

Sacred Rebellion: Socialism and Messianic Religious Zionism

Introduction

THE EGYPTIAN EXODUS is the foundational event in Jewish history. Our self-understanding as Jews, our relationship to each other as a people, and our connection to God as our sovereign and redeemer all emerge out of the exodus. Through familiarity with the Biblical account of the exodus, others in the Western world have looked back to the exodus as an orienting point for their own revolutionary and transformative political agendas. This is the subject of Michael Walzer's fascinating book, *Exodus and Revolution*. In a chilling coda to that book, Walzer contrasts an exodus political orientation with the alternative, political messianism.

Messianism is the great temptation of Western politics. Its source and spur is the apparent endlessness of the Exodus march. . . . Why be content with the difficult and perhaps interminable struggle for holiness and justice when there is another promised land where liberation is final, fulfillment complete? History itself is a burden from which we long to escape, and messianism guarantees that escape.¹

Walzer's book is an extended praise of the power and potential of the exodus paradigm and he warns against the dangers of political messianism:

Then politics is absolute, enemies satanic, compromise impossible. . . . It's only when the struggle is an ultimate one that choice can be so radically restricted. For men and women working within the Exodus tradition, however, choice more commonly takes on a different character. There is no ultimate struggle, but a long series of decisions, backslidings, and reforms.²

Walzer was inspired to research the resonance of the exodus for political reformers and revolutionaries after witnessing the use of the exodus story by preachers working with the American Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.³ His warnings against political messianism must also be understood in the context of the late 20th century, in some ways the spiritual and intellectual world in which we still live. Political extremism and violent nationalist ideologies had unleashed two global wars upon the world. An ideologically driven Cold War perpetually threatened to destroy civilization in a nuclear Armageddon. Only political tolerance and flexibility, attributes Walzer claims are precluded by messianic politics, could guarantee our very survival. The world in which Walzer wrote, and to some degree the world in which we still live, exists in a post-ideological age in the shadow of the disappointment of the large ideological movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The greatest disappointment of all was the failure of Communism to live up to the lofty hopes of its early adherents. The failure of the messianic promise of Communism was so painful to so many because the hopes were so expansive.

The Zionist movement, in all its permutations, has straddled the divide between a pragmatic quest for historical improvement and messianic utopianism. Only the messianic promise of the return to Zion could have motivated the Jewish masses to support Zionism, yet pragmatic non-messianic thinking has been necessary for the Zionist movement and the State of Israel to survive in the world of history and politics. In the pages that follow, I will explore the role of messianism among some of the most ardent Socialists associated with Religious Zionism in the early 20th century. As committed Socialists, the Religious Zionist leaders whose thought will be examined in this paper, Samuel Hayyim Landau, Rabbi Yeshayah Shapiro, and Moshe Unna, were supporters of a transformative economic program that elsewhere was associated with a sort of “secular messianism.” At the same time, these individuals were all Orthodox Jews of one stream or another, and remained committed to the messianic vision of the Prophets of Israel, as understood within the context of the Religious Zionist movement. Out of this tension, the thinkers developed a Zionist philosophy in which messianism played an important role. For each of these men, however, the Socialist vision did not inform the messianic element of their Zionism. It is worth contemplating whether Zionism and the State of Israel surviving in a post-ideological world after other 20th century ideologies have fallen is the result of the sort of flexible messianic anticipations, not connected to a specific political or economic program, advocated by the Socialist Religious Zionists examined in this paper.

Socialist Messianism and Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx distinguishes his own communist socialism from earlier utopian socialist schemes. Utopian socialism, to Marx, represented a primitive stage of socialism arising in an economy with an undeveloped proletariat. Their schemes for reform remain “social utopias.”⁶ Notwithstanding Marx’s wish to establish a variety of socialism that was scientific and free from utopian dreams, the post-revolutionary era in the Soviet Union saw the spread of utopian expectations for the new communist era.

