this Israel is not alone among the world's states) is lowering one's guard because of a false conception. It was an article of faith among Israeli Jews that no Jew would kill another Jew and therefore no preventative measures of the kind normally expected from the guards of heads of government were taken.

There was an eerie similarity in this to Israel's dropping of its guard just prior to the Yom Kippur War. In the weeks and days prior to the war our government and its security services had all the facts, but their overriding belief that Egypt would not dare attack a strong Israel, especially by making a difficult canal crossing to do so, invalidated those facts in the eyes of those who were responsible. We all know the result.

The Immediate Aftermath

In the aftermath of the Rabin assassination, one witnessed a pulling back on the part of all sides, but, unlike the case when Emil Grunzweig was killed by a hand grenade at a Peace Now demonstration or when Torah scrolls and other sacred writings were torn up in a raid on a yeshiva in Bnai Brak, several other important developments occurred as well. First of all, there was a tremendous outpouring of shock and grief from the Israeli public, made particularly visible by the young, primarily non-religious Israelis who, building on the rituals developed in Israel over the years to commemorate Israel's Memorial Day, performed spontaneous memorial rituals consisting of mournful or otherwise expressive popular music, candle lightings, and assemblies. Those who suggested that this was a new departure either are unaware of, or have neglected, the ritual developments for those specifically Israeli memorial occasions that have occurred over the past nearly fifty years.

To say that the youth did not invent new rituals but rather drew upon those developed for other Israeli mourning events is not to denigrate either the rituals or the seriousness of the young people involved. What is significant is that there has developed in Israel a rather secularized set of rituals that are informed with a religious spirit but are not much part of traditional

Judaism, nor are they identified with any kind of formal, non-traditional Judaism. This phenomenon holds interesting and important possibilities for Israel's future.

Soul-Searching and Witch-Hunting

Another development in the aftermath of the assassination was the soul-searching that began within various sectors of the Israeli population. One does not have the feeling that for most Israelis this soul-searching went very deeply. Indeed, the ones who seemed to be most engaged in it after the first week or two were the moderate religious Zionists, those who had provided the votes for the Meimad party in 1988 and who generally supported the peace camp, but who were a distinctly small minority among religious Zionists. They and their colleagues are the ones who have provided the dominant spirit at Bar-Ilan University and have helped build it into a bridging institution between religious and secular Jews and have given it the deserved reputation of being the university with the best teacher-student relationship in Israel.

Ironically, Bar-Ilan University suffered most from the third dimension, namely, the witch-hunt that developed in the immediate aftermath of the assassination in the pursuit of possible conspiracies among right-wing religious nationalists. Bar-Ilan suffered from this because the assassin, his brothers, and those most immediately associated with his group studied at the Institute for Advanced Torah Study, the *kollel* at Bar-Ilan. In an irony of ironies, that *kollel* was founded to convince young rabbinical students to pursue academic degrees while they were pursuing their rabbinical studies, something virtually unheard of in Israel until then, and thereby produce what would hopefully be a more enlightened rabbinate for the country. The fact that the *kollel* had, in part, moved to the right and that within it there were a small group of extreme right-wing students who succeeded in tarring the whole enterprise and the university that hosted it is a tragedy for Israel in its own right which will not be easily overcome.

Beyond that, some of the witch-hunt was based on dangerous silliness. For example, expecting an institution of 18,000 students to be accountable for the beliefs of any small group of them is to lack understanding of how universities work. Bar-Ilan has always represented the full spectrum of opinions in Israel. One can find students of any belief and most of the faculty have no idea what their students believe since in academic institutions we normally do not sit around and discuss

political opinions in the classroom. It would be just as intelligent to suggest that we should abolish the Israel Defense Forces because Yigal Amir had served in them with distinction (after all, they taught him how to shoot) as to suggest that Bar-Ilan should be punished for having had him as a student.

The witch-hunt went beyond that, however. In the first week or two, religious people were assaulted at least verbally for being religious. Those with pronounced right-wing views, including rabbis, were brought in for questioning. The objective observer had the feeling that the security forces and the police, having failed in their protective duties, were trying to find a conspiracy as their scapegoat. Then it was revealed that the leader of Eyal, the extremist group presumably involved, turned out to have been somewhere between an informer and an agent of the General Security Services, hardly a reassuring note for them. In the third week, public expression of this witch-hunt began to quiet down, but private thoughts remain and the hunt is not yet fully ended.

