

## Pragmatism and the Logic of Jewish Political Messianism

© 2013 Peter Ochs, University of Virginia

**In *Pragmatic Studies in Judaism*, ed. Andrew Schumann (Judaism in Context 14: (Gorgias Press, 2013): pp. 167-192.**

By the standards of reasoning employed in this essay, Jewish political eschatologies are not disciplined by any fully coherent rules of reasoning, including rules internal to these eschatologies. The one exception is if and when an eschatology is pragmatic, or what I call a “meantime eschatology”: one that designates a this-worldly end to some specific, identifiable conditions of suffering while bracketing any claim about the ultimate finality of this end. Typical of claims in the *chumash*, this kind of eschatology is logically comparable to the claims of contemporary empirical science: predicting the likelihood that a certain problem may be resolved in a certain way within a certain time. Such eschatologies are falsifiable. By these standards, I have not yet identified any modern eschatological claim that is rationally coherent, including any claim about the finality of the current Jewish return to Zion. I have found that very few eschatological claims come close to rational coherence. These are of three kinds: (a) strictly non-final, empirical claims about ways in which a particular suffering or exile of the Jews can most likely be repaired; (b) strictly final, non-empirical claims about the general character of redemption (*geulah*) or the general rules of “returning to Zion” (*shivat tsiyon*); these remain coherent until they are attached to time-specific claims about final redemption within this world; (c) what I have found to be the most valuable and powerful type of eschatological claim: one that draws out of the tradition of return-and-redemption a set of time-specific rules about how some particular suffering or exile of the Jews can most likely be repaired.

*The notion of rationality I employ presumes a scriptural and eschatological context of reasoning.* I assume that “rationality” or “non-rationality” can be ascribed only to modes of inference rather than to beliefs or assumptions. In other words, “reason” refers only to a movement of thinking from belief to belief (or from premises to conclusion), not to any premise or conclusion within an act of reasoning. I therefore evaluate an author’s standards of reasoning only if and when an author invites this evaluation by claiming to discover or to justify something through inference. In such cases, authors tend to present their claims as if they were

rationally coherent. Many of the eschatologies I criticize are highly rationalized: that is, their authors have sought to order some large set of belief and claims into what they consider coherent systems of belief. I criticize these efforts when the activity of synthesis has, at significant points, included incoherent or self-contradictory acts of reasoning. Such authors either fail to recognize these fallacies or else cover them over for the sake of persuading others.

I have three goals in the essay. One is to set out general criteria for distinguishing rational from non-rational messianic claims. Rational claims are those for which public argument makes a difference; non-rational claims may be as true as rational one, but there are no public ways of arguing for them. A second goal is to show that, according to these criteria, the more rational messianic claims are “pragmatic” ones that identify worldly, or what I call “meantime” end times. There is value in public argumentation and discussion of pragmatic claims. Wholly non-pragmatic claims display their truth or falsity only to self-defined subgroups of people; efforts to demonstrate this truth or falsity publicly are either dis-ingenuous or unintentionally misguided. A third goal is to illustrate how the criteria of rationality may be applied. My two test cases are the more pragmatic claims of the haredi thinker the Hazon Ish and the non-pragmatic claims of Rav Avraham Isaac Kuk.

I begin the essay by proposing a set of conditions according to which individual acts of Jewish religious thinking could be judged “rational” or “non-rational.” Labeling these “the postulates of Jewish religious reasoning,” I set out a few general postulates and then offer detailed sub-postulates for only a single case of Jewish religious thinking: “Jewish political messianism,” which, when it is rational, I label “Jewish political eschatological reasoning.” Both rational and non-rational thinking can generate truth-functional claims. The difference is that only rational thinking offers criteria according to which any listener could judge its conclusions to be true or false. Non-rational thinking either lacks such criteria or displays them only to a pre-designated set or class of listeners. In these terms, I believe we can identify if and when an argument for a given political messianism is misleading: misleading arguments are those that present themselves as rational when in fact they are non-rational. These arguments may mislead intentionally or unintentionally (that is, deceptively); either way, they should be carefully separated from non-misleading statements in behalf of a

political messianism. Statements may, to be sure, be utterly false but nonetheless non-misleading. My concern in this essay is not to offer judgments about truth and falsity, particularly in the case of eschatologies whose truth may be known only in the end of days. A statement that is not only non-misleading but also non-rational may, for all we know, turn out to be the truest or most powerful. My concern in this essay is only with something that we can know for sure: how to wade through the often frightening verbiage that collects around messianic claims to identify which aspects of which claims merit further public attention. The best method is to distinguish:

- a) *Claims that are non-rational: the truth of these is to be judged, not by the character of reasonings brought for them, but by some other means.* These means may be empirical, if the claims are about some publicly observable or testable facts occurring in history or and space-time. Or the means may be non-empirical as well as non-rational, in which case I assume they are also non-public. In this case, they may be true or false, but there is no purpose served by promoting public arguments on behalf of their truth or falsity. Such arguments are available only to some self-identified subgroup, whose public arguments, if and when they are offered, should be received either as non-truth-functional or as equivalent to political statements that can be evaluated only according to the strength or weakness of their public effects in achieving some goals of the subgroup.
- b) *Claims that are rational and non-misleading: the truth of these is to be judged by the character of the publicly testable reasonings that are brought for them.* The rationality of such a claim is not a measure of its truth or falsity but only of the availability of public means for measuring that truth or falsity. Rational claims should make reference to these means, so that any listener can evaluate the claims on the basis of those means.
- c) *Claims that are purportedly rational but misleading: these are to be judged as non-rational and, furthermore, as either purposefully deceptive or confused or errant.* Such claims call for corrective action. Those who receive them have reason either (a) to be wary of those who offer them; or (b) to treat the claims as meriting clarification and reclassification.

*The Postulates of Jewish Religious Reasoning: the case of Jewish political eschatology*

1. *Religious reasoning begins with postulates.*
  - a) Postulates are neither true nor false.
  - b) They are evaluated by their success or failure, their strength or weakness in serving as premises of religious reasoning.
  - c) The inadequacies of a given postulate may not become apparent until much time and energy has been devoted to testing it in use.
  - d) Inquirers may therefore prefer to begin with postulates that have been “proven” through longer traditions of inquiry or interpretation.
  
2. *There is a hierarchy among those postulates that derive from antecedent traditions:* (i) The primary postulates are biblical; (ii) The secondary postulates are rabbinic (from the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods), followed by: (iii) Postulates derived by commentaries of the *rishonim* (the early medieval commentators, through the 15<sup>th</sup> century) on the primary and secondary postulates; (iv) Postulates derived from commentaries of the *achronim* (the later commentators, early modern to modern); (v) Postulates derived from subsequent and/or additional sources, depending on the inquirer’s sub-tradition of inquiry; (vi) Postulates derived from efforts of imagination or through a variety of mixed sources (part tradition, part imagination, part recommendation and so on).
  - a) The hierarchical order provides an order of reliability, where postulates from a higher order are presumed to have proven over a greater span of time and thus to be relatively more reliable than those from a lower or more recent order. The degree of reliability does not imply truth or falsity, however; it suggests only how probable it is that a given postulate will prove to be strong.
  - b) Each *rabbinic postulate* is *suggested* by a given verse or trope within the literature of a given order (biblical and so on) or, in cases of the last two stages, by a given form, concept, image, philosophic or other judgment, and so on. *There are several significant and delicate points to add here:*
    - i. Almost all inquirers presume that that all verses of the Bible are indubitable, but what does this mean? For this account, it means that no verse is subject to doubt *as being a suggesting source for the postulates of religious reasoning*. Plain sense study clarifies the meaning of each verse *as*

a suggesting source. But plain sense meanings refer only in most general terms to the subjects of religious reasoning; *what postulates* any verse will suggest therefore remain indeterminate. *This is why the Bible merely suggests rather than dictates the postulates of religious reasoning.*

- ii. For most inquirers, the texts of rabbinic literature also tend to be indubitable but merely suggestive with respect to any particular claim of religious reasoning. They are one step less reliable than the Biblical verses but also one step more determinate with respect to the postulates. Each subsequent order of texts is comparably less reliable and more determinate. The postulate that tells us most clearly what to do in this world is also the least reliable.

3. *Particular acts of religious reasoning are stimulated by space-time specific observations of societal pain or suffering or, secondarily, of problems or challenges perceived within any of the literatures and techniques that serve as resources for religious reasoning.*

- a) The postulates of religious reasoning are sources of specific guidelines for acting in response to such observations. These guidelines, in turn, generate particular directives to act (and or reason) in response to them.
- b) An act of religious reasoning may be defined, formally, as a three-part relation among a given set of observations, a given set of postulates, and a specific set of directives ( the latter would ideally but not necessarily include an account of the space-time specific way that these were in fact undertaken).

4. *Eschatological reasoning is religious reasoning about or in relation to end times. Political eschatological reasoning offers claims about the societal character of a given end time. The elemental postulates of Jewish political eschatological reasoning are suggested by a set of biblical Types.*

a) (Type 1) *Reparative reasoning*: reasoning about “meantime end-times.”

- i. *Cycles of going down to Egypt*: one suggestive source for this Type is the cycle of patriarchal “descents” to Egypt (Gen. 11-12; Gen. 37-50, Ex. 1-19). Here, some crisis compels the patriarch to journey far from home to seek relief the goal is to “go down” and then “return,” once the crisis is resolved. From this perspective, the Exodus account simply extends the time

of going-down. Distending the time of relief, this account may also suggest subsequent Types, but I shall read it within the limits of this Type.