To get a sense of the type of messianic thinking unleashed by Communism, it is helpful to look at one fascinating example. In 1924, the Soviet author Innokenty Zhukov wrote a science-fiction story recounting a voyage by a group of “Young Leninist Pioneers,” a youth movement troupe, to the year 1957. In the future, the youngsters encounter a Young Leninist Pioneer troupe from 1957 who recount the prior thirty years of world history to the time-travelers from 1924:

The heroic Red Army, like a mighty armored fist, rained blow after blow upon the dwindling armies of capital’s stooges. Several more years passed in agonizing but heroic battle before the whole world was adorned with red banners, like red flowers. The Great Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, founded in 1923, was joined voluntarily by all the peoples of the earth, and turned the world into a peaceful commune. War on earth ceased forever. Mankind, liberated, became master of the world. With the disappearance of oppression and violent force, enlightenment swept the world in a broad wave. Magnificent scientific discoveries and inventions gradually made mankind’s life on earth easy and joyful - just like a holiday, yet not idle.⁷

In this passage, the sober scientific analysis of Marxist economics has been replaced by unrestrained expectations of a radically transformed world. In that same story, Zhukov describes the differences between the 1924 Young Leninist Pioneers and their 1957 counterparts:

Liberated from capitalist slavery, the workers of the world had created a new healthy life on earth. Science had learned to defeat and prevent disease, and new people were born and grew as sturdy and strong as steel. Daily physical exercise strengthened their muscles, straightened their spines, and made their lungs breathe freely and easily.⁸

The very fiber of humanity has been transformed into something stronger and more refined. The new social order has created a new type of human

being. The new economic and social order of post-revolutionary Soviet Russia was seen to be a departure of such large proportions, that it could not have failed to inspire utopian fantasy of a redeemed world. It is telling that Zhukov turned to science fiction for a genre that could express his hopes for the new Soviet human being. This utopian element of supposedly somber Marxist Socialism is nothing less than secular messianism. The hopes and vision of the future, as depicted in Zhukov's story overlap with the transformed world depicted in messianic prophecies. The socialist economic transformation was the catalyst and fuel of Communist messianic hopes for a transformed humanity.

During the same years that Zhukov wrote science fiction describing the new world as foreseen by Soviet Communism, a new offshoot of religious Zionism was setting down roots in agricultural settlements across Palestine. Founded in 1922, *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi*, the *Mizrahi Workers Party*, was responsible for the establishment of several dozen *moshavim* and *kibutzim* during the British mandate period.

A messianic current animates the thought of some of the key ideologues of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* in the Twenties and Thirties. Dov Schwartz has argued that the establishment of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* marked a rejection of the careful excision, cultivated so carefully by Rabbis Moholiver and Reines, of Messianism from the *Mizrahi*.⁹ The Zionist pioneer labor, primarily road paving and collective agriculture, that was undertaken by members of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* was seen to be a departure of such large proportions from traditional European Jewish life that it could not fail to inspire hopes for a redeemed world and redeemed Jews.¹⁰ Unlike their counterparts in Soviet Russia, however, the socialist component of socialist religious Zionism was incidental to the messianic aspirations of the movement and not integral. Socialism was the framework within which the ideologues of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* undertook the task of settling *Eretz Yisrael* and building a new type of Jew—and *that* undertaking, the settling and building of *Eretz Yisrael* by redeemed Jews, was integral to their messianic aspirations and messianic agenda.

Beyond the secularized messianism of Marxist Communism, a more immediate intellectual context for the messianic elements of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi*, is the secularized messianism of the broader Zionist movement. The messianic current that runs through the intellectual history of Zionism has been described by Arthur Hertzberg in his introduction to *The Zionist Idea*:

From the Jewish perspective messianism, and not nationalism, is the primary element in Zionism. The very name of the movement evoked the

dream of an end of days, of an ultimate release from the exile and a coming to rest in the land of Jewry's heroic age.¹¹

Thus the transformation that Zionism sought to effect was a transformation already anticipated in the ancient Jewish messianic dream. The Zionist innovation was the means by which the age-old dream would be realized. In Hertzberg's words, "Zionism is Jewish Messianism in process of realizing itself through this-worldly means."¹²

The messianic elements of general, non-religious, Zionism decisively influenced the messianic agenda of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi*, and through them the broader *Mizrahi* community. Hertzberg sees messianic elements in Herzl's Zionist ideology in Herzl's optimism:

[W]hat he offered was Zionism as optimism, as the most complex of modern Jewish reconciliation's with the world. Messianism is the essence of his stance, because he claimed the historical inevitability of a Jewish state in a world of peaceful nations.¹³

As Hertzberg explains, Herzl's political solution to the problem of anti-semitism; an internationally recognized charter for Jewish statehood in Palestine, alleviating the status of diaspora Jewry, and ridding Europe of the embarrassing phenomenon of antisemitism, displayed an optimistic expectation of a peaceful and better future sure to come that can only be described as messianic in nature, if not in specific content. This messianic world view colored the whole of Zionism in hopeful shades of a redeemed world.

