

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_evangelical\\_quarterly.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php)

# Jerusalem in Jewish fundamentalism

*David Zeidan*

KEY WORDS: Jerusalem, Messianism, Zionism, Fundamentalists, Gush Emunim, Temple.

## Israel: caught between traditional religious Judaism and modern secular Zionism

Israel is caught in an ongoing struggle between traditional religious Judaism and modern secular Zionism. Both secular and religious camps offer wide spectrums of attitudes and ideologies. The relationship between secularism and religion is not yet fixed, and a *kulturkampf* is smouldering between the extremes in the two camps, representing the efforts of both to shift the State legal system and institutions to their advantage.

Activist millenarian Jewish fundamentalists are actually only a small minority in Israel. However, due to the convergence of interests with the dominant right wing nationalist political parties, their influence extends far beyond their numerical strength.

Jewish Israeli society is divided into a radical secular camp of some 30%, a religious camp of some 20%, and a middle camp of secular-traditionalists of some 50% of the population.<sup>1</sup> Reform and conservative Jews, though dominant in the United States and numerous in several European diasporas are a small minority in Israel.

Among the religious Jews, the Orthodox compose some 12.5%. Orthodox Judaism is divided into modern Orthodox Zionist (8.5%) and ultra-Orthodox non-Zionist (*Haredim*, 4.5%) camps.<sup>2</sup>

Although overall a small minority, in Jerusalem the Haredi population is approximately 50% of the total population. It is growing demographically, and gaining in political strength as it seeks to dominate the Holy City and to marginalize secular Jewish life there.<sup>3</sup>

The Ultra-Orthodox camp is divided into followers of mystical Hasidism and legalistic opponents (*mitnagdim*). All are inherently non-Zionist, while some are violently anti-Zionist. Zionism is seen as a movement of unbelieving secular Jews engaging in forbidden efforts to hasten the end before God's appointed

1 I. Shahak and N. Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (London, Pluto Press, 1999), 7.

2 Laura S. Zarembski, 'Israel's Religious Right: Not a Monolith', *Middle East Quarterly*, 7:2 (June 2000).

3 Marshall J. Breger, 'Understanding Jerusalem', *Middle East Quarterly*, 4:1 (March 1997), 75-83; Jane Little, 'Jerusalem Gets Ultra-Orthodox Mayor', BBC News, 18 February 2003.

time. Some Ultra-Orthodox are willing to engage in the political process, and two political parties have developed: *Degel-Hatorah* representing the Ashkenazi part of the movement, and *Shas* representing the Sephardi wing. Both participate in the political process in order to strengthen their position and gain access to State resources while maintaining a hostile attitude to State ideology. Radical separatist groups – *Neturei Karta* (NK) and *Edah Haredit* – eschew any political activity since they do not recognise the State of Israel.

The Zionist Orthodox camp is mainly represented by the National Religious Party (NRP). It was allied to the Labour Party in the first stage of Israeli independence, and was then politically moderate. It relied on *halachic* rulings which legitimised the Zionist stance, imbuing it with a positive religious definition as heralding a gradual change in the condition of Exile.<sup>4</sup> However it was radicalised by the 1967 Six Day War, and shifted its ideology to that of active messianism, allying itself to the right-wing nationalist Likud party. Its main plank became the advocacy of Israel retaining the whole of *Eretz Yisrael*, claiming that *halacha* forbids any withdrawal from parts of the Holy Land.