- ii. *Cycles of attacks against the Israelite tribal amphictyony*: the suggestive source is the Book of Judges. Here, the “descent to Egypt” is replaced with the “ascendancy” of a warrior-judge whose purpose is to relieve the Israelites of some shared threat and, therefore, restore them to their previous, decentralized manner of life.
  - iii. *Cycles of Churban (?)*: the suggestive sources in Tanakh include various accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the first temple in the 2 Kings 24-25, the prophetic books, Lamentations, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 2 Chronicles. I add a “?” here because other readers might assign this cycle to one of the other 3Types. From the perspective of rabbinic accounts of the Second Churban, the first Destruction may be read as anticipating some ultimate end. Within the canon of Tanakh, however, I believe it is more appropriately read as a continuation of the “meantime” cycles of “going down to Egypt.” For this essay a whole, this is the Type of what I will call a “reparative” and this-worldly process of *geulh* (redemption). In a time of famine or terrifying attack or destruction, or exile, biblical figures may seek divine aid. The purpose and end of this aid is to bring relief from these conditions of distress. If relief comes, the agent of relief may be called a *goel* “redeemer.” While this redeemer is an agent of God, the biblical accounts need not suggest anything “final” about this redemption. In the words of this essay relief brings a “meantime finality,” by which I mean that a particular relief represents a final end to some particular crisis; for one who suffered this crisis, this is the only end in mind. But there is none of what we might call a “double consciousness” here about the relation of this end to any other one. It fulfills the category of what it is, no less but also no more.
- b) (*Type 2*) *Monarchical reparative reasoning*: reasoning about “theo-politically institutionalized meantime end-times.”

*An apparent end to the “Judges cycle”*: the Books of Samuel offer an account of how warrior-judges were replaced with kings. The prophet-judge Samuel warns Israel against making this replacement. His warning suggests a second Type of eschatological reasoning. While the purpose of the Judge is to provide relief for only a space-time specific source of distress, a king transforms the office of “redeemer” into an institutionalized and, in that sense, permanent source of protection against any possible distress. In different terms, we could say that this office introduces a theo-political double-consciousness into the bible’s soteriology. Israel seeks its first king, who happens to be Saul, as if he were a judge mighty enough to turn away the unprecedented threat of the Philistines. But, Samuel warns, in order to become quantitatively and qualitatively this mighty, Saul will have to become a king like other neighboring kings. This means someone who does not return home after the enemy is gone. His institutions of warfare remain elements of daily life, so that the decentralized amphictyony will become a centralized monarchy. Previously Israel’s cries for help rose up to God, one might say, only when an enemy threatened and only then would God call a warrior-hero forward from some previously unknown and unidentified place among the tribes. Now, however, even before the enemy comes, one already knows where the potential redeemer lives: it is a central place, ultimately the city of David, in Jerusalem. This means that God will have already chosen a potential redeemer even before Israel calls for one. Individual kings may come and go but, as long as the office of king is retained, Israel’s cries to God will no longer be direct. It is the king who cries on their behalf, just as the temple priesthood, once centralized, will offer sacrifices on Israel’s behalf. (The Book of Psalms may, in fact, be read as ritualized expressions of both the king’s cries and the priest’s temple service.) And what of end times? Like the Israelites of old, the king will cry for what we may assume is a finite end: relief from this enemy or this threat.

But the institution of the monarchy adds another dimension of consciousness about end times. Before, threats were threats against the nation and relief came from the agent of redemption. Now, however, the king may feel threatened by personal enemies within the nation even when there appears to be no threat against the nation itself. The king may therefore be tempted to pray not only for Israel’s welfare (the prayer of the old judges), but also for himself even against the interests of the nation. In this

sense, the office of the king may work on behalf of two different worldly ends: the end of this-worldly relief from Israel's enemies and relief from enemies of the king. But a third level of consciousness may also enter into Israel's soteriology: independently of this or that king, the institution of kingship may also be threatened, and this may come from either within or without. External enemies may arise who replace the kingship with some other source of institutionalized relief: foreign governors, for example, or foreign emperors. "Internal" enemies may also arise, not necessarily in opposition to this or that king nor to the nation as a whole, but only to the institutionalization of the redeemer in a permanent, centralized office. We may call this the threat of *theo-political revolution*, which suggests the possibility of a dialectical soteriology.

The religion of Israel, as a whole, may nurture competing lines of eschatological reasoning, either as names we may apply to otherwise unidentified structural tendencies within the Israelite nation, or as names of competing parties of Israelites who dedicate themselves, consciously, to competing theo-political ends. On the basis of the suggestive verses considered so far, we might, for example, envision 3 competing parties or structural forces. We have already named one the "reparative reasoners," those for whom the cycles of Egypt and the cycles of Judges define Israel's pursuit of strictly meantime end times. We have also named the second: "monarchical reparative reasoners." We may liken these to the Israelites who named Saul and then David king, hoping perhaps, for super-Judges even if in the end they got more than they bargained for. We have not yet provided a name for the third party. This party is concerned to protect the institution of kingship itself against the efforts of the first party. Independently of any immediate, external threat to Israel, members of the third party fear that if Israel turns away from the kingship, perhaps returning to models of the earlier amphictyony, then external enemies will arise whom Israel will be unable to repel. The third party is therefore a party of monarchists. Like the second party, however, this party will give birth to something other or more than it imagines. The second party campaigned for a king as a source of relief against the immediate threat of an enemy like the Philistines. The second party did not therefore inhabit a level of consciousness that could write something like "the law of kings." In effect, this party was aware only of wanting the equivalent of a mighty, mighty Judge.

The efforts of the third party, however, would be accompanied by another level of consciousness, since this party's campaign is motivated, not by fear of an immediate threat, but by *a political theory*. The third party *conceives* the monarchy is that which, *in idea*, would protect the nation against the *possibility* of being overwhelmed by a powerful enemy in the future. This conception is not irrational. One may reasonably suggest that, *to some degree of probability*, Israel may face such a threat in the future, provided that one recognizes that to some degree of probability this will not happen. And that to cite Samuel, there is some probability that the monarch will be the source of Israel's problems in the future, not just any external enemy. We may infer, therefore, that the third party would introduce a form of argumentation that exceeded the limits of evidence. They would not merely argue for kingship. They would also introduce a concept of "kingship," whose definition reified their desires (that Israel's security be assured), as well as it institutionalized their political experience and memories (that, in the past, some enemies exceeded the power of the judges and that some kings were able to repel such enemies). We may conclude that the third party would institutionalize a third Type of eschatological reasoning (2.3).

c) (Type 3) *Ultimate, monarchically redemptive reasoning*: reasoning about the "theo-politically institutionalized ends of history."

- i. *Divine Promise*: One suggestive source is 2 Samuel (where God refers to David as his son and appears to promise his throne in eternal covenant). This account suggests the monarchical eschatology we attributed to a "third party" in the theo-political dialectic of the period of kingship. For God to love David is to institutionalize the office of Israel's earthly redeemer, indeed, to establish a covenant that could compliment but could also compete with God's covenants with Israel. The Davidic covenant could conceivably compete with other monarchical lineages. It is difficult not to attribute to the monarchy an epic of irremediable theo-political conflict within Israel and within the religion of Israel. It is difficult to see how an argument for any one of the theo-political options would not imply a rejection of the others. It is, moreover, difficult to read any simple resolution to this conflict within the plain sense of Tanakh.

ii. *Prophetic Messianism*: The literary prophets articulate types of messianism that could suggest either of our Types 1 or 2 (2a, 2b). But Type 1 can be eliminated, since all the prophets presuppose a monarchical redeemer. The words of first Isaiah recommend Type 2: “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity....they have forsaken the Lord...your country is desolate your cities are burned with fire” (Is. 1:4-7). Type 2 reads empirical-like observations of Israel’s military defeat as signs of Divine punishment for Israel’s sins against God. This reading sets the stage for the eschatological reasoning of Type 2: there are explicit actions Israel may take to repent of its sins and, thereby, seed the possibility that a forgiving God may forgive Israel and restore her wellbeing. “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow....if you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword” (Is. 1:18-20). Comparable passages abound in the prophetic writings. While these could be read as suggesting Type 3, the plain sense speaks more powerfully of Type 2. Here, as in Type 1, Israel suffers this-worldly distress and is promised this-worldly relief. The main difference is that Israel’s enemies are no longer merely external. What appear to be literally external enemies are also agents of divine punishment, and, therefore, reflect dimensions of Israel’s inner drama of sin and repentance. In this case, the agent of redemption is a king, not an ad hoc hero. But there is no need to identify this agent as a “king forever.” It is monarchical but meantime messianism.

iii. *Ultimate Prophetic Messianism (Type 3)*: The prototypically suggestive source for Type 3 is 2 Isaiah. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people says your God....the glory of the Lord shall be revealed in all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. ...the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever. You who bring good tidings to Zion, get yourself up into the high mountains. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with strength. ...behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand and his arm shall rule for him” (Is. 40:1-10). It is not unreasonable to read these verses as

suggesting Type 2. While the promised return from Babylonian exile may be this-worldly, perhaps it heralds a moment of universal salvation breaking in within history. Or perhaps this particular cycle of worldly redemption gives final definition to the logic of universal redemption, for all time and places. If so, Isaiah 40 introduces a prototype for not only one particular meantime end time, but for the logic and structure of all meantime end times, for anytime between the times these are reasonable readings of 2 Isaiah. But tradition has tended to read such verses as also intimating the final messianism we have associated with Type 3.