A more specific influence upon *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi's* messianic thought are the messianic currents within secular labor Zionism. Nahum Syrkin (1867-1924), an early and influential advocate of socialist Zionism and activist in *Po'alei Zion* saw universal import in Jewish socialism. Writing in 1898, Syrkin called upon his fellow Jews to, "become the vanguard of socialism."¹⁴ The victory of socialism, as Syrkin imagined it, would lead to the fulfillment of messianic dreams:

Socialism will do away with wars, tariffs, and the conflict of economic interests among civilized peoples; it will eliminate the possibility of the oppression of one nation by another, and it will increase commercial and cultural intercourse, thus creating a common base of interests and purposes among the civilized nations. This will pave the way for the uniting of their separate histories, which will weld them into one humanity.¹⁵

Although socialism has become the principle element of Syrkin's secularized messianism, the Jewish people still retained a central role within the unfolding of global redemption:

Because the Jews are placed in an unusual situation, that they are forced to find a homeland and establish a state, they therefore have been presented with the opportunity to be the first to realize the socialist vision...what is utopian in other contexts is a necessity for the Jews...Israel is to be compared to a sleeping giant, arising from the slough of despair and darkness and straightening up to his infinite heights. His face is rimmed by rays of glory of the pain of the world which he has suffered on his own body. He knows his task, to do justice and proclaim truth. His tragic history has resulted in a high mission. He will redeem the world which crucified him. Israel will once again become the chosen of the peoples.¹⁶

This secularized messianic vision saw socialism as the path to a redeemed world and saw socialist Zionism as the Jewish people's opportunity to lead the world to this brighter future. As was alluded to earlier, and will be shown later, *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* theorists' socialism was less central to their messianic expectations and messianic agenda. Yosef Salmon has noted the paradoxical nature of secular Zionist messianism:

The dilemma [between messianism and normalization] was harder and more complicated for Secular Zionism, for at the same time it wanted, more than Religious Zionism, greater normalization and also more messianism.¹⁷

Only secular Zionists looked to "normalize" the Jewish people and the Socialists among them saw messianic universal significance to Zionism beyond what most religious Zionists believed. Salmon writes:

In the Socialist movements of Eretz Yisrael the messianic idea was widespread. Berl Katznelson was the one who established, as early as 1918 (at an agricultural conference) that Hebrew labor is carrying out the "work of redemption." His words were said in response to the Balfour Declaration "that serves as a shofar of redemption."¹⁸

David Ben-Gurion continued this messianic trend within secular Zionism into the early years of the State of Israel. Writing that, "the redemption of Israel is a component of the redemption of humanity, the vision of the end of days of our prophets had a universal element for all people, without diminishing its specific Jewish content."¹⁹

Samuel Hayyim Landau

Samuel Hayyim Landau (1892-1928) was among the ideologues and activists responsible for the establishment and early leadership of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi*. Hailing from the Hasidic court of Kotzk, Landau achieved prominence as an essayist, polemicist and movement activist in Europe. His first comprehensive essay, "*Oraittha ve-Yisra'el*" was published in Europe in the journal "*Ha-Mizrahi*" in 1920.²⁰ He advanced in influence within the Polish branches of the *Mizrahi* and specifically within the *Mizrahi* Youth and within *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* after its founding.

S. Don-Yehiya places Landau's Zionism within the context of Landau's Hasidic yearning for redemption. He could not accommodate himself to the cautious approach of the *Mizrahi* which presented Zionism as merely a means to alleviate the physical condition of the Jewish people in exile.²¹ The cautious *Mizrahi* position, adopted perhaps in an effort to placate *Haredi* anti-Zionists, manifested itself in three specific *Mizrahi* policy positions which Landau objected to. The *Mizrahi* supported Herzl and the political Zionists in relegating cultural and educational efforts to the margins of the Zionist agenda (out of a fear of upsetting traditional religious education), the *Mizrahi* supported the Uganda plan as a means to achieve its stated goal of providing a safe haven for oppressed Jews, and the *Mizrahi* devoted its institutional energy towards building its membership and thus its influence in the highest levels of the Zionist movement's efforts to secure international support for a Jewish state. Promoting and supporting the *aliyah* of religious pioneers was not a priority for the *Mizrahi* and the number of religious pioneers in the early years of the twentieth century reflect that.²² Landau was a Zionist out of a belief that Zionism was a movement to bring about the national redemption of the Jewish people. This required educational efforts, it could only occur in Palestine and it could only be accomplished by *aliyah* and pioneer labor. In the aftermath of the First World War, enough Religious Zionists were of a similar mind to make possible the establishment of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* as an independent movement within the *Mizrahi*.