### Haredi beliefs<sup>5</sup>

Jewish history has always been in a state of tension between 'Exile' and 'Redemption'. Following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, rabbinic Judaism has opted for a pacifist stance, which saw the survival of the Jewish people as the highest goal. Exile was God's will, imposed as expiation for Israel's sins. It was sinful to try to hasten the appearance of the Messiah; Jews must wait patiently for God's supernatural intervention to send the Messiah, ingather the exiles, rebuild the Temple, restore the Jewish kingdom and bring about final redemption.<sup>6</sup> Hastening Messiah's return in any way was strictly forbidden. All national and political aspirations are deferred until the coming of the Messiah.<sup>7</sup> In exile, Jews have opted out of the normal national and political processes, focusing on their spiritual calling. Any suggestion that Jews should use political or military means to escape the decreed exile is seen as heresy.<sup>8</sup>

According to *Kabbala* even the divine system itself has been damaged by exile, the *shechina* has gone into exile with the people, and required restoration in the final redemptive stage. Israel's present condition is still defined by exile,

---

4 Menachem Friedman, 'Jewish Zealots: Conservative Versus Innovative', in E. Sivan and M. Friedman (eds.), *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East* (Albany: SUNY, 1990), 136.

5 Menachem Friedman, 'Jewish Zealots', 131-36.

6 Gershom Goldenberg, *The End of Days*, 13.

7 Shahak and Mexvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, 7; Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 46-47.

8 Rabbi Yisrel David Weiss, 'Zionism and Judaism – Let Us Define our Terms', *Neturei Karta International*, [www.nkusa.org/About US/Zionism/index.cfm](http://www.nkusa.org/About%20US/Zionism/index.cfm).

and in exile it is God's will that Israel submit to gentile rule. The sages enacted the dictum of *dia d'malchuta dina* – the law of the (gentile) kingdom is the law, and Jews must submit the gentile law even when it contradicts *halacha*. There are only three exceptions to this rule, three extreme cases when it is preferable to be martyred than to submit (*yehareg vebal ya'avor*): when asked to deny the unity of God, to worship idols, and to engage in sexual immorality. In the exile, meantime, Jews must focus on studying the Torah, keeping the commandments, and maintaining themselves separate from gentiles and their sinful culture. This guarantees the survival of the nation.

Early on the rabbis accepted three axiomatic bans (oaths) as binding on Jews in exile:<sup>9</sup>

1. Jews must not rebel against non-Jews.
2. Jews must not massively migrate to the Holy Land before the coming of the Messiah.
3. Jews must not pray too strongly for the coming of the Messiah, so as not to bring him before the appointed time.

The appearance of several false messiahs (Bar Kochba in the second century, Shabetai Zvi in the seventeenth) caused great harm to the Jewish people, and intensified the rabbinic fight against messianism.

In contemporary Orthodox Judaism the exilic past, particularly that which evolved in Eastern Europe before the processes of Enlightenment, emancipation, secularization and modernization took place, is viewed nostalgically as the paradigmatic golden age. *Hereditim* look to this past model as the standard for determining the legitimacy of modern Jewish life, and fight any perceived deviation from it. From this perspective Zionism and the State of Israel are condemned as deviant.<sup>10</sup>

In exile many laws pertaining to the Land and the Temple could not be implemented. The sages could codify and theorise about the laws of the coming Kingdom, but they were perceived as not binding during the Exile, when Jews were a persecuted minority. Thus all *halachic* laws concerning the Jewish kingdom in the land were put on hold until the messianic restoration. In the meantime the main criterion for action was the survival of the Jewish people, the discernment of what is good for the Jews and what is harmful for them in the exilic context of subjection to gentile powers.

Zionism is seen as a revolt against God's commandment of not being like other nations. Zionist attempts at controlling history are seen as a mutiny against God. The Jewish people are still in exile, despite the existence of the State of Israel.

### Jewish messianic fundamentalists<sup>11</sup>

The great cataclysms that have befallen the Jews since the end of the nineteenth

9 *Talmud, Tractate Ketubot*.

10 Menachem Friedman, 'Jewish Zealots', 127.

11 See Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*.

century – the East European pogroms, the Russian revolution, the rise of racist anti-Semitism in western Europe, culminating in the Nazi Holocaust, and finally, as a counterpoint, the establishment of the State of Israel, the ingathering of exiles and the conquest of the biblical heartland and of Jerusalem in 1967, were all catalysts in the gradual emergence of messianic fundamentalist Judaism.