Shabtai Tevet wrote a book about the aftermath of the murder of Haim Arlosoroff, a Mapai party official, in the 1930s. He describes there how Ben-Gurion had been developing a closer relationship with Jabotinsky up until the time of the murder because they were nearly balanced in political power. Jabotinsky was in Warsaw when Ben-Gurion announced on the day after the assassination that it was done by a Revisionist (it later turned out to have been Arabs). He started to exploit a target of opportunity to discredit his main opposition party and to assure that a Mapai-led coalition in the Labor camp would remain solidly ensconced in government, and of course he was quite successful. In a sense there is a certain similarity between these two stories, but Shimon Peres does not appear to be part of this. No doubt Peres sees that he does not need to do this for the next elections and that a Labor victory will rest on other factors. His people must be polling all the time and he has seen the polls that tell him so.

Likud-baiting, then, has been left to the still leaderless Rabin camp. Leah Rabin seems to be sparking the effort, but she is being supported by the late prime minister's chief advisers.

Peres Picks Up the Pieces

Perhaps the most positive element to emerge from all of this was one that, on reflection, should not have proved to be particularly surprising. It was the way in which Israel's governmental system continued to function smoothly. In true democratic style, Israelis

in responsible positions simply picked up the pieces and continued. As Deputy Prime Minister, Shimon Peres became Acting Prime Minister immediately. Binyamin Netanyahu, leader of the leading opposition party, the Likud, announced with equal rapidity that Likud would support Peres's bid to formally become prime minister on the grounds that no other party should profit from the assassination.

Peres proceeded to reshuffle his cabinet and put together a new government. Haim Ramon, who had left the Labor party to run on an independent list for the chairmanship of the Histadrut and had won, used this occasion to return to Labor and was given the Ministry of Interior. (Ramon did not exactly cover himself with glory during this whole period. Appearing on Ted Koppel's *Nightline* program that originated in Jerusalem in the week after the assassination, he presented himself as one of the hard-line left, talking about the right and especially the religious right in terms of "We shall crush them," with a vindictiveness that appalled viewers.) Ehud Barak, the former chief of staff, became foreign minister. Both appointments strengthened the Labor coalition. The new government received a resounding vote of confidence for the reasons that Netanyahu presented.

Peres also added the leader of Meimad, Rabbi Yehuda Amital, a leading figure in the yeshiva world with clearly moderate views, to his government as a minister without portfolio to help bridge the gap between religious and secular Jews, and began discussions with the National Religious Party and the ultra-Orthodox parties either to bring them into the governing coalition or to at least get them to informally support the government. From their side, the effort of the religious parties to backpedal from their extreme positions of the past few years to get back to defending the religious concerns which had been primary to them in the past was given encouragement by Peres reaching out to them. Unless something disastrous happens with regard to the security of the settlements, they are likely to continue to try to find their way back to become the balance wheels in the party struggle. These last two bridging actions placed the government squarely behind the movement toward bridging, stopped the delegitimization of the religious community, and represented important steps toward reconciliation.

Both sides would like to find a way to help the whole community of Israel bring itself back together. In this, Shimon Peres is definitely a positive figure in ways that were perhaps unexpected when one looked at him before. He is also moving in a different direc-

tion in terms of reaching out to the settlers in the territories. About six months before Rabin was assassinated, when he would lash out against the settlers, it became noticeable that Peres showed body language signs of discomfort, of disapproval, of cringing, of feeling that it was not appropriate. The irony here is that Rabin probably really understood how the settlers felt but he just could not deal with it himself on a personal level and so he reacted as he did. Peres may understand how they feel, yet he will not have any problems making the decisions he wants to make in terms of the direction of the peace process. But he understands the necessity of making an effort to treat people as people, and so may succeed in dampening those tensions a little bit, though there are many other factors that can come in to upset that effort and that direction.