Landau took part in the great *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* debates over joining the secular *Histadrut* labor federation. This debate pitted a "leftist" faction of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* that advocated an alignment with the Jewish working class in Palestine even at the expense of membership within the broader international *Mizrahi* movement, against a "rightist" faction which sought to maintain the unity of all religious Zionists and were put off by the

Marxism of the *Histadrut*. Landau advocated a moderate position during these debates until his *aliyah* in 1926. During the few years of his life that he lived directly among the *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* pioneers, Landau shifted his allegiance to the “leftist” faction of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi*.

Landau’s religious and intellectual development, together with a basic outline of his life, along with extensive direct quotations from Landau’s published writings, are contained in a short biography of Landau written by S. Don-Yehiya. Don-Yehiya describes Landau’s shift on the *Histadrut* question. While in Europe, Landau was wary of too close an alignment with the *Histadrut*. The secularity of the *Histadrut* was not the only difference between *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* and the *Histadrut*:

The *Histadrut* has set for itself, along with building The Land, socialist goals, revolution, and class warfare, as among its most important principles. Not so the *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi*, which announced from its earliest days, that its agenda was not class warfare. Our agenda is to build The Land without revolution and without a socialist *Shulhan Arukh*.²³

In another context, Landau rote similarly of a broader division between religious socialist Zionism and secular socialist Zionism:

The goal of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* is different from the goal of a secular Zionist worker. The secular worker comes to improve his lot in *Eretz Yisra'el* through class warfare, based in a type of Socialism that sees only materialist laws in creation which cause perpetual struggle between one class and another - and each class rallies for its own justice. On the other hand, *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* fights for the building of The Land on the basis of social justice of the Torah.²⁴

These selections from the “early” writings of Landau (in so much as one can speak of early and late writings of a man who died at age 36), clearly present a Religious Zionist thinker, yearning for national renewal, seeing labor as a crucial means to achieve that end, and yet rejecting Marxist categories to interpret that labor activity.

Following his *aliyah* in 1926, Landau shifted his views on the relationship between *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* and secular labor Zionism. Don Yehiya quotes Eliyahu Rothstein, a colleague of Landau’s within *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi*, on Landau’s evolving opinions:

He came to teach, and found himself learning. . . . He found here, in The Land, a life that was different in its essence that could not be evaluated with the measuring tools of men of the exile. Landau would say, “the stones of *Eretz Yisra'el* have taught me to see things anew from how I saw

them in exile.” After he had rebelled against convention and went after his own truth in all ways that were revealed to him, he examined afresh the question of the relationship of *Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrachi* and the *Histadrut*. . . . He grabbed hold of the Jewish revolution at its roots. This is the explanation of the phrase “the holy rebellion” that did not leave his mouth as a mere adornment of speech, but rather as a slogan of his movement in the manner of, “this [i.e. the slogan] is the whole Torah and now go and study.” After a period of time for the ideal of Religious Zionism, he came and called for rebellion. It is impossible to build without rebellion, that is, without hardship and without suffering...He built ties with the Leftists within *Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrachi*; among these young men he found a kernel for the renewal of religious Judaism and an expression of the destiny of *Torah ve-Avodah*. . . . He considered *Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrachi* to be the foundation out of which will flower the new man in Israel.²⁵

Landau built ties with the Leftists of *Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrachi* because he saw their pioneer labor actively creating a new Jew and a foundation for renewed Jewish national life.