Messianic religious Judaism stressed several accepted traditional beliefs, but drew extreme interpretations from them. The uniqueness, exclusivity and singularity of the Jews as God's chosen people, possessing God's holy law, was emphasised in contrast to the more universalistic attitudes of mainstream Jewish movements. This is taken to imply that there are no universal moral or behavioural norms. Gentile norms are not binding on the Jewish people who are ordained by God to follow their own unique path. The sanctity of the Land of Israel is stressed, but the conclusions drawn from this doctrine are the imperative of its territorial integrity under Jewish sovereignty and the impossibility therefore of any territorial compromise. The belief in the coming of the Messiah and the ultimate redemption is reclaimed and shifted from an ahistorical distant future to the immediate present: the messianic age has dawned and traditional norms have therefore passed away.<sup>12</sup>

### Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacoen Kook and Merkaz Harav Yeshiva

The messianic trend in religious Zionism was a hidden fringe stream until after the 1967 war, which was perceived as a miraculous victory, a sign of messianic redemption. It was developed in the writings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacoen Kook (1865-1935), the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Mandatory Palestine, who founded the small Merkaz Harav *Yeshiva* in Jerusalem.

He was followed by his son, Zvi Yehuda Hacoen Kook (d.1982?) who interpreted his teachings. Kook saw the progress of redemption as creating a new synthesis of the sacred and the profane. He made use of traditional Jewish mysticism (*kabbalah*) to explain the new reality of an independent Jewish State and to predict its future.<sup>13</sup> Lurianic mysticism sees the cosmos as the result of internal movements in the Divine. God contracted himself to provide space for his creation, and sent divine rays of light into it, but the vessels failed to contain the rays. The breaking of the vessels and the failing of the rays constituted the primordial cosmic catastrophe. The whole cosmos awaits its repair or rectification (*tikkun*), which is a long eschatological process in which the Jewish people play a central role. *Tikkun* includes the liberation of the primordial holiness from the evil entrapping it, and the restoration of purity even to the divine personality itself.<sup>14</sup>

12 Ehud Sprinzak, 'Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 19:3 & 4 (1985).

13 Menachem Friedman, 'Jewish Zealots: Conservative Versus Innovative', 136-37.

14 Martin L. Gordon, 'Messianism', *Hagshama*, Department of the World Zionist Organization, 10 June 2003, [www.hagshama.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1436](http://www.hagshama.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1436); Moshe Halbertal, 'Exile and the Kingdom' *The New Republic* 16 March 1998.

Exile is an alienation of the divine from itself, and Jews have a duty to help to restore its wholeness.<sup>15</sup>

According to Lurianic mysticism, Jews should devote their lives to *tikkun*, mending the cosmic disharmony, integrating the profane into the sacred. Redemption will come when *tikkun* is achieved.<sup>16</sup> Kook revolutionised this concept by shifting it from the sphere of individual piety and spiritual exertion to the sphere of practical messianic activism. According to Kook this final redemption stage has now begun, the new dispensation ushering in the healing of the world and of the whole cosmos as God moves in a new way to bring in the final stage of history. Restoration of the earthly Jerusalem and the Temple as the centre of Jewish national life has a spiritual and cosmic impact because it means victory in the heavenly realms leading to cosmic healing. Activist participation in settling all the Land and rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple helps the messianic process along. Jews must establish the Kingdom and implement the messianic laws first, then Messiah will come.

According to Kook, secular Zionists, though ignorant agents of the divine will, are sanctified because they are involved in the redemptive process. It is God's calling that brought them into being, and they are unwittingly fulfilling his plan. Zionism does not stem from a human initiative, but is a response to the divine movements toward final redemption. The intrinsic holiness of *Eretz Israel* and of the redemptive process will gradually correct secular misconceptions and permeate all Israel and all Jews. Secular Zionism, the State of Israel and its secular society are thus accorded religious legitimisation as part of the redemptive process. All are imbued with a special holiness, even in their most profane manifestations. The State of Israel is God's pedestal on earth, the nexus between the divine and the corporeal. The enemies of Israel are the enemies of God. Israel's military victories reflect spiritual victories in heaven. -