Meanwhile, Peres has accelerated the process of the IDF's evacuation of the Arab cities and towns scheduled to be turned over to the Palestinian Authority by the end of December. Indeed, one of the controversies dominating the news broadcasts was between the Public Works Department and the Ministry of the Environment over the damage being done to Israel's environment as a result of hasty construction of the bypass roads designed to connect the Jewish settlements to the heart of Israel without requiring the settlers to pass through Arab-occupied areas.

When this year's poverty statistics were announced, the Likud used them as the basis for a motion of no confidence against the new government. Predictably, it was defeated and by the time Israel reached the thirtieth day after Rabin's death, on the surface it looked as if all was back to normal. Indeed, as the thirty-day mourning period came to an end and the redeployment of the IDF from the West Bank cities began, the Israeli public on both sides of the issue displayed what could only be called apathy or even lassitude. There was no significant opposition, even symbolic, to the evacuation of the West Bank cities. At most, a few questions were raised about Jewish access to particular sites or communications between the settlements in the territories and the main body of Israel over Palestinian-dominated roads. In a symbolic move, Bethlehem was passed to the Palestinian Authority several days before Christmas so that for the first time since 1966 the IDF would not be responsible for maintaining order and safety over that Christian holiday. Arafat flew to Bethlehem on Christmas eve to proclaim Jesus to be a Palestinian, but also talked about the three faiths living together in peace. A Jewish

demonstration scheduled for Christmas eve at Rachel's Tomb on the outskirts of Bethlehem drew only a thousand participants. A long article appeared in the weekly opinion section of *Ha'aretz* discussing how Peres was returning to his old interest in a functional solution as a major part of the final settlement which would give Israel a significant place in the territories after peace was achieved, but that is a matter of speculation, no more.

Possible Long-Term Changes

In fact, there are likely to be some important longer-term changes in Israeli politics, although we will not really know until at least after the next Knesset elections, planned for November 1996. The Likud is in retreat on all fronts, partly because during the witch-hunting days, Labor party polemicists, led by Leah Rabin, the prime minister's widow, attacked the Likud and Netanyahu, its leader, for fomenting the violence that led to the assassination, a false charge but one that hit home at the time. The opening up of discussions between the governing coalition and the religious camp left the Likud more or less isolated with little immediate chance to reverse that.

The Likud was not in a good position before Rabin's assassination. Netanyahu had not caught on as a viable alternative to the prime minister, although his party looked as if it would gain a majority in the Knesset under the new provisions for direct election of the prime minister. Many of us thought that one of the first things that Shimon Peres might do would be to seek repeal of that new constitutional provision or at least its delay, but at the beginning of December he announced that he would not do so, suggesting to those in the know that Labor's secret public opinion polls showed them likely to win both the prime ministership and the Knesset in the fall elections. That, too, is too soon to tell. Who knows what awaits us between now and then, but it is the Likud that has to come up from behind as of now.

Labor's trump was that it captured a position that did not really provide for an alternative that would promote peace. I had suggested right after Oslo One that there were possible confederal options in which the Palestinians could have their own flag and have primary control in their area, but that Israel would retain a secondary position. I do not know if the Palestinians would have accepted that but it would have been a credible position to put forward. I am not sure whether that can be put forward in the same way now.

Meanwhile the Palestinians are, in general, minding

their Ps and Qs. There have been some incidents but the Palestinian Authority's reactions have been swift and at least reasonably satisfying. We can probably expect the Palestinians to be two-thirds to three-fourths good. I think the Palestinian Authority understands that they need to exploit the current situation and that they have to make efforts to prevent terrorism. This may be due to a change of heart or may simply be a tactical move, but the end result is approximately the same.

On the other hand, even the most established authority has a limit to what it can do with its crazies. The Republic of Ireland does not want trouble with the British; they may not like the British but they do not want trouble with them, so they were not interested in supporting the IRA provisionals in their terror campaign in Ulster.

One has the clear sense that, at least until they get their populated areas back, Arafat and his supporters will try to keep within the agreement. Will this lead to continuing peace? We still must wait and see, but perhaps we are all a bit more optimistic now.