In the words we used earlier, 2 Isaiah may suggest a “third level of consciousness” that crystalizes a concept of *melekh meshiach* (king messiah) whose identity and work are defined independently of the worldly character of this or that enemy. Note that the movement from Types Two to 3 is not a movement from this-worldly to other-worldly theo-politics. The king messiah will rule in *this* world. The difference is that the office of this king is fully defined before the fact and defined for all time. The difference is not that theo-politics leaves this world, but that another world, or perhaps another order of creation, *enters* this world. This is why 2 Isaiah suggests an ultimate, monarchically redemptive end: God has delivered not only the promise of a redeemer but also a conceptual a clear conceptualization of the redeemer’s role in God’s redemptive work. *This conceptualization suggests a universal and eternal redemption, because the work of conceptualization belongs to a world or order other than this world of contingent suffering and unpredictable repair.* Like Plato’s *eide*, 2 Isaiah’s “ideas” of the king messiah inhabit a dimension independent of any particular space-time. It remains, however, a dimension of possible space-time and, thus, of a redemptive rule that is conceived for his world of history even though it’s conceptual stuff comes from another world. Prior biblical literature, through first Isaiah, fills its descriptions of this world (of contingency and empirical observation) with language derived from another (let us say, of divine discourse and the imagination). But the unique move in 2 Isaiah and its cognate prophetic literature is to articulate a coherent portrait from out of the stuff of this other world and then re-describe future events of this world within the categories of this portrait. It is in this sense comparable

to a Platonic idealism. If this is a reasonable reading, then it may suggest that a theo-political conflict among the 3 eschatological Types is also analogous to a philosophic conflict. Within such a conflict, Type 3 would correspond to an epistemological idealism and a politically utopianism. Type 2 would correspond to a transcendental idealism or philosophic pragmatism and a non-utopian political messianism. Type 1 would correspond to an epistemological skepticism or materialism and a political realism.

iv) *Messianic Apocalyptic*: The Book of Daniel is suggestive of what we might call an apocalyptic and mystical appendix or “upper story” to the third Type. Daniel speaks against the historical backdrop of the first Chorbān and the restoration wrought through Cyrus and Darius. Like 2 Isaiah, it could be read as suggestive of an appendix to Type 2, but the work of imagination and conceptualization in Daniel presupposes Type 3. Traditional readings tend to vacillate between something analogous to Type 3 and a fourth, more radically apocalyptic Type.

5. *There is an irremediable dissonance among three or more Types of Jewish eschatological reasoning.*

Postulate #2 and its sub-postulates suggest that, within the plain sense of Tanakh, there is no single “code” for privileging any one of the three major eschatological Types over the other two. This fact suggests that the *overall* biblical Type is a dialectical one: that the biblical canon delivers to the Jewish community a theatre of eschatological difference, disagreement, and contestation. As a social fact or social directive, such contestation would imply something like the political conflict and even civil strife or war historians may attribute, for example, to the conflict of political parties in the Roman period. As a hermeneutical and theological fact, it suggests that, in rabbinic terms, the *peshat* or plain sense of Tanakh beckons an interpreted sense, or *derash*: not just one interpreted sense, but that each Jewish eschatological judgment requires an active choice among the three or more biblical Types. There is no knock-down argument that would eliminate two of the choices from the plain sense.

6. *The postulates of rabbinic religious reasoning, including rabbinic eschatological reasoning, introduce conditions and criteria for making judgments in relation to the three biblical Types.*

a) *“Plain sense” postulates of rabbinic reading: Correlated Poles of Reading*

- i. *Peshat vs. Derash: Every word, jot and tittle of Tanakh is an infallible source of divine guidance but that guidance is unavailable in the peshat (plain sense) of the text. Divine guidance is disclosed only by way of the rabbinic community's historically time-bound reading, or derash. For each new time-bound context of reading, such guidance is available only by way of fresh, time-bound readings of the peshat: ein mikra yotse midei peshuto (TB Shabbat 63a, Yevamot 11b, 24a).*

For this study, *peshat* is defined as the time-independent meaning of a text in its intra-literary context (the way the text is “spread out”). I follow David Weiss Halivni's usage, but specifically for what he considers the Tannaitic and earlier Amoraic sense of *peshat*, as opposed to the late Amoraic to modern tendency to identify it, increasingly, with the *literal sense*. I derive this essay's definition of the latter from the Christian theologian, Hans Frei's term “ostensive reference,” so that the literal sense is that to which the text refers *indexically*, or by pointing: such as the text's purportedly direct reference to events and things in this world or also, at times, to ideas or conceptual Types treated as realia. The force of this Postulate is that, as Halivni argues, direct divine authority is available only for the *peshat*; all halakhic and moral judgments marry divine and human authority in a way that renders each judgment fallible and subject to correction.

- ii. *The Divine Authority of Semantics vs. the Human-Divine Context of Pragmatics: Divine authority attaches to the meaning (“semantics”) of each item of Tanakh only within its literary context of peshat. The performative implications (“pragmatics”) of each item for human life in this world are displayed only by way of time-bound judgments whose divine influence is inextricable from their worldly fallibility.*
- iii. *The peshat is “true” (emet) generally but the derash is “true” only for its local, time-bound context or possibly true for analogous contexts in other times. A claim about the plain sense is therefore a claim on any reader in any time, and it may be contested for the sake of uncovering its “truth.” In the case of peshat, “truth” is a measure of the literary “fit” of a given reading, its “elegance” within the intra-biblical context. A derash makes time-bound claims on the behavior*

of some members of a community of readers. For such claims, “truth” is a measure of “faithfulness” (*emunah*) to God within the context of relations to world and human others. *This measure cannot be reduced to the two-valued truth-tables of propositional logic, where the predication of any term x by some term y must obey the principles of both non-contradiction (not x and –x) and excluded middle (x or –x).* Instead, the measure can be diagramed only within a logic of relations, which requires a minimum of 3 terms, x to y to z (yXz): for example, “murder” (x) in this social context (y) means “do not embarrass publicly” (x). The *reason and measure* for such a claim is necessarily inexplicit, because it is in part time-bound and in part bound to a covenantal relation with God. Both of these “bindings” remove truth-claims of this kind from the limits of two-valued truth-tables. This does not render the claims extra-rational or recondite, however, since the community of readers is guided by inherited traditions of inquiry (Torah) that are as communicable and testable as are the traditions of experimental natural science.<sup>1</sup> Finally, we may add that, sometimes, a *derash* is offered only for the sake of education, edification or entertainment. In such cases, the claim is either not a truth-claim, or its truth is measured by ad hoc standards.

- iv. *Empirical (observed) Vagueness vs. Theoretical (constructed) Clarity:* This postulate may appear counter-factual to thinkers in the modern west. *Although it is time-bound and informed by a logic of relations, an interpretive claim or derash tends to be “clear and distinct” – defined by two-valued truth tables – for participants in the community of readers to whom the claim is addressed.* This means that the meaning of any term in the claim may be defined to any degree of completeness that these participants may request. *This is possible because clarity and distinctness is made possible only by human intervention: specifically, by a community’s active work of proposing and constructing conditions according to which individual members of the community may make two-valued claims of truth or falsity.* We outside the community may (for a project like this, for example) observe that the community’s true-false claims are time-bound, but everyday participants in the community will tend not to make such relativising observations. They will

tend, instead, to treat their claims as if they corresponded to “eternally” two-valued truth-tables built into the structure of Torah itself, in particular, its ethics and *halakhah*.

On the other hand, although they are general and address only the intra-literary contexts of Tanakh, *claims about the peshat are never clear-and-distinct, but always incompletely defined and subject to further determination. There are no two-valued truth tables to measure plain sense claims, because the plain sense is unconstrained by any humanly constructed conditions of meaning and truth.* In this sense, observations of the peshat are like empirical observations of the created world according to post-Newtonian logics of science: *they are guided by logics of probability. True-false claims about either the laws of the created world or the laws of the plain sense are claims about realia that are known only by way of humanity’s intimate relations with the Creator and Revealer but that remain, nonetheless, irreducible to measures of knowledge that are strictly humanly constructed.*

b) “Historical” postulates of rabbinic reasoning:

i. “Normal Times”: contexts for conventional reading and interpretation

Life in normal times is supposed to make sense. Otherwise, we would be hard-pressed to judge this creation as “good.” We may consider a “good creation” to be one in which life is lived more or less as we are created to live it: that is to say, one that has life as well as death, pleasure as well as pain, joy as well as sadness, fear as well as hope, all these the conditions of what I call normalcy. If creation is good, then these conditions are maintained, sometimes for better and sometimes for worse. But, all the time the scale of better and worse is the scale of creation that is good. Normalcy is thus a time for the Aristotelian mean for the way of habits. It is not per se a time defined by human reason when left to its own imaginings. Normal life is coherent in the sense that it coheres with the conditions we associate with created life. It coheres, but not in the way desired or imagined by “coherentists.” By *coherentism* we mean the expectation that life can be lived consistently with some individual humans’ measures of what life should be. That is as we might imagine if some finite list of human attributes were stretched to accommodate all possible conditions for living them. Coherentism is what we expect of worlds built of the imagination alone; built independently of the give and take, up and down, life or death of this created world. In these

terms I am assuming that life in this world is coherent with life in this world but not a place for coherentism.

*Guidelines (a Torah) for normal life in this world are guidelines for a life that already makes sense.* Since this is a life lived, and not merely conceived, the model for making sense will not be some coherent system of thought (thought that is, from the “neck up”), but a coherent life. Without overthinking, however, I could not say what the latter term means. But I do believe I can *see it*. What I see that makes sense is not human life, but animal and plant life. I trust that these last few steps of reasoning may reenact the motivations of late 19<sup>th</sup>- early 20<sup>th</sup> century “organicist” thinkers, such as Levy-Bruhl, Whitehead, de Chardin, and the Jewish thinkers stimulated by analogous to them, such as Eli Benamozegh and Max Kadushin. The descendants of all these in more recent years are the process thinkers, generic and Jewish, but the model I am seeking lies satisfactorily with the earlier group. On the organicist model, a coherent life is exemplified in say, the life of a healthy dog or elm or oak tree, or for those more skilled in such observation also the lives of colonies of hydra and ecosystems. When the organicists said things like this, they assumed their readers simply knew what they meant by common sense, and I shall assume the same.