Kook used the example of the building of the first Temple to justify his sanctification of secular Zionism. During the building process workmen who were not priests were allowed to work on the holy site, even on the site of the Holy of Holies, even though access to that sanctuary was later limited to the High Priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. He explains this apparent contradiction by a quote from the *Gamara* (*Me'ilah* 14a): 'First they would build and only later would they sanctify.' Just as the Temple was constructed in a non-holy state to enable the building process to take place, and on its completion the Temple was sanctified, so secular Zionism is building the State which, when perfected, will be sanctified.<sup>17</sup>

---

15 Gideon Aran, 'Redemption as a Catastrophe: the Gospel of Gush Emunim', 163, in Sivan and Friedman (eds.), *Religion and Politics in the Middle East*.

16 Elisheva Carlebach, 'Keys to Judaism. Scholars Debate the Relationship Between Catastrophe, Jewish Mysticism, and Messianic Fervor', *My Jewish Learning*, Virtual Jerusalem website.

17 Gideon Weitzman, 'From Zion to Jerusalem and Back Again', *Yeshiva.org.il*, [www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/print\\_shiur.asp?ID=2245](http://www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/print_shiur.asp?ID=2245).

Jews, the Land, and Torah are a sacred Triad. Jews can only be real Jews in the Promised Land. Only here can all the laws be observed, including those relating to farming, settlement, government, politics. All the Promised Land is holy, Jerusalem is its holiest part, and the Temple Mount is the holiest of all. The Land is indivisible, hence the struggle for its ancient borders. Hidden within the political struggle over territorial boundaries and settlements is the battle over the essence of Judaism itself: is it exilic or messianic?

Kook promulgated an explicit theory of change, a cosmic shift, a new dispensation. The redemptive messianic age has dawned and the exile has ended. Jews have been catapulted into the End Times. Exilic passivity and the three bans are over, to be replaced by messianic activism. It is not Messiah who initiates redemption, but Jewish messianic activism that will end with the coming of Messiah, marking the culmination of the process. The keys to redemption are Jewish dominance and sovereignty over Greater Israel, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, and the rebuilding of the Third Temple. It is now a religious duty to annex all the Promised Land and to rebuild the Temple. This means that it is now also obligatory to enforce the commandments pertaining to an independent messianic Jewish State in the Promised Land that were in abeyance during the exilic period. The State of Israel today is seen as being in a radically different category to the Exile. It is a sign that the period of the 'footsteps of Messiah' (*pa'amei mashiach*) has begun and the exile is at an end. The Bans are no longer valid. A new dispensation of Jewish dominance and sovereignty has begun.<sup>18</sup>

A new consciousness is needed to understand that the advent of the Jewish State is the beginning of the divinely inspired and ordained redemptive process. This process depends, among other things, on the territorial integrity of *Eretz Israel*, and on Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. The Temple is a source of divine power. Withdrawal from any part of the Land could cause interruption or even cessation of the redemptive process. In the messianic age it is an obligation to conquer all the Promised Land, and never to give up any portion of it to gentiles.

The dawning of the messianic age means that a new legal dispensation is now valid: Jewish subservience is ended. Jerusalem and the final redemption are exclusively for the Jewish people who are now politically dominant. A role change has taken place: the gentiles are now subservient to the Jews. In the messianic kingdom non-Jews are to be treated as Muslims treat *dhimmis* – they are tolerated if they accept their God-ordained inferior status; if they rebel they must be subdued.

Kook made a distinction between Zion and Jerusalem. Zion represents the physical rebuilding of the land and the people, while Jerusalem represents the spiritual facet of Judaism. Both exist in the Jewish people at all times, but the weightings change. In exile the balance between the two was skewed towards the spiritual. In secular Zionism it is skewed towards the physical. It is impera-

---

18 Menachem Friedman, 'Jewish Zealots: Conservative Versus Innovative', 127-31.

tive to fuse the two facets in order to revive the whole nation.<sup>19</sup> While engaged in a pragmatic and earthly building project it is also important to deny pragmatic considerations in pursuit of the redemptive programme initiated by God.