A Changing Israel: What It Suggests for the Future

It has been nearly twenty years since Israel and the Jewish people entered into a new generation of political change, economic prosperity, and a peace process. In that time Israel has changed from an embattled state, whose Zionist vision was basically unquestioned and whose people, or at least the Jews among them, were tied together by a solidarity long-since lost in the West, to a state in which half the population or more is ready to take great risks for peace while the other half remains strongly fearful of the consequences; where individualism has become rampant; and where all of the country's main institutions have been undergoing transformation as a result of changing conditions. Israel has ceased to be isolated in the world. The new world popular culture has penetrated into almost every corner of Israeli society, replacing the old Zionist-Jewish culture upon which the state's life had been based, and Israeli institutions are becoming more like others in the West.

There is every reason to believe that these changes will continue over the next generation. However, what is even more important is that not all accept these changes as good. Hence, the cleavages in Israeli society which at one time concerned matters considered either temporary and passing such as the cleavage between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, or tolerable within the context of Jewish culture, such as between secular and religious, are now becoming the kind of cleavages

that lead to deep and lasting conflict.

Looking at the many trends with regard to Israel's changing environment, we find that they group themselves into four categories: 1) Normalization of Israel and its people; 2) Globalization of its society and economy; 3) Postmodernization of its expectations, aspirations, and norms; and 4) The peace process and its dividends. In addition, there are the constraints on the foregoing that exist and are likely to remain.

Normalization: In 1968 I wrote a paper called "Israel: From Ideological to Territorial Democracy," in which I advanced the thesis that Israel, like every other new society, now that it was finishing its initial pioneering period and moving toward a second generation of statehood, would soon begin to move from being an ideological state to being one whose people were tied to it not by the ideology that had motivated their fathers and mothers to come and settle but by their ties to place, the country as a whole, their localities, the scenery, the region, the local culture and habits. This has now substantially come about as it has in every new society in modern times beginning with the Puritans in New England. We can expect more movement in this direction and we cannot expect the old ideologies to capture the majority of Israelis as they once might have.

This means that Israelis' expectations will be less tied to the ideologies that brought their forefathers to the Land of Israel and more to what "normal" people want in "normal" places; that is to say, personal success, health and happiness for themselves and their families, a chance to succeed in what they choose to do with their lives. They will be less interested in communal goals and more in individual ones, at least private and personal ones for themselves and their families. Their goals will be less ideologically Zionist or even Jewish and will become more conventional; that is to say, "like all the nations."

Zionism itself was founded on two strands: one which sought Jewish renewal through a return to the land, and the other which sought normalization. The two could live together as long as Zionism and Israel were in their pioneering stages and, in addition, were under siege. But now that the siege appears to be ending, the tensions between the two come out in the open and, as with most people in most places, most Israeli Jews seek normalization and only a minority continue with their Zionist, Jewish, communal, and ideological goals.

The consequences of this are to go after those "pleasures" and opportunities that everyone else does in the world or at least as everyone who is considered

"modern," "progressive," and "Western" seems to do. Moreover, the old ideological instrumentalities are in decline. This is true of the kibbutz and this is true of Judaism. Any program that seeks to improve Israel and life within it must make choices between how much it wants to foster this normalization and how much it will try to foster older or newer versions of older Zionist and Jewish norms and goals.

Some organizations for improvement simply seek "normal improvements." The Society for the Protection of Nature, for example, seeks nothing much that is not on the agenda of nature protection in societies anywhere. The only difference between it and a nature society in Australia, for example, will be that in Israel there is more concern with preserving archeological remains as well as natural environments.

Others such as Gush Emunim exist primarily to advance the older ideological and communal goals, but still others, like the proliferation of new style Jewish learning centers in Jerusalem, may try to find some new synthesis.

Globalization: This situation is further complicated by globalization that is bringing Israel to be fully part of the world scene in every or virtually every respect. Jews have always been heavily involved in the world scene. Indeed, unlike Icelanders or Laplanders or Amish, Jews always have insisted on preserving their Jewishness while being on the center of the world stage.

The Land of Israel itself is a kind of metaphor of the Jewish character in this respect. Most of it is drained by the Jordan River which flows into the Dead Sea, a body of water that has no outlet, thus leaving the land self-contained, but the land is located right at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa with all the intercontinental connections of the Old World passing through it so that it could not ever be isolated. That is the classic Jewish situation: self-contained but right in the center of things.