*The second defining mark of organicism is that a coherent life is a life that we do not judge as “ill” or “in crisis” or “suffering.”* For this essay, the term *suffering* will be the primary one. Here, suffering is not equivalent to but much more than what we call “pain.” With a nod to Simone Weil, we may define *pain* as a component of coherent life, specifically a sign that some action must be taken in order for the organism to maintain coherent life. The assumption here is that conditions that promote coherent life also promote all the resources needed for responding successfully to pain. In classical Jewish terms, we might assume that *maaseh b’reshit*, “the order of creation,” refers to the order that sustains coherent life, therefore including resources for responding to pain. We may then define *suffering* as the condition of organisms in persistent pain, from which the organism does not anticipate relief. In these terms, suffering is not a component of coherent life. I do not mean to suggest thereby that classical

Judaism lacked an account of the resources that are available to repair suffering. To the contrary, such resources tend to define the ends of Judaism as a religion such as the end of *geulah*, “redemption.”

To articulate religious guidelines (a Torah) for normal times, however, it is helpful to define *geulah* as a component of Judaism that belongs to an order other than *maaseh bereshit* –if, for the sake of this study, we define *maaseh bereshit* as referring ostensibly to the everyday world of experience rather than to every possible world. In other words, I am envisioning a theology of normal times to be *rabbinic* rather than the plain sense of Torah (I use these terms, therefore, as ontological correlates of the *halakhic* terms, *mi de rabbanan*, and *mi d’oraita*). I therefore distinguish theologies of normal and abnormal times as two complementary genres of rabbinic theology, one that takes its cues from the plain sense of the Genesis account, the other that names the creator (*bore olam*) as also the redeemer (*goel yisrael*), to which I would add *goel adam* (redeemer of humanity) and *goel maaseh b’reshit* (redeemer of creation). We will say that pain and its healing belong to *maaseh b’reshit* and to a theology of normal times.

But suffering is a mark of the limits of this created order and its need for a supplement. The supplement, which belongs to a world that redeems this one is not “another world” in the sense of another *maaseh b’reshit*, but, rather, a world alongside this one, peopled by entities that are creaturely but more than creaturely, having feet, one might say, in this world, but another dimension of themselves in another world. In rabbinic terms, this is the world of *melakhim* (angels), various other *kohot ashem* (divine powers and agents), and whatever entities or persons of this world are appointed by God to be also agents of redemption; the prototypical agent is Moses (*moshe rabbenu*). This world persists only if and when it is served and redeemed by another. If suffering is successfully repaired, this other world does not produce another *maaseh b’reshit*; instead, it affirms the possibility of a new life for this created world. In one sense, to be sure, we might call this world another world when it is repaired, redeemed, and renewed; after all, the sages say that God daily renews the order of creation (*mekadesh b’khol yom tamid maaseh b’reshit*). But for the sake of a theological vocabulary, let us not call such renewed worlds *other* worlds, but simply renewals of this one. In this way, *maaseh b’reshit* marks an indefinite series of former, present, and past renewals of itself. But the other world is visible only as it attends this one as its

redeemer. Ontologically, the other world contains no creatures qua creatures nor any element that reiterates or renews itself; all its elements are visible in the way they are *for-creatures* and *for-this world*. A prototype for such elements is the divine identity *ehyeh imach*, “I will be for you” or “I am with you.” All being in the second world is being-for. Ironically, the appropriate logic for guiding claims about this world is a logic of “vagueness,” while the logic appropriate for the redeeming work of the other world is a logic that allows a greater degree of clarity. Standard medieval and modern propositional logic is, surprisingly enough, an inadequate resource for guiding true-or-false claims about this world. For our purposes, we may identify this propositional logic with the form “x is y,” or “there is a condition K with respect to which x is y.” A typical illustration is, “that cat is black.” To be sure, I am not claiming that “that cat is black” is an inappropriate statement to be uttered in this world. My claim is that the statement is *uttered by* a creature in this world but that it is not a statement about this world per se. It is a statement about one discrete act of judgment by a creature in this world. I assume, however, that, within a theology for normal times, claims about this world are specifically claims about coherent life in this world. The judgment, “that cat is black” may contribute to a claim about a coherent life, but by itself it represents only an element of such a claim, not the claim itself. To start with an illustration, a prototypical claim about this world would sound like this one, “Persian cats tend to sport monochrome coats, typically grey, black, or tan.” The claims of contemporary natural science are helpful here, because most biologists, physicists, chemists, and so on now tend to employ languages of science from after the age of Newton, which usually means claims marked by some measure of ability. A probabilistic claim is one marked by what I am calling the “logic of vagueness,” because it delivers information that remains, at least to some extent, open to further definition or specification. If Persian cats tend to be black 60% of the time then any general claim we make about cats will only be fully defined with respect to some specific set of data. This is not to say that appropriate claims about this world need be scientific claims. They may also be poetic, theological, and so on. Strictly affective claims provide appropriate data for such claims but are not themselves adequate to any account of a “coherent life.”

In sum, appropriate claims about normal life, the claims that serve everyday common sense, are probabilistic or vague claims, subject to further specification. We may identify two different genres of clear and distinct judgments, one which is appropriate to this world and one which is not. Appropriate to this world are *wholly local judgments* that are specific to some individual creatures' views of the world. These judgments contribute bits of data that generate prototypically probabilistic claims about this world. When, however, clear and distinct judgments are uttered about something *purportedly general*, then the judgments are deemed inappropriate or fallacious. Consider, for example, the clear-and-general claims "all cats are adorable" or "all Jews are ... fill in here any claim you like." These claims are appropriate if registered as data for survey of opinion, but their clarity does not correspond to the vague character of coherent lives.

*ii. "Abnormal Times": contexts that interrupt the possibility of everyday reading and interpretation*

Abnormal times mark conditions of suffering that interrupt normal times in this world. If, at any specific time, this world is not served by another one, then the interruptions of this world also mark the end for this world; minimally, an end to some coherent life in this world, or maximally, God forbid, an end to this world. If this world is served by another, then the interruptions of this world may also mark the *other world's point of entry into this one: the other world entering as the source of this world's redemption*. In this case, we refer to the redemption of some interrupted dimension of this world: the repair and renewal of this particular, coherent life, or perhaps of all this network of lives. Two defining challenges for this essay are: (a) to identify a set of logical norms for measuring claims about or on behalf of this redeeming work; and (b) to determine the degrees of generality that are appropriate to such claims. For now, I will suggest the following guidelines: (i) *a logic of being for*. As noted above, claims appropriate to a second world are claims offered on behalf of repairing some particular aspect of life in this world. This means that claims offered in and for normal times are inappropriate if they fail to specify the identifiable conditions of suffering they were meant to repair; or if they claim to repair the conditions of suffering that we may ascribe to this world in general (in which case they will have failed to specify

particular sufferings in this world); or if they offer means of repairing conditions of pain (for which we may identify sources of healing in this world), or conditions of suffering for which we cannot yet identify failed agents of healing or for which we cannot identify agents of divine action. The primary term necessary for this discussion is *ehyeh imach* (“I will be with you” God’s appellation in Exodus 3). In this paper I will employ this as a name of the category of entities or actions that are known overtly only in their relation to something else: in particular the relation of “being for” or “being with.” Our immediate example is that the second world is known only as “being for” the first. The etiology of this category-name indicates that the capacity and discipline for “being with something or someone” depends on an ongoing relationship with God. (ii) *a logic of repair and redemption*. There are many possible ways of “being for.” Within the context of a theology of abnormal times, our interest is exclusively in the subcategory of “being for” we will name *geulah*, “redemption,” where the prototypical reference is to *ga’al yisrael*, “redeemer of Israel.” There are three elemental features of a logic of redemption. The first is *za’akah*, or “cry,” as in Exodus 3:7-8, “the Lord said, I have indeed seen the affliction of my people in Egypt; I have heard their cry (*tsa’akah*) and I know their suffering. I have come down to deliver them (*l’hatsilam*) from out of the hand of the Egyptians.” The “cry” stands for the category of “suffering” (*avelah*), which represents “that condition of interrupted life whose articulation calls for redemptive action.” The second feature is *tikkun*, (in the sense of “repair”), which names the category of all actions that could potentially heal the conditions of suffering that give rise to “cries.” According to the distinction between “pain” and “suffering” we introduced earlier, conditions of suffering, per se, are marked by irremediable pain, that is, pain for which a natural remedy appears to be absent. That which heals the source of pain belongs to the category of *tikkun*. When, however, pain cannot be removed even through innumerable efforts at repair, then we will say that *tikkun* is available by way of *geulah*. This means that healing will not be possible unless and until our current capacity to heal is qualitatively transformed in some as yet unknown way. The third feature is therefore *geulah* as it names the category of actions that, in previously unforeseeable ways, repairs, transforms, and renews the very capacity of our current world to repair pain. Pain that cannot be healed defines a condition of “suffering.” *Geulah* repairs suffering. The

distinctive feature of our logic of repair and redemption is that *geulah* does not refer to some transformation of this world into a wholly redeemed world. *Geulah* is a “*being for*,” that is, an activity that is not an end in itself, nor does it generate some other and final world, or mode of existence. Instead, *geulah* exhausts itself in the repair of some condition of being, transforming a world that cannot heal some pain (that is a world that is no longer functioning as an order of creation, *maaseh b’reshit*) into a world that can heal that pain within an “order of creation,” pain is always a sign not only of the interruption of a life, but also of the real possibility of that interruption’s being repaired. This is why belief in a Creator God is a hopeful belief. It means that the conditions of pain, limitation, and enslavement that surround us will not forever define our existence. We live in an order of creation rather than a “state of nature,” because we live in a world that is self-corrective, one in which there is bondage, but not forever, because this a world within which we may be free. When this world appears to give rise to irremediable pain, then the promise of the Creator is to renew this world so that it will once again have the capacity to repair itself. *Geulah* names the activity of renewal. A renewed world may, for a time, or in various ways be a world without suffering, that is, a world of pain but also repair. But a redeemed world may at some time become once again a world of suffering.