### The Rise of Gush Emunim<sup>20</sup>

Kook's messianic ideology has become the basis for an activist religious-political messianic movement, keen to hasten the coming of the final redemption. His Merkaz Harav Yeshiva became the spiritual and ideological centre of this movement, and his mysticism underlies the ideology of Gush Emunim<sup>21</sup> ('The Bloc of the Faithful'), the movement that carried and implemented his ideology and vision following the Six Day War.<sup>22</sup>

The success of Gush Emunim may be attributed both to the convergence of its views and aims with the maximalist territorial aims of the secular nationalist Likud government, and to its representing a wider movement of sympathisers among the national religious sector of the Israeli population (the iceberg model).<sup>23</sup> Gush Emunim managed to radicalise the wider national religious party, and take over its leadership.

### Principal points in the ideology of Gush Emunim

1. The Jewish people have experienced a metaphysical transformation and are now living in a new messianic dispensation, a process of redemption that signifies dramatic changes in Jewish history. The exile is past, and the beginning of redemption (*atchalta de'geulah*) or 'revealed period' (*ketz meguleh*) process is well under way. It is time to implement all *halachic* laws reserved for the messianic end time of the Jewish Kingdom. -
2. Redemption is a linear, non-reversible divine initiative and process, beginning with Jewish messianic activism in the Land, and culminating in the coming of the Messiah and the ultimate Kingdom. Messianic activism hastens the programme. While there may be setbacks, the process itself is inexorable.
3. The secular Zionist programme and the State of Israel are holy because, even if unwittingly, they are part of the divine process of final redemption, agents of the divine will. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook defined the State of Israel as the

---

19 Gideon Weitzman, 'From Zion to Jerusalem and Back Again.'

20 Ehud Sprinzak, 'The Iceberg Model of Political Extremism', in David Newman (ed.), *The Impact of Gush Emunim: Politics and Settlement in the West Bank* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); 'Gush Emunim: The Politics of Zionist Fundamentalism in Israel', Martin L. Gordon, 'Messianism', Hagshama; Uriel Tal, 'Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel', *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 35 (Spring 1985).

21 Gush Emunim was officially founded in March 1974, but its founding members had been active since the 1967 war in promoting Jewish settlement of the West Bank (Ehud Sprinzak, 'Gush Emunim: The Politics of Zionist Fundamentalism in Israel', 5.

22 Gideon Aran, 'Redemption as a Catastrophe', 157-75.

23 Ehud Sprinzak, 'The Iceberg Model of Political Extremism', 27-45.



*halachic* Kingdom of Israel, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Every person and every thing within it is imbued with a special holiness.<sup>24</sup>

4. Secular Israel's main legitimising principle is the furtherance of the redemptive process, including especially the settling of the whole biblical Land, and Jewish dominion over it. When it deviates from this goal it must be coerced back by all legitimate means.
5. Religious messianic Zionism is a movement for Jewish spiritual revival, whose ultimate goal is the full redemption of the Jewish people and of the entire world. Jews, a unique people chosen by God for a specific purpose, must stop desiring to be like other nations, return to authentic Jewish values, and be liberated from an alien secular and corrupting western materialism and hedonistic culture.
6. The Jewish people, the Promised Land and the Torah form a holy and unified whole. It is imperative to implement this unity by reclaiming the Holy Land for the Jewish people, settling it, ensuring Jewish dominion over it, and not returning any part of it to gentile rule. No compromise or withdrawal is permissible.
7. Jewish sovereignty over the Land has liberated it not only from gentile enemies, but also from the evil demonic forces of the *sitra achra* that embody all defilement and moral corruption. Israel is entering an era of absolute sanctity and victory over mere corporeality.<sup>25</sup>
8. The Land belongs to the Jews by divine decree and covenant and universal principles of self-determination do not apply to it. Palestinians must fulfil their national aspirations within the larger pan-Arab nationalism. They must understand that the fulfilment of Jewish redemption means salvation for them and for the whole world.<sup>26</sup>
9. Arab nationalism is exclusive, and does not accord national self-determination to Jews, Kurds, Copts, Maronites and others. So some Arabs (Palestinians) could be under non-Arab rule too. While Arabs as individuals deserve respect and fair treatment, Arabs who oppose Jewish sovereignty must be fought and subdued. Arabs in the Holy Land should be presented with three alternatives:
  - Accept the legitimacy of Zionist doctrine and be accorded full citizenship rights
  - Obey the laws of Israel without formally recognising it, and be accorded the rights of resident aliens
  - Reject any Zionist rights, and emigrate to Arab countries.<sup>27</sup> More radical elements support the idea of transferring all Palestinians to neighbouring Arab States, especially Jordan.