Now, however, that is changing as a result of world changes impinging upon Israel and Israelis' desires to be part of those world changes. What was once involvement with the world while preserving separation is for many becoming merger with the world culture. We can find some precedents for this in Jewish history, but world culture has never been so universal and powerful as now because of the new technologies and the annihilation of space that is part of the contemporary scene.

Today, it is much harder to preserve a separate pocket without great sacrifice than it once was. The arrival of cable TV and the latest communications

methods have made this merger with world culture an almost inevitable process unless people chose to resist it. In addition, Israel has looked forward to its merger with the world economy in order to prosper and become part of things, which Israelis were prevented from doing because of the siege and the reluctance of the rest of the world to fully accept Israel as a partner since that meant risking their ties with Arab partners who had needed oil reserves and other advantages.

Even Israeli Jews who want to resist merger with the world culture generation are pleased with Israel's merger into the world economy, although the consequences of this will be as great. For example, after 1948 Israel had to become almost self-sufficient in the manufacture or production of most goods during its first generation and its economy boomed on that basis, but prices were high because markets were small. Now that Israel is open to the world market, those local industries are being undercut by cheaper goods of equal or better quality from elsewhere. Israel must find its market niche instead of trying for self-sufficiency. This is driving old firms out of business or into merger with multinational firms, subject to all the local vagaries that that produces as multinationals move their chess pieces across the world board.

It also means that as Israel succeeds in this, there is more need for low-level workers in the kind of positions that Israeli Jews once filled in great part out of ideological belief, that this was required for "the normalization of the Jewish people," but which their children will no longer fill, thereby requiring "foreign guest workers." For the last generation, Palestinians have fulfilled that role, but increasingly, Israel has begun to import foreign workers to do so, partly because of security fears stemming from the employment of Palestinians, and partly because in the short run it seems to be cheaper or better in some way. Thus Romanians, Thais, Filipinos, and Nigerians are either brought in or sneak into Israel to find work and do so, generating a whole new set of problems that Israeli society has not even begun to contemplate.

Globalization also means accepting global political expectations with regard to peace, the definition of happiness, and the definition of human rights and democracy. The penchant for liberalism among modern Jews, which was not absent from the Zionist movement, easily lends itself to accepting these political expectations. In practice these have mixed consequences since, implemented in a certain way, they strike at the kind of communal and ideological concerns of both Zionism and Judaism and have contributed to the intensification

of the cultural struggle within Israel, the tension between religious and nonreligious, and the tension between tradition and what has come to be considered "normal" or "conventional" in the postmodern world.

Postmodernization: For Israelis as for others, principally this has involved, first and foremost, accepting the canons of postmodern life and belief; that is to say, radical individualism as opposed to the acceptance of communal norms and responsibilities, the relativism of values rather than the existence of eternal truths, the almost exclusive emphasis on rights without regard to obligations, the advancement of the right to life to the foremost position over and above any other considerations which gives every individual life an entitlement to certain "goods" or "benefits" from society as a whole.

Postmodernization also means the weakening of the state structures of the modern epoch, the diminution of political sovereignty for all states, and the growth of interdependence that is being constitutionalized, as well as placing very real limitations on what individual states can do. The state is becoming more a vehicle for providing services to those who live within it than a vehicle for achieving the special collective goals of its citizenry.

This also means the weakening of high culture as all culture is evaluated as equal because taste is considered relative and democratization means that people and behavior of what once was considered low taste cannot be denigrated in any way on behalf of what once was considered of higher taste. Moreover, this is accompanied by the elimination of all taboos. Any subject can not only be discussed, but virtually any action other than the direct destruction of life is to be accepted as a matter of personal preference.

All of this leads to a weakening of boundaries of every kind: territorial boundaries between states or other political entities; cultural, national, or racial boundaries between groups; the boundaries between what is good or bad, permitted or forbidden. In some cases this weakening of boundaries has brought the world to a better state. In others, it has become life-threatening.