There is an implicit messianic element in any Jewish call for “rebellion” against the exile and its modes of Jewish life. The role of labor in Landau’s messianic vision is clear in the following selection from his 1924 essay, “Towards An Explanation of Our Ideology:”

The desire to make “*Avodah*” a basic premise of the renaissance is actually an organic expression of the essence of the movement of national rebirth—this is the new word of the labor movement in *Eretz Yisra’el*. Labor is important not for economic reasons, or even for the sake of social morality and righteousness (lofty though these values be), but for the sake of the renaissance. All the rest is commentary on this basic idea, that “*Avodah*” is identical with the national renaissance. . . . Torah cannot be reborn without labor, and labor, as a creative nation-building force, cannot be reborn without Torah—Torah which is the essence of the renaissance. This is the whole of our ideology.²⁶

This quote, however, makes clear that the socialist aspects of Landau’s messianic Zionism were incidental to his messianic theory. The “economic reasons,” “social morality,” and “righteousness” of socialism are not the essence of the messianic potential of Socialist Zionism, as they are for Nahum Syrkin. Labor and socialism, for Landau, represented the means by which the Jewish people had the potential to rebel against exile and build a new Jewish life in *Eretz Yisrael*, leading towards redemption.

Rabbi Yeshayahu Shapiro

Rabbi Yeshayahu Shapiro (1891-1945) was one of the few rabbis among the ideological leaders of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrachi*. Like Samuel Hayyim Landau and most members of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrachi*, R. Shapiro was born into a Hasidic family in Eastern Europe.²⁷ Specifically, he descended from an illustrious line of Hasidic *rebbe'im*—his brother, R. Kalonymous Shapiro, was the leader of the Hasidic court of *Piasecznie* and offered brave spiritual resistance as a rabbi in the Warsaw ghetto—his *divrei Torah* from the war years were posthumously published as the book *Eish Kodesh*.

R. Shapiro was one of the founders of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrachi* and wrote, in a number of places on the relationship of socialism to the religious Zionism of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrachi*. S. Don-Yehiya, author of the short biography of Landau, also wrote a short biography of R. Shapiro titled “*Adm*” or *Halutz*,” or “Pioneer Rabbi.”²⁸ Several of R. Shapiro’s published essays are printed in *Adm*” or *Halutz* along with a detailed account of his lineage and a basic outline of his life story.

Don-Yehiya’s book prints a large portion of R. Shapiro’s programmatic essay “You Shall Do The Straight and the Good,” which is devoted to explicating the Torah’s perspective on socialism and private property. R. Shapiro cannot deny that private ownership of property and commercial life are basic assumptions of *halakhah*. However, R. Shapiro argues that the Jewish call for a morality that is beyond strict legal requirements, the, “straight and the good” and “you shall be holy,” as understood by *Ramban* among others, is a call for a socialist reliance upon the work of one’s own hands and communal ownership of property:

It is incumbent upon us to create here a lifestyle which will be not merely permissible from a strict legal sense, but also in the spirit of “You shall be holy,” and “Do that which is right and good in the eyes of God.” And if we weigh the matter in this way, we shall see that Judaism, in no way is in favor of private property, but is against it. If there is any place in Judaism for the “*yesh omrim*” that “what’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is yours,” the foundation of private property, is nothing but “*midat Sodom*,” then it is clear that this is not an orientation in favor of ownership of property.²⁹

R. Shapiro then traces the philosophical right to property. Based upon John Locke, in his *Second Treatise of Government*,³⁰ R. Shapiro identifies the individual’s legal ownership of property as arising from labor:

The sole method of acquisition that a person has in the world is labor. For only something that one acquires through his labor is his. For only the power of labor was not given collectively to all of creation, but instead to each individual separately.³¹

Through these passages, and many similar passages drawing on Biblical and rabbinic proofs, R. Shapiro presented an understanding of the Torah's moral values that embrace a socialist appraisal of private property.

This socialist ethic was important to R. Shapiro's messianic hopes for the Zionist enterprise. "Anyone who yearns," R. Shapiro wrote, "to fulfill in his soul the requirement of 'You shall be holy,' and 'You shall do that which is straight and good,' must live exclusively through the work of his own hands and in no circumstances off of the labor of another."³² This was the only way that an individual could be certain that he was not inadvertently oppressing another. Furthermore, R. Shapiro argued that the return to Zion must be established upon this ideal of moral cleanliness and out of a striving for ethical perfection:

As we are beginning to return to our land, it falls upon us to yearn for a return to a situation wherein the law of the land will be in congruence with the principle of "You shall do that which is right and good." "You shall not act at all as we now act here, every man as he pleases, because you have not yet come to the allotted haven that the Lord your God is giving you." As we are beginning to return to that allotted haven, it is upon us to not act as each individual that which is right in his eyes, but rather "the right and the good in the eyes of the Lord."³³