---

24 Sprinzak, 'Gush Emunim', 10.

25 Uriel Tal, 'Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel', 10.

26 Gideon Aran, 'Redemption as a Catastrophe', 172.

27 Sprinzak, 'Gush Emunim', 13-14.

10. Jerusalem and the Temple Mount are eternally sanctified by God to the Jewish nation and to no other. The Jewish people's right to the Temple Mount is eternal and inalienable. There is no room for concessions.
11. Building the Third Temple in Jerusalem is essential for achieving the final stage in redemption. The keys to final redemption are Jewish dominance and sovereignty over Greater Israel, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, and the rebuilding of the Third Temple. It is now a religious duty to annex all of the Promised Land and to rebuild the Temple.
12. Israel's wars have significance in the spiritual and cosmic realms as part of the final conflict between good and evil, light and darkness. They are the Wars of God that are vanquishing Satan and all spirits of defilement represented on earth by gentile forces opposing Israel. These wars are not merely against Arab forces, but against all the impurity of western secular atheist culture. While Israel is already in the messianic era, wars continue as a process of purification. Wars against the gentiles are ultimately for their own good, as their redemption is conditional on the redemption of the Jewish people in the whole Land of Israel.<sup>28</sup>

### The radical messianic fringe

More radical messianic fringe groups have emerged from the religious messianic camp, both within Gush Emunim and external to it, such as Kach and Kahane Chai, The Temple Mount Faithful, and The Temple Institute. These were partly driven by the failure of the redemption process to proceed as smoothly and as quickly as expected. Frustration at government-led attempts at peace-making and compromise, and the fact that most Israelis remained secular and did not join the messianic movement made some impatient, and caused them to question the legitimacy of the secular State system, the government and its policies. While moderates think that the process of redemption might be graded and lengthy, the radicals conceive of it as relatively brief (one generation). While the State may be sacred, its government is not, and any government that opposes the redemptive process is illegitimate and must be opposed. Such radicals felt personally called by God to fulfil the biblical commands against all opposition, to advance the redemptive process, and to purify the Temple Mount.<sup>29</sup> The end must be hastened by any means, even radical and violent action. This process led to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1996, and to the attempts at destroying the mosques on the Temple Mount.

While the dovish fringe in the messianic movement employs *halachic* concepts of saving Jewish life (*pikuach nefesh*) and the priority of Jewish people over the Holy Land in its preparedness to accept some compromises and peace ef-

---

28 Ian Lustick, *For the Land and For The Lord* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988), especially ch. 5: 'The Range of Disagreement Within Jewish Fundamentalism'.