Israel is just now moving into these aspects of postmodernization, but is doing so rapidly and those who have opted for these canons of postmodern life and belief seem to feel very threatened and angry at those who stand for other or older ways of life that require the acceptance of obligation, the belief in norms that have intrinsic value rather than values that are relative, and the maintenance of boundaries in life. The practi-

cal ways in which this is beginning to play itself out is not only the difference between the pub culture of Tel Aviv and the ideologically-driven settlements in the territories, but also in the fact that Jews no longer maintain even the boundaries of marriage between themselves and non-Jews, and their non-Jewish partners are accepted as immigrants to Israel under the Law of Return, thereby bringing in a new non-Jewish population that does not have its own strict separate identity as does the Arab population but are themselves parts of or aspire to be part of the universal world culture, which makes it easier for them to live with their Jewish partners who are also expected and probably do share those aspirations. Or, on another plane, it makes it impossible for the state to distinguish between the entitlements of Jewish citizens and others based upon obligations and performance; i.e., more benefits if one does military service than if one does not.

The Peace Process: All of the foregoing have affected Israel and Israelis in any case, but they are all being exacerbated or hastened by the peace process which has made it possible for Israeli Jews, who have hitherto viewed themselves as under siege, to relax and partake of these changes. Peace will bring greater Israeli involvement with their neighbors and their neighbors greater involvement with Israelis, both of which will lend support to the process of normalization and make it more difficult to maintain old ideologies and commitments in old separations. Peace will also weaken the desire to maintain those separations and indeed heighten the desire to become part of the neighborhood, as it were.

This will have a whole host of practical consequences, ranging from an increase in crime as borders become more permeable and there is greater contact between Israeli criminal elements and those in neighboring countries, to greater intermarriage of Jews and non-Jews, to the introduction of forms of behavior almost completely absent from Israel in the past, whether with regard to drunkenness, violent crime, or in the observance of Christmas, which has been noted as growing among Jews in Israel in recent years. The spread of these "vices" in Israel reminds one of the United States of seventy years ago when the mass media promoted drinking, smoking, and looser sexual behavior as "sophisticated." In Israel, imitation of the non-Jews in almost every respect is considered by certain groups as more sophisticated.

These trends are both restrained and exacerbated by certain constants or what seem to be constants in Jewish life within the Israeli situation. The strong

tendency to universalism in Jewish culture is an exacerbating force, just as the equally strong tendency to parochialism among some Jews may be a retardant. The clash of the two or, even better, the clash of the distortions of the two is a major producer of tension and conflict in Israeli society. The Jewish cultural penchant for doing things in extremes through the mobilization and expenditure of great energy also leads to an exacerbation of all these tendencies and the opposition to them. The tenseness that has been noted among Jews, at times described as neurosis, adds fuel to this situation.

The same kind of limitations of the Land of Israel, its location, its lack of natural resources, its limited size and limited opportunities, are also constant. They affect the way Jews will respond to the changes around them. There seems to be no question that in the long run only ideological commitment — Jewish, Zionist, or the equivalent — has kept and keeps many Jews in Israel despite greater individual opportunities elsewhere. The weakening of those commitments is likely to ease the process of emigration or rather *yerida*. Yet in the postmodern epoch this is not necessarily a once and for all act, but may involve moving back and forth under differing circumstances at different stages in one's life.

On the other hand, the culture of Israel's neighbors has proved to be unappealing to many Israeli Jews. It serves as a barrier to the pursuit of normalization as integration into the immediate region, though it may bring those same Jews to look for normalization as integration into the cultures of others further away,

e.g., Europe or the U.S.A.

Israelis and world Jewry are facing an entirely new situation that we have not even begun to explore or reckon with, but which we must. We do not have the luxury to choose whether we want to or not because the situation is upon us and will grow in its impact.

One thing in the Jews' favor in reckoning with this situation is that when Jews sit down and think about a problem — "talk it up," so to speak — they tend to find the directions that they should take and even some of the actions. We do not require a hierarchy to give us instruction, but can, using our own heritage and resources, find the way to move forward.

For those of us who seek to remain distinctively Jewish even as we participate in the world in the active Jewish manner that we have known in the past, the road is doubly difficult. But, knowing the resources that we Jews can bring to bear on the problem, we can be at least qualifiedly optimistic that with the right combination of good sense and Divine assistance, we will be able to do so.

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