Only if the return to Zion is a return to Judaism's socialist moral orientation can the spiritual component of exile be repaired. The condition of exile itself, to R. Shapiro, has caused a corruption of Jewish ethical evaluations that a return to Zion must repair:

When Nathan the prophet told King David about the rich man that stole the sheep of the poor man, the matter touched his heart to such a great extent that he declared a death sentence upon the rich man. Can one even imagine anyone today who would declare a death sentence on one who steals the sheep of a poor man? Of course we know full well the seriousness of the prohibitions against stealing, tormenting (*ona'ah*), spreading gossip, slander, baseless hatred, or embarrassing another in public. However violating these prohibitions no longer arouses within us the same agitation as is caused by the violation of other prohibitions such as eating forbidden foods. . . . A man who holds on to the wages of

his employer or who spreads gossip is indeed considered to be not quite right—but he will not be considered as one who is secular and irreligious even though these prohibitions are not at all lighter than others. This situation is the outcome of the long exile.³⁴

If exile has caused the social morality of the Torah to lose its force within the Jewish people's collective religious consciousness, repairing the damage of exile must involve a return to Judaism's socialist economics. R. Shapiro identified this theme as one that recurs repeatedly in the history of religious Zionism.

When we look over the writings of the first Zionists of *Hovevei Zion*, especially to the traditional ones among them, what stands out from those writings is the desire to become liberated from the habits of exile and to build in The Land a life without tormenting and oppression, without jealousy or competition or baseless hatred. For this reason the common vision of all of them was working the land and creating a life of physical labor.³⁵

For R. Shapiro, physical labor, socialist economic principles, and a national life free from oppression and based upon interpersonal *mitzvot* were all necessary for a renewal of Jewish life in a manner that was complete. However, R. Shapiro does not present socialism or social equality as an integral element of the messianic age. As was the case with Landau, socialism was an accidental component of R. Shapiro's messianism. A full Jewish life, to R. Shapiro, must reflect a religious orientation that takes social economic justice with the utmost seriousness. A full Jewish life, must reflect a striving to realize Judaism's idealistic ethical demands. But socialism is just one component among many that R. Shapiro believed were components of a full and renewed Jewish life.

Moshe Unna and the Religious Kibbutz Movement

Within *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi*, one might expect the strongest expressions of religious socialism to emerge from ideologues associated with *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati*. Most members of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* who established and lived on collective farms chose to live on *moshavim*. This is the opposite of the general trend favoring *kibbutzim* among secular collective farmers of the early decades of the twentieth century.³⁶ The members of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* who chose, therefore, to live on *kibbutzim*, were the elite socialist vanguard of religious Zionism. However, unlike the majority of members of *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* (and unlike the majority of Jews then living in Palestine), *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati*, founded in 1935, was populated, by a large

majority, by Germans. These Germans embraced the more developed socialism of the kibbutz out of a commitment to socialism that was distinct from the Hasidic yearnings for Jewish life based upon physical labor. The Germans came to Palestine having already been exposed to modernity in Europe. It was their modernity, and not a mystical yearning, that drove the Germans to *kibbutzim*. The writings that emerge from *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati* contain eloquent defenses of socialist economics and critiques of capitalism. They contain calls for practical Zionism that demands activist pioneer labor in service of the nation. But they do not contain messianic visions that are rooted in the socialist societies then being built on the *kibbutzim*.

Moshe Unna (1903-1988) was a founder of *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati* and a vocal advocate for its cause. In an essay titled "Foundations of *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati* and its Purpose" Unna explained that the turn to socialism arose out of a negative appraisal of the existing capitalist order:

The feeling grew stronger, and this was a general phenomenon, that the situation in which the individual and community find themselves placed in the capitalist world can no longer be tolerated and this framework should be broken in order to find a new way that is more suitable to the ideals of justice and righteousness.³⁷

This negative appraisal of capitalism and the turn towards socialism was not an a-priori ideological stance, rather, Unna explained, it emerged as a response to perceived problems in the status-quo:

A movement can develop in two ways. 1) A movement that begins its path and continues according to an ideological line that was fashioned before its creation. . . . 2) A movement that arise out of specific needs of a known community . . . I don't want to determine here which way of development is more suitable for a movement. It is enough for us to recognize that our movement has traveled the second path. Our movement is not based upon an ideal that was clear and certain from the outset.³⁸

This is a very different sort of advocacy on behalf of socialism than Landau or R. Shapiro's attempts to ground socialism within the preexisting sources of Judaism. Unna did indeed believe that socialism was the the system of social organization that was most in keeping with Jewish values, but that recognition was not the catalyst for *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati*. Rather, the move to create religious *kibbutzim* grew out of a pragmatic response to existing challenges. Socialism and the *kibbutzim* were seen as the best solutions to the problems of capitalism and the best means to achieve the practical goals of Zionist settlement.