The logic of repairing suffering is thus the logic of a cyclical process. Within any finite period of time and within finite human memory, the story of our moving from life to pain to suffering to redemption may appear to be linear. In this way, the Rabbinic/Biblical tradition refers to an end-time, *acharit ha-yamim*. And, with respect to this end-time it refers to a redeemer (*goel*) who, in theo-political terms, is said to work through the agency of the messiah (*meshiach*) the way Moses was agent of God’s redeeming work in Egypt. When conceived as a singular, linear trajectory, movement toward the end time is what we might dub “end-time messianism.” The Messiah has a unique name or time of activity. For our logic of repair and redemption, however, there is no basis for presuming the strict linearity of redemptive history nor for reifying the agents of redeeming work as the agent of a single historical space-time. The commentarial literature concerning “king messiah” (*melekh messiach*) is commonly read as referring to a single end. But the literature can equally be read as addressing only the singular form of *geulah* and then

reifying this form as if it not only defined the general category of “redemptive action,” but also *described* the singular event and token of redemptive action in historical space-time. *Our logic of repair and redemption belongs, however, to a theology of abnormal times.* As noted earlier, this theology is not served by empirical judgments about the world of existence. This is why it has not displayed the probabilistic and vague judgments characteristic to descriptions of the current world’s existence.

Coherentism is as inappropriate to abnormal times as it is to normal times. In abnormal times, what was assumed without thinking to be the everyday order of things is no longer apparent. In place of the assumed order comes the pursuit of order: searching for it, looking for it, conceiving and imagining it. In such a setting, “coherentism” may name what is desired at the tail end of a frustrated search for the coherence that was once known but is known no longer. In these terms, coherentism names the desire to dwell in a world that one remembers having once inhabited: not this broken world but one that cohered. But coherence desired is not the same as coherence experienced. The former adds another level of consciousness and self-reflection to the latter. As noted earlier with respect to the third biblical Type of eschatological reasoning, coherentism adds to the yearning for non-incoherence a *concept* of the meaning of coherence and, thence, a desire for what is represented by this concept. In terms introduced in the previous section, it is the desire for an end of *suffering* rather than for the end of *pain*. It is, therefore, a desire for what is counter-factual but *conceived* as if known the way a fact is known. It is a desire to conceive of what the Creator-Redeemer can alone make known and to achieve what the Creator-Redeemer can alone deliver. It is, therefore, desire for what cannot be desired; to pursue it is to pursue fantasy as if actual, illusion. To believe one can pursue and achieve this end and, then, to work for it, is *avodah zarah*.

c) “*Interpretive*” postulates of rabbinic eschatological reasoning: expanding the biblical Types

For the most part, rabbinic literature articulates what we have called the 3 “biblical” Types. The one significant addition which we will add here as Type 4 is stimulated by rabbinic reflection on the Second Chorbán. This reflection generates rabbinic Judaism’s most poignant tropes, and images and the context for singularly rabbinic halakhic legislation. The reflection also generates significant

eschatological reasoning that includes conflicting versions of our four Types plus a fourth Type that seems, equivocally, to generate subsequent, medieval and modern readings comparable to Type 3 but other readings that have the force of “anti-Type-3’s”:

*Type 4: “Messianic Eschatology for the World to Come.”*

Type 4 has two equivocal sub-types:

- i. *Type 4A: An ultimate end time without this-worldly monarchy* (by far the most widely illustrated sub-Type in rabbinic literature). A suggestive source is: *Avot D’rabbi Natan 11-A*:  
 ...Rabbi Joshua looked at the Temple in ruins and said ‘Woe for us. The place that atoned for the sins of Israel is destroyed.’ Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said to him, ‘Do not be troubled my son. We have another way of achieving atonement: through acts of loving kindness, as it is written “loving kindness I desire not the sacrifice of animals” (Hosea 6:6).

While not evident in the anecdote itself, the text complements rabbinic intimations that this Second Destruction and exile will not, this time, be followed by a return within the chronology of this-worldly history. There will be *shivat tsion* and there will be life in and for Israel after it, but it will be an Israel outside of the vicissitudes of *olam hazeh*. In the meantime, as depicted in this anecdote, the rabbinic community will live its religious life in exile for what may prove to be the remainder of this-worldly history. “Deeds of loving kindness” will therefore serve indefinitely as substitutes for temple-based acts of atonement. That is the *halakhah* for the rest of life in this world. Comparable are sayings like this one from TB Sukkah 49-B, “Rabbi Eleazar said, ‘doing deeds of charity is greater than all of the sacrificial offerings, as it is said, “doing charity and justice is more favorable to God than animal sacrifice” (Prov. 21:3). If, on the one hand, the sages find solace after destruction in deeds of loving kindness, and, on the other hand, they adopt the language of loving kindness as a trope for everyday virtue, then it stands to reason that the sages must have considered these moral substitutes for temple sacrifice to define the rest of life in this world. In this case, the “three Oaths” that the medieval decisors ascribe to the rabbis provide a quasi-halakhic fence around this vision of this-worldly life without the Temple. The oaths are read as precluding the nation of Israel’s return to Zion before the messianic age and the end of history:

- *The Oaths according to TB Ketubbot 111a:*

What are the three oaths? One is that Israel will not ascend the wall; one is that the Holy One, blessed be He, bid Israel not to rebel against the nations of the world; one is that the Holy One, blessed be He bid the idolaters not to oppress Israel excessively.

- According to the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael:*

“Because God said, ‘the people may have a change of heart when they see war’ (Ex. 13:17). This is the war of the children of Ephraim...because they forced the End and transgressed the oath.”

- According to *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 2:7:*

Rabbi Helboah said, “there are four oaths: that they not rebel against the kingdoms, that they not force the end; that they not reveal their mystery to the nations of the world; and that they not ascend as a wall from the exile.”

As read by later authorities who forbade premature return to Zion, these oaths committed Israel to desist from overturning the condition of exile that began with the Second Destruction. Within the frame of Type 4, such authorities might nonetheless retain elaborate eschatologies somewhat comparable to Type 3. *The defining difference is that these authorities are wholly non-activist, often in fact, anti-activist. They may dream of a world that looks like Type 3, but they will not allow any rabbinic action that leads to it. The end comes apocalyptically or not at all.*

- ii. *Type 4B: An ultimate end time with an apocalyptic version of Type 3 monarchy:*

Within the plain sense of the rabbinic sources, this is the much less prevalent reading. On occasion, however -- through medieval and modern times and, of course, intensely in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century haredi literature -- this Type is often read into the rabbinic sources. According to this reading, the rabbinic sages did not anticipate a this-worldly return to Zion because they expected the coming return to end this-worldly history. In other words, this sub-Type shares one dimension of plain sense reading with the previous sub-Type: there is no *shivat tsion* within the limits of this-worldly history. To that plain sense, the second sub-Type has as its apocalyptic qualifier: “because the return will end history.” I read this sub-Type as, in some ways, the functional equivalent of Type 3. Whether this sub-Type names a monarchical agent of redemption or not, it presumes some such an agent will lead the people of Israel back to its Holy

Land, vanquish Israel's enemies, provide the conditions for remaking the Temple and reinstating the temple sacrifices, and, with all this, usher in the single, messianic age. One suggestive source appears in the traditional daily prayer book as the last of the petitions in the *amidah*: "Restore worship to your sanctuary." Another source in the *musaf*, or "Additional Service for Sabbath and Holidays": "May it be your will, Lord our God and God of our fathers who returns his children to their borders." And "restore worship to your sanctuary...May we witness your merciful return to Zion. Blessed are you, lord, who restores his Presence to Zion." In their plain sense, such prayers for restoration envision Israel's life once again in the Holy Land with its Temple. The question is only what manner of history this would be and what manner of rabbinic activity would contribute to it or not. For the activist authorities, Israel's actions help bring about this apocalyptic. For the anti-activists of the first sub-Type, Israel cannot contribute to this actively. Both sub-Types attribute this end to a time after history. But they display very different ways of explaining what that means.

*Applying the Interpretive Postulates of Jewish Religious Reasoning:*

*The Case of 20-21<sup>th</sup> Century Haredi Messianisms*

In this section, I offer detailed illustrations for the two haredi theologies that are modeled on the two rabbinic prototypes. I read the Hazon Ish as providing the clearest case of Type 4A, messianic meantime theology, and Rav Avraham Isaac Kuk as providing the clearest case of Prototype 4B, messianic end time theology. I believe the differences between these two, furthermore, display the primary theological issues at stake in all contemporary theologies of Zion, haredi, non-haredi and liberal. In an extended study, I would also illustrate theologies modeled on the biblical prototypes, alone. From a formal point of view, however, I believe these are secondary since it is difficult for any contemporary Jewish thinker to think independently of the notions of time, infinity, and interpretation that are embedded in the heritage of rabbinic Judaism.

***1. Illustrating Prototype 4: The Hazon Ish, Rav. Avraham Yishayahu Karelitz.<sup>ii</sup>***

In this case, I will rely on Benjamin Brown's encyclopedic study of the halakhic and theological work of Rabbi Avraham Yishayahu Karelitz (1888-1953) named the *Hazon Ish*, after the title of his primary work. That early work was a collection of his halakhic commentaries, composed in Lithuania where he spent most of his life, primarily as a halakhic commentator and decisor. Brown focuses primarily on collections of the Hazon Ish's later writings (commentaries, addresses, response and letters),<sup>iii</sup> after he moved to Israel in 1933 and gradually became one of the most respected voices in the haredi community.

The Hazon Ish was a Lithuanian halakhic pietist and rationalist, who followed the Hafets Hayim in his manner of seeking a pure faith: a drive to get to the peshat of all things, not the literal or surface truth but the plain truth, unsullied by conjecture (97). His primary focus was on Talmudic law and legal commentary, and there too he sought the plain sense. Like a medieval rabbinic rationalist, he understood human reason to be an instrument for discerning both the order of things in the created world and the order of Torah and mitzvot in human in the human soul and human behavior. In both orders of reasoning he sought what he considered the plain truth beyond conjecture, but he identified the imagination, *dimayon*, as a central vessel for observing the truth, And he associated scholarly searching after wisdom with pursuit of "the joy of heavenly knowledge," Or the disciplined effort to search after questions about the theological character of the human being, the nature of human ideals and the work of Torah and for the sake of fulfilling God's will (100).

