**Have We Reached the End of the Secular Zionist Dream?**

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A perception has taken root in Israeli society that canonical, secular Zionist and nationalist, messianic religious Zionism can live side by side in this country. The two are perceived as nuances of one shared ideology, similar to the differences between spiritual-cultural Zionism and political Zionism, or between them and practical Zionism. However, the two are actually different national visions that contradict one another and compete over the determination of the character, identity and regime in the State of Israel; moreover, their ability to coexist is conditional upon the identity of the controlling worldview.

Five fundamental characteristics differentiate the two. First, canonical-secular Zionism saw the need of the Jewish people for a safe shelter as the motivation for establishing the state. “Let sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe adequate to meet our rightful national requirements; we will attend to the rest,” Theodor Herzl wrote in “The Jewish State.” Nationalist-messianic Zionism, however, sees the divine commandment to fulfill the biblical promise as the motivation for establishing of the state. “We settled … because we were commanded to inherit the land that God Almighty gave to our forefathers,” Menachem Felix, a leader of Gush Emunim, declared in a hearing at the High Court of Justice regarding the settlement of Elon Moreh in 1979.

The second characteristic: Canonical Zionism saw in its vision of Jewish settlement a Jewish majority next to an Arab minority. “I consider it utterly impossible to eject the Arabs from Palestine,” Ze’ev Jabotinsky declared in “The Iron Wall” in 1923. Messianic Zionism welcomes settlement in a biblical fashion: “As it is written, ‘And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have assigned the land to you to possess.’ About which Rashi interpreted to mean ‘You shall take possession of the land from its inhabitants and then you will settle in it,’” Felix explained.

The third characteristic: Canonical Zionism saw international legitimacy as the political-legal foundation for establishing the state, and sought to rely on the “natural rights” to self-determination that every nation has. “By virtual of our national and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly,” David Ben-Gurion read in the Declaration of Independence, on May 14, 1948. But Messianic Zionism negates this, and claims the land on the basis of “historic rights” while denying political, spatial and demographic changes that have transpired in the Land of Israel since the destruction of the Second Temple. “It is important to remember that the UN decision is not the source of our right to Israel, but rather the Bible and the promise of the Holy One, Blessed Be He,” Bezalel Smotrich declared two years ago. Rabbi Shlomo Aviner added this year that “the land lay fallow before Zionist settlement.”

The fourth characteristic: Leaders of canonical Zionism sought to set borders while considering the future state – mainly in relation to its economic needs. “If we seek to set the borders of the Land of Israel of today, mainly if we see it not only as the heritage of the Jewish past but rather as the future Jewish country – we cannot take into full account the ideal borders, which were promised to us according to tradition, which are too broad given the conditions of today,” Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi wrote in their 1918 work “The Land of Israel: Past and Future.”

In the eyes of nationalist-messianic Zionism, the borders are the heart of the matter. Every time canonical Zionism sought to decide between its three supreme goals – a Jewish majority, democracy and the entire Mandatory Land of Israel – in favor of the first two, messianic Zionism resorted to extreme nationalism and belligerence to prevent this. The first time the Zionist movement accepted the idea of partitioning the land, in the wake of the Peel Commission Report in 1937, in order to establish a state in part of the land and to absorb European Jewry, members of the Mizrahi movement declared: “The Jewish people will never accept any attempt to shrink the historic borders of the Land of Israel, as was promised to the people of Israel, by divine word.”

The Arabs’ rejection of partition and the British withdrawal postponed a decision on the matter. A decade later, when canonical Zionism accepted the decision to partition the land and establish the State of Israel, Jews gathered in Rome for a prayer of thanksgiving in front of the Arch of Titus, a symbol of the destruction of the Land of Israel. At the Great Synagogue in Tel Aviv, they wrote a prayer of national thanksgiving to the nations of the world “who voted on the decisive day for the failing one among the nations, to give it a name and the remainder of the inheritance of its forefathers” – but the Mizrahi movement rejected the partition vote.

The agreements on separation and disengagement of forces after the Yom Kippur War gave rise to Gush Emunim, based on the declaration of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook that, “for Judea and Samaria, for the Golan Heights … someone asked me if I wanted a ‘civil war’ … It won’t come to pass without a war! With our bodies! All of us!” The peace agreement with Egypt gave rise to the Judea, Samaria and Gaza Regional Council, which at its founding convention in 1981 asserted: “The council considers any proposal whose purpose is to hand over parts of the Land of Israel to a foreign sovereign … an illegal act.”

This was the impetus for the activity of the Jewish underground, which even tried to blow up mosques on Jerusalem’s Temple Mount to stop the process. This was also the approach of Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the late chief rabbi of Israel. In 1993 he rejected the legitimate right of the international community and elected institutions in Israel to give up territory on behalf of other values, such as achieving peace, saying, “No national or international law has the power to change our status, our rights.”