Unna makes this even more clear in an essay of his entitled “The Prophetic Destiny and Religious Socialism: the Ideological Foundation of *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati*.” Part of the essay is devoted to demarcating the distinctions between *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati* and the broader *Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrahi* movement with its Hasidic orientation. The ideology of Landau and R. Shapiro was characterized by Unna as prophetic destiny, whereas his own ideological school was characterized as religious socialism:

The slogan “prophetic destiny” asks of us to set up the social vision of the prophets in our day through our own actions. It comes to emphasize the social question through the approach of religious Judaism and to mark the way for traditional Judaism to solve it. It is not a scientific socialism based upon cold logic and research, rather a socialism based upon relationships between people and religious traditions. Not class warfare but clarifying obligations. . . . In contrast, “religious socialism” is a progressive modern scientific approach. . . . This is its approach to solving problems. Just as we use modern statistics to solve technical problems that arise... just as we use geological research to improve crops...without accepting materialist ideas that are brought by the developments of these sciences, so to it is upon us to conduct ourselves regarding the various questions of society.³⁹

There is an ironic component of Unna’s socialism. Although *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati* cultivated stronger allegiance to socialism than the broader *Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrahi* movement, the socialist elements within *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati* were merely instrumental to the national and religious goals of the movement. *Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrahi* theorists, such as Landau and R. Shapiro, gave a more central role within their thought to socialism, even as they advocated a more moderate socialist agenda than the *kibbutzim*.

Conclusions

Samuel Hayyim Landau, Rabbi Yeshayahu Shapiro, and Moshe Unna were all committed socialists who each developed political and religious philosophies that combined socialism with religious Zionism. Each of these thinkers and activists were committed to a vision of Zionism that was colored in messianic hues. The cautious messianic stance of Rabbi Reines and the *Mizrahi* was abandoned within *Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrahi*. However, the type of utopian messianic visions that Soviet Communism, and secular socialist Zionism inspired, were absent from the thought of each of these men. Their most enthusiastic endorsements of socialism remain short of the messianic.

What is different about the messianic stance of religious Jews that preempted the growth of a socialist messianic vision?

Jacob Katz in an essay entitled "Israel and the Messiah" identified a characteristic of Jewish messianism that sets it apart from other messianic hopes and messianic movements. Katz's observation may also answer the above question:

Probably as early as the Babylonian captivity, but certainly after the destruction of the Second Temple, the plight that required redemption was mainly not that of the Jews of Palestine but that of the Jews in exile. And the plight was not economic scarcity, social degradation, or spiritual decadence, although all these at times may have been experienced as adversities to be overcome by the redeemer. Once in exile, the Jews tended to understand these sufferings as mere byproducts of a basic deficiency, namely, exile itself, the condition of banishment. . . . This dependence of Jewish messianism on the concrete situation of exile sets it apart from the millenarian fantasies of other socially or nationally suppressed groups. . . . Jewish messianism has a point of reference in the factual history of the Jewish people. Jews had at one time lived in their own country, their own commonwealth; it was there they hoped to return in the messianic age.⁴⁰

At its heart, Jewish messianism responds to the Jewish perception of exile, rooted in Jewish history. The Zionist attempt to reverse the Jewish exile was an agenda fraught with messianic implications. The messianic implications of the end to exile and a return to Zion were so great, that the dramatic economic and social transformations promoted by *Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrahi* failed to elicit competing messianic excitement.