Five arguments within the later writings of the Hazon Ish (as Brown cites and comments on them) give evidence of what I consider his pragmatic, or meantime end time reasoning.

(1) *The active intellect suffices to enable each of us to recognize that the world around us has a creator and guide* (100ff. and (קרו"א, ג, ט)). Since this recognition is not displayed within the bounds of language, the Hazon Ish refrains from any positivist rationalism. Like the pragmatists, and in this sense like Kant as well, he refrains from metaphysical claims but allows for positive claims about human history and about human perceptions of the natural world (natural science). In fact, he argues that

humanity is obliged to exert all rational efforts to comprehend this world and how to act in it and, in fact, that human intelligence has the capacity to succeed in these efforts (אמר"ב, א, ז). We have, however, neither the means nor the permission to peer into God's own reasons for acting in the world. For the Hazon Ish, metaphysics is replaced by our knowledge of providence and divine promises, and that is disclosed only by way of Torah (written and oral). Unlike the Rambam, he makes no exception for prophecy (*nevua*): God alone enabled prophetic reception and only in a time that is now long past. Even then, the intellect of the prophet did not itself participate actively in what it received (קרב"א א, טו). As we will see, the Hazon Ish therefore ascribed to a limited rationalism, pragmatic and empirical, that recognizes the human being's profound capacities to examine and understand this world but that denies any human capacity to achieve positive—that is, linguistically disclosed – knowledge of the other world. We are received into such knowledge in a manner that exceeds the bounds of language and thus of clear statements and claims. What then of our knowledge of Torah? It is not disclosed by way of the “external” forms of natural language (הנכרי השר' (קרב"א, ב, קעג, יז). I take this to mean that biblical and rabbinic discourse cannot be translated directly into the manner of speech and writing that we employ in everyday transactions and judgments. It belongs to another manner of speech and writing that, as I note below, contrasts with everyday discourse in the way that the subject of pragmatics (the study of the force and performance of speech) contrasts with that of semantics (the study of conventional meanings).<sup>iv</sup> Imagination (*dimayon*) is the vessel of this manner of speech and writing, the medium of contact with the deepest wisdoms of Torah, delivering judgments, at times, from beyond the limits of the intellect (*sekhel*)(שם, א, ח).

(2) *The discourse of talmud torah is apprehended first and foremost by way of the halakhah in the broadest sense: that is to say, by way of the pragmatics of torah rather than by way of its semantics as read by way of natural language.* To be sure, the Hazon Ish does not use the analytic language of pragmatics, but I introduce it here as a helpful means of comprehending his mode of eschatological reasoning. In my terms, he offers a critique of “semantics” as an effort to comprehend Torah by way of “external” discourse. The goal of *talmud torah* is to produce *talmidei chakhamim*, which I will identify in broader terms with those who search after and seek to embody the “wisdom of torah.”

For the Hazon Ish, this wisdom is delivered through two categories of divine command: *mitsvot*, or commands to act, and commands concerning beliefs and opinions (*emunot v'deyot*). For the Hazon Ish, in other words, to understand the halakhah strictly behaviorist terms is to have reduced it to an external discourse, one that we could identify with the semantics of a finite system of action in the world. In the classic terms of Bahya ibn Paquda, God commands not only the “duties of the limbs” (*chovot ha-ibaram*), but also the “duties of the heart” (*chovot halev*). To study these duties is to seek wisdom (*chokhmah*) and, at its deepest level, wisdom emerges from contact with the holy spirit (*ruach hakodesh*). Such wisdom that cannot be articulated by way of everyday speech, nor by conceptual statements, nor by accounts of visible actions per se (שם, א טו), but only through its effects. Prime among these effects is “refinement” or “nobility” (*edinut, atsilut*) (אמרי"ב, א, ט) (p 109), which, in the Lithuanian tradition of *musar*, includes the refinement of both the passions and the intellect (*sekhel*). In sum, to speak of his pragmatics is to speak of how, in his work, the meaning of Torah is displayed in its effects, now and in the long run, in cultivating wisdom and refinement. As he writes, “the *mitsvot* were given only to refine the human being...”<sup>v</sup> Or, in Brown’s summary (from נכרי לשר and other places), “the heavenly goal of the *mitsvot* is to repair humanity’s religious ethics; only after that comes the heteronomous (“Leibovitz-like”) goal of expressing submission; thirdly, ... the goal of drawing the Torah’s divine wisdom from the Active Intellect; and fourthly, the kabbalistic goal ... of repairing the upper worlds” (121).

(3) *Torah delivers promises and commandments. Divine promises (havtachot) are offered only to increase our trust in the divine commandments (mitsvot).* For the Hazon Ish, the Torah commands *mitsvot* and “beliefs and opinions,” and prime among the beliefs (*emunot*) are beliefs in the divine promises, such as Resurrection (*tichiyat hametim*), the Coming of the Messiah (*yemot hamashiach*), and the economy of reward and punishment (*sachar v'onesh*) (117-126). Consistent with his pragmatics and with his sharp distinction between *talmud torah* and this-worldly knowledge, the Hazon Ish argues that knowledge of the *mitsvot* belongs to this world, but that there is no worldly knowledge of the promises. We cannot under any circumstances claim this-worldly, empirical knowledge of the days of resurrection and of the

Messiah and of final reward and punishment. The latter are offered to us only as subjects of *talmud torah* and cannot be articulated in the everyday discourse that bears our empirical knowledge of the world. In the terms I am using, this means that the divine promises do not lend themselves to semantic analysis, but only to pragmatics: *they touch our worldly lives through the effects of our belief in them*. These effects are to motivate our observance of the *mitsvot* (117-119) and to embody this aspect of the divine will in us *as* divine will, so that our will, in this sense, will be His will (199ff.).<sup>vi</sup> At the same time, while we are obliged to believe in these promises, they do not constitute *knowledge* of the inner will and purpose of God. The sources of human obligations are heavenly; the province of human knowledge is this-worldly.

(4) *Our knowledge is of the finite and conditioned not the infinite and unconditioned*. While I do not discern this point explicitly in Brown's commentary, these distinctions drawn by the Hazon Ish appear to imply a distinction between knowledge of the infinite and unconditioned and knowledge of the finite and contingent. I introduce this point because it introduces the first of several correlations between these claims of the Hazon Ish and Type 4A of rabbinic messianism. Consistent with Type 4A, the Hazon Ish identifies this world and the world to come as two utterly different and unbridgeable spheres that are, nonetheless, complementary and, in a manner of speaking, "coexistent." For life in this world, God offers commandments and the freedom to think about them or any other features of creaturely existence. For life in the world to come, God offers promises and a prohibition against doing anything more than believing in them. If so, what theological claims will the Hazon Ish make about his living in the land of Israel?

(5) *We are forbidden to strive after knowledge of the days of the Messiah the way we would strive after knowledge of things in this world*. Brown cites Tsvi Yehudah's recollection of what the Hazon Ish taught him several years before:

He drew a distinction between two categories. One category was "mitzvah," the human being's obligation before the Holy One Blessed Be He: that in which you and I should occupy ourselves. ... The other category is "promise" (*havtacha*) ... that in which you must believe, but which is not for you to do....He believed that we are forbidden to busy ourselves with messianic issues, because these are the province of the Holy One Blessed

be He alone. We are required, in Maimonides' words, only to have faith... that "though He may tarry, yet we shall wait for Him each day." [The Hazon Ish] was scared to death of messianism.<sup>vii</sup>

The Hazon Ish cited with favor the Talmudic saying, "Three come unawares: Messiah, a found article and a scorpion" (TB Sanhedrin 97a). As Brown reports, even during the dramatic events of the First World War and after, when many rabbinic leaders spoke of these as the days of the coming of *geulah*, the Hazon Ish remained reserved on the topic, focusing on matters of routine life and, apparently, never wrote at all about matters of *geulah*.<sup>viii</sup>

*Consistent with these arguments, the Hazon Ish adopted a pragmatic approach to life in erets yisrael today and to dealings with medinat yisrael.* He moved from Lithuania to Israel in 1933, for reasons that are apparent from the date. In Israel, he served the haredi community, in relation to which he had dealings with the State, accepting its legitimacy without acceding to the politics or ideology of Zionist nationalism. In other words, he dealt with the social and political and geographic realities of life in Israel as he would deal with any this-worldly matters: as matters to be dealt with according to the demands of Torah and the discipline of the *halakha*. He had no truck with secular or religious eschatological thinking, whether in the manner of socialist or messianic Zionism. Of claims about "the time of redemption," he claimed that those are matters of divine promise, of which we know only the command to have faith and are otherwise forbidden to ask further. Of claims about how to act in this land in this time, he argued that these are matters of this-worldly *halakha* as they would be at any time in this land of which we can speak. There is of course much work to do in relation to the *halakhah* in this land, and that should be the center of religious discussion and effort today, not discussion of the end-time and efforts to bring it about, strengthen it or hinder it. He objected strongly to efforts by the students of Rav. Kook who "appear already to know the place of the Generation of the Resurrection," to which he responded "this is not our business." To those who argued from Israel's worldly success, in saving Jews and gathering Jews and winning wars, he argued that worldly success is not *halakha* (120-128).

Pragmatism, I might add, is not about worldly success, but about worldly embodiment. The question is “embodiment of what?” Crass conceptions of pragmatism, as in the common use of the term, are species of utilitarianism, according to which we judge value and truth according to the run of the world. For classic pragmatism, however, and prototypically in the pragmatic philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce, success is measured only according to the values that are given elsewhere. In the case of Torah, pragmatic success would be measured by the embodiment of Torah in those who seek it: perhaps this is close what the Hazon Ish called *edelkeit* (refinement or nobility). If life in *erets yisrael* or elsewhere “succeeds,” this means that Torah is embodied. How? Those are judgments made only by way of and within *talmud torah*, not within the terms of an essay like this.