All these historical decisions were implemented, as were interim accords between Israel and the Palestinians, and the disengagement from the Gaza Strip – despite heavy pressure from followers of nationalist-messianic Zionism. That was mainly due to the support of the public and the determination of prime ministers, who thought separation from the Palestinians would keep Israel democratic and help maintain its Jewish majority.

And the fifth characteristic: Canonical-secular Zionism saw Israel as a country whose character and regime were democratic and liberal, as Ben-Gurion declared at the founding of the state: “The State of Israel will be … based on freedom, justice and peace … will ensure complete equality of social and political rights … will guarantee freedom of religion …” In the eyes of messianic Zionism, the democratic regime is nothing more than a platform for fulfilling their vision.

“There is no ingathering of exiles, no revival of the state and its security, but only initial stages … we have before us tremendous additional goals that are an integral part of Zionism, and first and foremost: establishing ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,’ bringing the Shekhina (the divine presence) back to Zion, founding the kingdom of the House of David and building the Temple – as a key point for tikkun olam (repairing the world) in the kingdom of God,” wrote settler leader Hanan Porat in the introduction to the book “Against All Odds.”

Until recently the political system in Israel was led by canonical-secular Zionism, and the reigning ideology, which defines what is good and what is bad, gave preference to democracy, a Jewish majority, security and membership in the family of nations – not Greater Israel. In that context it enabled nationalist-messianic Zionism to challenge the existing order.

Today, due to the revolution undergone by the Likud movement, the successor of Herut and the Revisionist movement, by adopting the ideology of national-messianic Zionism and joining forces with it – the order of priorities in the three supreme goals of Zionism has changed. Likud together with the nationalist-messianic parties, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked, are leading the battle to undermine the Supreme Court, the gatekeepers, the rule of law, civil and human rights, Israel’s relationship with Diaspora Jewry, the status and image of the country – and all for the sake of the illusion of Greater Israel, in which there is no Jewish majority at present.

“We have to mark the dream,” declared Bennett in October 2016, “and the dream is that Judea and Samaria will be part of the sovereign Land of Israel.” In September 2017, Bezalel Smotrich said: “There is room here for the definition and fulfillment of national aspirations of only one people: the Jewish people … National aspirations? Palestinians? Not here. Not at our expense.” And last July the prime minister summed up: “We will go on to the next stage, gradual Israeli sovereignty in the territories of Judea and Samaria.”

Next week’s election is likely to bring about the death of the dual identities, Jewish and democratic, of the State of Israel – in light of the policy adopted by the government in connection with the diplomatic process for separation from the Palestinians; the status of religion in the state and in politics; minority rights; the rights and status of women; the status of civic-social organizations; and the right to engage in a public battle over all those things.

These trends are being advanced by politicians who interpret democracy as the right of the majority to determine every issue. They reject the democratic principle that the majority can rule only on condition that it guarantees the rights of the minority and the individual – the objective of democracy. The world is seen as an arena in which the prevailing logic is a zero-sum game. Less for the other camp means more for my camp; anyone who doesn’t support me is by necessity against me. There is no room for those who are different, both socially and politically. This is an anti-democratic government campaign, which believes: If you don’t succeed to convince others – then vilify, silence and outlaw.

For over 100 years canonical-secular Zionism was dominant in Israeli society. It enabled the existence and development of its rival: nationalist-messianic Zionism. Today, when nationalist-messianic Zionism is gradually taking over the birthright, thanks to public apathy, it considers shared existence as shatnez (a prohibited mixture), demonstrates zero tolerance and declares that canonical-secular Zionism must be destroyed.

When Shlomo Goren was asked in an interview with the daily Yedioth Ahronoth on April 16, 1965, how he saw the State of Israel in terms of the vision of the messianic redemption of the Jewish people, he said: “Halakha [religious law] rejects the possibility of an interim situation in the historical process, and recognizes only three periods: the first, from the conquest of the land by Joshua bin Nun until the destruction of the Temple; the second, the period of exile; the third, the messianic period. I believe that we are now at the beginning of this period … I believe with total faith that we will be privileged to see the building of the Temple.”

The results of the upcoming election, more than all its predecessors, and the government that will be formed, will prove whether the ideological war between canonical-secular Zionism and nationalist-messianic Zionist has been decided. In such a case, those believing in canonical Zionism will be required to give up their dream, and only one of three possibilities – which already taking shape at differing intensities – will be left for them: a struggle that is likely to lead to a civil war as well, emigration from the State of Israel or life as anusim (the forcibly converted).