NOTES

1. Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 135.
2. *Ibid.*, 148.
3. *Ibid.*, 3.
4. *Ibid.*, 144. See also references cited in n. 19.
5. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Communist Manifesto" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 497.
6. *Ibid.*, 499.
7. Innokenty Zhukov, "Voyage of the Red Star Pioneer Troop to Wonderland," in

- Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*, eds. James von Geldern and Richard Stites (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 96.
8. *Ibid.*, 98-99.
 9. Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism: History and Ideology* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing, 2003), 60.
 10. In a number of articles and books, the Israeli scholar Yosef Salmon has argued that messianism was a central, if sometimes silent, element of Zionist and anti-Zionist Jewish thought from the very origins of Zionism. See, most recently, Yosef Salmon, *Do Not Provoke Providence: Orthodoxy in the Grip of Nationalism* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2006). Even if Salmon is correct, so, too, is Schwartz and the conventional narrative. The *Mizrachi* did attempt to control and contain messianic rhetoric.
 11. Arthur Hertzberg, "Introduction," in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 16.
 12. *Ibid.* 17.
 13. *Ibid.*, 45.
 14. Nahum Syrkin, "The Jewish Problem and the Socialist-Jewish State" in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 340.
 15. *Ibid.*, 342.
 16. *Ibid.*, 350.
 17. Yosef Salmon, "Messianism and Normalization in Secular Zionist Thought," in *Do Not Provoke Providence: Orthodoxy in the Grip of Nationalism* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2006) 289. All translations into English of Salmon are my own.
 18. *Ibid.*, 293.
 19. David Ben-Gurion, *Vision and Path* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Mapai), quoted in Salmon, "Messianism and Normalization," 294.
 20. S. Don-Yehiya, *The Holy Rebellion: Samuel Hayyim Landau and his Work* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1960), 41.
 21. *Ibid.*, 55.
 22. *Ibid.*, 59.
 23. *Ibid.*, 79.
 24. *Ibid.*, 70.
 25. *Ibid.*, 121.
 26. Landau, "Towards An Explanation of Our Ideology," in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 437- 439.
 27. Aryei Fishman, *Judaism and Modernization on the Religious Kibbutz* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 55.
 28. S. Don-Yehiya, Adm"or Halutz: *The Aliyah of R. Yeshayahu Shapiro* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1961). Don-Yehiya shares an unusual last name with Yehudah Leib Don-Yehiya (1869-1941), a student of Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk and early rabbinic supporter of the *Mizrachi*. Yehuda Leib Don-Yehiya hailed from a Lithuanian Hasidic family. The common name and the interest in Zionists with Hasidic orientations suggests that S. Don-Yehiya was a relative, perhaps a son, of Yehudah Leib Don-Yehiya. Yehudah Leib Don-Yehiya's recollections of his days as a student at the Yeshiva of Vollozhon, including his interactions with H.N. Bialak,

are printed in Immanuel Etkes and Shlomo Tikochinsky, eds., *Memoirs of the Lithuanian Yeshiva* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2004), 152-163.

29. Don-Yehiya, Admo"r Halutz, 153.
 30. Chapter Five, Section 27. At first, I assumed that the similarity between R. Shapiro's formulation to that of Locke's was a coincidence. After rereading Locke's formulation, I am now convinced that R. Shapiro's theory of ownership was either directly or indirectly derived from this passage in Locke's Second Treatise:

Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a *property* in his own *person*: this no body has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the *work* of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *labour* with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *property*. (John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, ed. Crawford Brough Macpherson [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1980], 19)

31. Don-Yehiya, Admo"r Halutz, 154.
 32. *Ibid.*, 157.
 33. *Ibid.*, 157.
 34. *Ibid.*, 159.
 35. *Ibid.*, 160.
 36. Aryei Fishman, *Judaism and Collective Life: Self and Community in the Religious Kibbutz* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.
 37. Moshe Unna, "Foundations of *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Dati*," in *On the Paths of Thought and Action* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1955), 61.
 38. *Ibid.*, 60.
 39. *Ibid.*, 52-53.
 40. Jacob Katz, "Israel and the Messiah," in *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*, ed. Marc Saperstein (New York: NYU Press, 1992), originally published in *Commentary* 73 (January 1982), 476-477

Sacred Rebellion: Socialism and Messianic. Religious Zionism. Introduction. THE EGYPTIAN EXODUS is the foundational event in Jewish history.Â The messianic elements of general, non-religious, Zionism decisively influenced the messianic agenda of Ha-Poâ€™el Ha-Mizrahi, and through them the broader Mizrahi community. Hertzberg sees messianic elements in Herzlâ€™s Zionist ideology in Herzlâ€™s optimism: [W]hat he offered was Zionism as optimism, as the most complex of modern Jewish reconciliationâ€™s with the world.