As displayed in the arguments I have attribute to him, the Hazon Ish adopted the following, pragmatic approach to eschatological reasoning:

- a. Human understanding (what Kant called *verstand*) has the capacity to offer testable responses to any question it raises about the worldly sources or character or consequences of specific actions in this world. (Argument #1 and consistent with Peirce’s account of scientific reasoning and of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.)
- b. The human imagination (*dimayon*) has the capacity to display the wisdoms of Torah by way of *talmud torah*, whose modes of discourse and communication are irreducible to those of the human understanding (“external language”). (Argument #1 and corresponding to Peirce’s account of abductive reasoning and to Kant’s account of the imagination and inner time consciousness.)
- c. *Talmud torah* is displayed, first, by way of *halakhic* reasoning, which examines the practical consequences of *limud torah* for conducting life in this world. The primary work of *limud torah* is to nurture refined or noble habits of character and of possible action in the world. (Argument #2 and corresponding to Peirce’s accounts of pragmatics and habit formation and Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*.)
- d. *Talmud torah* is displayed, secondly, in the reception of biblical accounts and rabbinic reflections on the character of God’s relation to this world, including divine promises (*havtachot*). Divine

promises do not deliver any direct instructions for human behavior in this world. Instead, by way of the imagination, they command the consent of the rational will to acknowledge the distinction of the everyday understanding from the activities of *talmud torah* per se. This act of acknowledgment introduces the conditions for the possibility of the practical employment of *limud torah*. (Argument #3, Peirce and Kant's critiques of dogmatic metaphysics, Peirce's "Neglected Argument" and pragmatic account of the normative sciences, and Kant's accounts of the practical employment of the ideals of reason.)

- e. *By way of the imagination, limud torah therefore delivers rational wisdom about ultimate matters, that is, wisdom about that which is infinite and unconditioned.* ("Wisdom" may be employed as a synonym for reasoning conducted within the terms of *limud torah*.) This wisdom cannot be articulated, however, within the discourses of the understanding (which are discourses of external language). Wisdom about ultimate matters therefore introduces conditions for guiding the rational will and, thus, for nurturing dispositions of refinement and nobility, but it does not introduce conditions for any this worldly action (which is action according to the terms of the understanding). *In sum, within the terms of biblical and rabbinic eschatology, wisdom about ultimate matters cannot and does not appoint any this-worldly monarch as agent of divine promises. It does not introduce conditions for any change in the categories of everyday understanding or, therefore, in the halakhah* (Argument #4 with parallels as noted in item "d.")
- f. Following item "e," promises concerning the return to Zion do not introduce conditions for any change in the categories of everyday understanding or in the *halakhah*. Historical events that effect Jewish life in the land of Israel may, to be sure, transform some of the conditions of everyday Jewish life in the land and outside it, and these transformations will most likely call for new work in the *halakhah*. But claims to make this-worldly judgments about the return to Zion misdirect the rational will and, out of ignorance or rebellion, violate the conditions of *talmud torah*.<sup>ix</sup>

## 2. *Illustrating Type 5: Rav Abraham Isaac Kuk, Orot HaTorah (OH)*

The OH lays out a prototype for haredi eschatologies of Type 5. While the writings of Rav Kuk the son display the broad, worldly consequences of Type 5, the father's OH serves as a more helpful prototype because it articulates foundational principles that are at times merely assumed in the son's work. In this section, I will first overview the steps of the argument in OH, according to order of the chapters. Then I will re-outline the argument as illustrating an eschatology of Type 5.

*The argument of OH* (noting chapter and section):

1.2: “The first principle is to study *Torah l'shma* (for its own sake)” – “through which intimacy with God is disclosed”—and “deeds performed [for the sake of *Torah l'shma*] are garments of divine light.

9.2: Study that is not *l'shma* distracts the mind (from God) and the words remain dried and at times are filled with inner poison.

10.1: The time to study the secrets of Torah is when the inner longing to approach the nearness of God is strongest: when it grows so intense that the soul cannot rest.

10.2: One cannot always approach the inner sanctums this way. But when the light of the soul breaks out, then it is immediately necessary to give it freedom to continue and expand. This is when the intensity of God's inner presence is available, to enter into the light of the living soul of all worlds, the light of the almighty.

10.3: If one observes that one is in such a state and grows intense in study and action, but, nonetheless one does not see the inner fruit of this study, it is because one has not sufficiently chased away one's inner spiritual coarseness (*gasut*).

10.5: Because they are intimately of the divine, the inner secrets of Torah can enlighten the heart of anyone, including those not as learned.

11.1: All the words of *Torah she b'al peh* are the wings of wings (of God) all together.

11.3: The Jew (*yisrael*) is obliged to believe that the soul of God hovers within him, that his bones are a letter of the divine Torah, and that each letter is a whole world that expands limitlessly.

12.4: The Torah literally forms the soul of Israel, and if one looks at the inner soul of humanity, there one finds the spirit of Israel living within it, and within that is the light of Torah.

12.5: The Torah was given to Israel so that its gates of light would become brighter, wider, and more holy than all the gates of the light of natural understanding and than all the natural culture and understanding of humanity.

12.7: “The chosen people,” (*am segulah*): The congregation of Israel can fulfill its chosenness only in the land of Israel, because a member of the house of Israel is chosen only in the Torah and the Torah is fulfilled only in the holy land (“The gold of the land is good”: there is no Torah like the Torah of the land of Israel and no wisdom like the wisdom of the land of Israel. *Midrash Rabbah*)

13.2: “Inside the land”: “In every generation we are obliged to love (*chavav*) the Torah of the land of Israel, and even more are we obliged in this generation, a generation of withering and resurrection, a time of darkness and light, humanness and mightiness, because we need a healing drug (elixir of life) [that is found] precisely in the Torah of the land of Israel.

13.2: “Outside the Land”: Outside the land one knows only the contingent particulars of Torah; inside the land one knows the general rules they illustrate .... “The Torah outside the land repairs the particularizing soul of its spiritual and material concerns – of the immediacies of everyday life in this world. But not so the Torah of Israel. Its concerns are always with the general rules, the generalities of the soul of the people as a whole. The Torah of the land of Israel sees the general in the particulars.

13.3: The Torah of the land of Israel sees these generalities not only in the aggadah but also in the halakhah: seeing in the details the foundational principles of wisdom and understanding, and not only in scholarly study but also in matters of everyday life.

13.4: ...All studies that, outside the land, are of mere details, minutia, and pilpul become foundational in the land of Israel.

13.6 The expansive spirit that contains all spiritual aspirations, hovering in the center of the soul, attends only to universal principles, not to particular (contingent) ones – the same glorious will that lies hidden in the inner soul of the congregation of Israel –that from which all universal and particular principles of

Torah.. are ramified – It falls appropriately only in the land of Israel. Therefore only in Israel can the sages enter into the depth of Torah—The universal intelligence (active intellect) that enlightens the inner holiness, shines only in the land of Israel..... Sages in the Land of Israel who do not prepare themselves to receive this light find themselves weakened in wisdom and understanding and thereby they cause weakening in Israel and thus the world—they descend near the level of those outside the land.

13.7: When the congregation of Israel lives outside the land, its life is out of touch with the generative sources. Scholars who study outside the land cannot draw their study from the ultimate sources (of Torah). [Their study turns to material details, to pilpul and logic detached from the generative sources. Within the land, study of these same details is enlightened from the sources and becomes an instrument of divine light.].... When Israel goes into exile, only an external dimension of the holy accompanies them.... Only within the land of Israel do the texts and words they study disclose their inner light, the soul of the living God.

13.8: In the land of Israel, scholars may reason from universal to particular. In exile, they can reason only from particular to particular.

*Irreducible elements of the argument of OH:*

1. This reasoning is set within a generation of the congregation of Israel that has known the depths of suffering and exile. (2) Every generation is obliged to return to the depths of Torah, which are available only in *erets yisrael* . This obligation applies all the more so to this generation. (3) The light of God, the creator and redeemer, shines out of the depths of Torah. From that light, alone, the light of the creator and redeemer re-enters the world. (4) God gave the Torah to the congregation of Israel so that, in studying Torah in its depths, they would uncover and release that light to the world. (5) The only way to study Torah in its depths is to study *torah l'shma and* to embody this study by observing the halakhah *l'shma and to conduct this study and performance in erets yisrael* . (6) If performed *l'shma* by wise scholars who study with devoted intentionality and purity of practice, within *kol yisrael* and within *erets yisrael* , then the study of Torah can open the light of the divine

universal intelligence to Israel and, through Israel to the world. This intelligence discloses inerrant universal principles rather than merely local, particular, and fallible rules. (7) Even if performed with utmost effort by the wisest scholars, such study will not bring the divine light if the study is (a) outside the land of Israel (*ch"l*) or (b) performed in *erets yisrael* but without proper devotion. In this case, the study can disclose only local and particular rules, not universal principles.

*Type 5 eschatological reasoning as displayed within the argument of OH:*

1. Suffering has a redeemer.
2. The Redeemer is God the Creator who redeems Israel and the world through the light of Torah.  
The light of Torah is the name of God as redeemer.
3. The agents of redemption are wise scholars among the congregation of Israel who study of Torah *l'shmah* in *erets yisrael*.
4. This is a time of suffering that calls for action by the agents of redemption. They must return from exile to study Torah *l'shmah* in *erets yisrael*. kol"yisrael must return to *erets yisrael* to enable this return.
5. But is this return a final return or a cyclical one? A response is not necessarily explicit in OT, but it is suggested elsewhere in Rav Kook's writings. Within the frame of this project, I would conclude that, while OT preserves some ambiguity on this topic, Kuk's other writings suggest "final return" as the far more likely option.
6. The work of scholars in *erets yisrael* is therefore like the rule of King David in the rabbis' messianic vision (Type 5). Such scholars are agents of repair like the *shoftim* of the Book of Judges, repairing Israel's suffering and protecting Israel from its enemies; but they are also like agents of the messianic time, since the suffering they repair is of the spirit (of universals not material particulars) and the repair is timeless (redemption).

*Does Haredi Eschatological Reasoning Respect the Postulates of Jewish Religious Reasoning?*

The Hazon Ish and Rav Kuk offered contradictory judgments and arguments concerning the theological significance of a return to Zion. These differences are instructive, moreover, for clarifying two contradictory implications of rabbinic messianism: that we can or cannot anticipate making empirical judgments about Jewish comportment in the world of promise. For the Hazon Ish, Rav Kuk had no warrant for seeking to look outside the halakha for evidence of the divine will nor, all the more so, for seeking to see through the evidences of history and human experience to the inner workings of the divine will. The Hazon Ish did not deny the reality of the messianic end, but only our capacity to know how it would appear and therefore our access to any behaviors that would be based upon such knowledge. At the same time, he did not exclude himself or members of his community from living in the land and engaging with the bureaucracies of the current State of Israel. In these ways, he displayed a type of pragmatic eschatological reasoning, or “meantime messianism,” and he illustrated Type 4 in our types of messianic theology, just as Rav Kuk displayed the contrary, “end time messianism” and illustrated Type 5. Differences between these two haredi thinkers also help clarify how the rabbinic Type 4 draws on the biblical prototypes of the *shoftim* (Type 1) and, to some extent, of King Saul (Type 2); and how the rabbinic Type 5 draws on biblical prototypes of “Monarchical Messianism.” Further research may suggest that most contemporary theological responses to the return to Zion will tend to the Types illustrated by either the Hazon Ish or Rav Kuk.

Can we judge, therefore, whether or not these two haredi thinkers respect the postulates of Jewish religious reasoning? The arguments of Rav Kuk tend to be non-rational. They appear to obey Postulates 2 (being grounded in biblical and rabbinic sources), 3 (being stimulated by observations of Jewish suffering), and 4 Type 4B. But they do not obey Postulates 1 (because Rav Kuk adopts his postulates as true in themselves), 5 (because of his coherentism) and 6 (since Rav Kuk generalizes the truth of his “derash” beyond any single context, offers clear judgments on the basis of both his empirical and theoretical claims, and coherentist claims with respect to the behavioral meaning of abnormal times.) The arguments of the Hazon Ish tend to be rational. They appear to obey Postulates 1 (because of their pragmatic basis), 2 (being grounded in biblical and rabbinic sources), 3 (being stimulated by empirical

observations of Jewish life—including suffering—and by perceptions of errant judgments in the messianism of his contemporaries), 4 Type 4A, 6 (since the Hazon Ish is fastidious in his pragmatic distinction between empirical claims and talmud torah and in avoiding coherentism).

Failing to respect the postulates is not likely a sign that some judgment respects only some “higher reason” or “a beyond reason.” It is more likely a sign that the judgment displays to varying degrees the results of ad hoc choices and strategic alliances. Respecting the postulates is not a sign that a given judgment is therefore “Jewish true,” since a contradictory judgment may also respect the postulates. It is more likely a sign that a given judgment is worthy of theological study. I would imagine that, if we followed the postulates, a Jewish political eschatology would be represented by a finite set of contradictory judgments, arguments among which represent the appropriate dialectic of Jewish theological reasoning.

---

<sup>i</sup> When interpreted through post-Newtonian logics of science, for which a prototypical alternative to two-valued truth-tables are the many-valued matrices employed in quantum mechanics.

<sup>ii</sup> Benjamin Brown, *The Hazon Ish. Halakhist, Believer and Leader of the Haredi Revolution* (Hebrew). (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2011).

<sup>iii</sup> In small part collected by him but mostly by others, in particular his relative, Rav Meir Greineman.

<sup>iv</sup> The Hazon Ish writes (קוב"א, ב, קעג, יז) ...

נפש המשכלת אשר באדם היא רק כח היולי לקבל צורת החכמה, והחכמה אצולה, בת מרום. הזדווגות ההיולי [=השכל האנושי] והחכמה היא עונג האדם ועדנו היותר גדול שבכל חשקי תבל, ואין משלו בתענוגי חומר בחשקי בשרים. כל מאמר ומאמר שבתוכו הוא ענין עיוני דק, עמק מאד, מפליא כל לב מבין, לא יושג בהשקפה קלה, רק אחר רב העיון וההשתדלות, כאשר יאמר ה'מימוני' בהשתפכות נפשו בפרוש המשנה: 'כל דבור ודבור מן התורה יש בהם חכמות נפלאות למי שמבין אותם'

( דברי הרמב"ם לקוחים מההקדמה לפרק חלק, היסוד השמיני. )

<sup>v</sup> To cite his full account (121, from a halakhic chiddush by the Hazon Ish):

לא נתנו המצוות אלא [א] לצרף בהן הבריות, [ב] ולדקדק בצואותיו ית' לקבלת מלכותו ית', [ג] וגם לקיום חכמת התורה הכלולה בכל דיני המצוה, [ד] ולסוד הפנימיות (חזו"א על ראש השנה, קלח, ד; הספרור בסוגריים המרובעים – שלי).<sup>67</sup>

<sup>vi</sup> I believe Brown attribute this to the Hazon Ish in a way comparable to William James' “will to believe.”

על זה שוחחתי איתו הרבה. הוא הבחין בין שתי קטגוריות: קטגוריה אחת היא 'מצוה', חובתו של האדם כלפי הקב"ה. זה הדבר שצריך לעניין אותי ואותך. אחר כך ישנה עוד קטגוריה, של 'הבטחה', שהא-ל מבטיח. זה דבר שבו אתה צריך להאמין, אבל לא עליך הדבר מוטל לעשותו. זה גם מה שנאמר בגמרא לגבי חזקיהו וישעיהו: 'מאי דמיפקדת איבעיא לך למעבד, ומה דניחא קמי קודשא בריך הוא - לעביד' [ברכות י ע"א]. [בהתאם לכך] הגישה שלו היתה שאסור לנו להתעסק בענייני משיחיות, מפני שזה התחום של הקב"ה. כל מה שנדרש מאתנו - בעקבות הרמב"ם - זה להאמין, 'אחכה לו בכל יום שיבוא'. הוא פחד ממשחיות פחד מוות.<sup>70</sup>

viii

מה שהפריע לו [לחזון איש] אצל תלמידי הרב קוק היה העניין הזה, שהם כבר יודעים לאתר את 'דור התחיה', הם יודעים להגדיר מה עושה הקב"ה ומה יעשה הקב"ה, כל זה היה מבחינתו משיחיות. בשבילו, הקביעה של הרמב"ם, שאל לנו להתעסק בזה, היתה בסיסית. זה לא ענייננו. למשל, אם מישהו היה בא לדבר איתו על בית המקדש וכו' - הוא התרחק מזה. הגישה שלו עומדת בניגוד לרבנים ציוניים כמו קלישר ומוהליבר, ואפילו בניגוד לחפץ חיים, שכתב על סדר קודשים וכו'. הוא התכונן. גם החזון איש עסק בקודשים, כמו שהוא עסק בטהרות, כפי שהוא עסק בכל דבר אחר, אבל אם היית שואל אותו על הציפיה - הוא היה אומר שזה לא ענייננו

<sup>x</sup> In Brown's words, the dominant debates in religious circles today concern Zionism and whether or not we can know the divine will in history; but halakha is the primary expression of divine will, and these debates almost never raise questions of halakha (120-121). For the Hazon Ish, however, the halakha is central to all Jewish theological questions as is the distinction between this world, where we know the halakha as the how and what of God's will, and the world to come, where we know only the promise of God's will: to restore and to resurrect. This, says Brown, is the approach of medieval rationalists like Maimonides, who argue that the populace is given divine promises only to motivate observance. The Hazon Ish will not go as far as Maimonides, however, because he considers it elitist to think that only the populace is given this incentive. For the Hazon Ish, not even Maimonides has knowledge of the purposes of the law. The Hazon Ish's theology of Zion is illustrated vividly in his halakhic judgments on shmitta (pp. 124-131). He argued, for one, that the rabbinic blessing for shmitta was not offered for the sake of any worldly gain, but so that the observance of shmitta would not endanger the lives of the poor and consequently so that the practice of shmitta could be celebrated without interruption for other obligations (such as to the poor). By implication, if our settling in the land of Israel or instituting the State of Israel served any theological purpose, then our efforts to serve that purpose would be strictly to fulfill God's

---

commands and not for any worldly gain. The halakha concerns our actions in this world and these apply as well to our behavior in any state. Were such a state of the messianic epoch, any claims about comportment in that state would themselves belong to the world-to-come, which means to the realm of divine promise, and there is no human knowledge of comportment in that realm. The distinctions between this world and the world of promise are not to be muddled.

Because we lack any halakhic knowledge of our specific behavioral obligations in the world to come, we would have no basis for offering judgments about how to comport ourselves in the land of Israel if our settlement there were a mark of the world to come. We "have no business" making such judgments (127). The halakhic rules that apply to our comportment in the land of Israel are the same as they have been since the Churban. For the same token, we have no reason to prohibit settlement in the land of Israel, since this settlement now is guided by these same rules. We are not settling for the sake of any immediate messianic expectation. There is no extraordinary obligation to settle or not to settle. As for the state of Israel, Jews are obliged to protect other Jews beside whom they are living, so the activities of any state -- in the land or outside it -- will be judged by their consequences for "saving a life" more generally and, in this case, for repairing immediate threats to Jewish life. There is therefore no extraordinary obligation toward or against the state. If it has value, it is instrumental, no more or less.<sup>ix</sup> Brown notes that the Hazon Ish "was particularly perturbed by the efforts of some haredi thinkers to discern the reasons for God's acting in history in our time -- for example in the Shoah and in the migration of Jews to Israel -- even though they appropriately refrained from efforts to discern reason for his acting in the rest of creation."