29 Lustick, 'For the Land and For the Lord', ch.5.

forts,<sup>30</sup> radicals find no justification for compromise. They expect violent cataclysmic events to accompany the redemptive process, and are happy to instigate them, in the assurance that Jewish victory is now guaranteed and irreversible.<sup>31</sup> Catastrophe is considered as a legitimate means to short-circuit adverse developments and precipitate total redemption. These final wars are understood as the wars of Gog and Magog, when all nations fight against Israel and Jerusalem. Out of this crisis emerges the ultimate redemption, since nothing can prevent God's predetermined programme from being fulfilled.<sup>32</sup>

Jerusalem is seen as the spiritual as well as the physical centre of the world, with the Temple as its heart. It is the source of divine light and inspiration, filled with spiritual energies. The Temple and its service are a cosmic blueprint, and its right functioning ensures the harmony of the universe. All energies and powers needed to fulfil God's purpose for Israel and for the world are concentrated there. It is filled with the holiness and power needed for the rectification of Israel and the world.<sup>33</sup> Therefore it is imperative that Jews control the Temple Mount and rebuild the Temple, otherwise the final redemption will be delayed and frustrated.

Members of the various Temple movements see the Temple Mount as the most important weapon in the struggle for the whole Land. It was ordained by God as the remedy for idolatry. It is needed for victory. The aspiration for the Temple is a spiritual attitude that includes a commitment to absolute holiness and absolute acceptance of God's will. Israel must have the Temple at its centre – all Jewish troubles are traceable to the sin of abandoning the Temple.<sup>34</sup> Radicals criticise the importance given by most Jews to the Western ('Wailing') Wall. That was a substitute during the exilic era, when Jews were forbidden by gentile rulers from entering the Temple Mount, but the Temple Mount is the real Holy Place, and it is a duty to place it once again at the centre of the renewed Jewish State.<sup>35</sup>

As Jerusalem and the Temple Mount are the central venue for the final events they must be appropriately transformed.<sup>36</sup> The status quo which gives the Muslim *waqf* authorities sovereignty over the Temple Mount, banning Jews from praying there, are deeply resented: Jews must be allowed to raise their flag, build a synagogue and hold public prayers on their most holy site.<sup>37</sup> Rebuilding the

30 Lustick, 'For the Land and For the Lord', ch.5.

31 I. Shahak and N. Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 7.

32 'The Approaching Battle for Jerusalem and the War of Gog and Magog', *Temple Mount Faithful*, Newsletter, 27 June 2000.

33 Chaim Richman, 'Focus on the Holy Temple – The Meaning of Jerusalem', *The Restoration Newsletter*, September 1996.

34 Nadav Shragai, 'Third Temple Culture', *Ha-aretz*, 26 January 2005.

35 Israel Eldad, 'The Temple Mount in Ruins', *Ha-Or* (New York: Council of Jewish Organizations, 1982).

36 Gershom Goldenberg, *The End of Days*, 13.

37 Ian Lustick, *For the Land and For the Lord*, ch. 6, 'Present Trends and Future Implications'.

Temple is the most urgent issue, a positive perpetual Torah commandment that it is sinful to ignore.<sup>38</sup>

Radicals see the years since 1967 as full of missed opportunities to rebuild the Third Temple and restart the sacrificial system.<sup>39</sup> The Islamic shrines ('abominations' to the radicals) hinder the consecration of the site and the desired rebuilding programme, and so must be removed. Some believe that they will be destroyed imminently by an earthquake, while others suggest that they be transferred to Mecca<sup>40</sup> and still others argue for their violent destruction. According to Goldenberg radical messianic fringe elements conspire to blow up the Dome of the Rock and then rebuild the Third Temple.<sup>41</sup>

Radical messianists are changing the map of Jerusalem because they are convinced that Judaising the City and rebuilding the Temple will hasten the coming of the Messiah. They see themselves as God's messengers, hastening his programme. The Temple Institute in Jerusalem is dedicated to rebuilding the Third Temple, developing a practical programme aimed at determining the exact shape and materials of its utensils and clothes from sacred Jewish texts, and then producing them. They have recently produced the golden Menorah, the Incense Altar and the Table of Showbread.<sup>42</sup>

For some of these radicals violence and terror have become legitimate means of hastening the messianic process and disrupting the peace overtures that appear to set it back. The dawn of the messianic age has an anarchic potential, the sense that all normative frameworks ought to be shattered, all traditional bounds burst.<sup>43</sup> The ultimate act of terror would be the bombing of the *Haram al-Sharif* mosques that would inflame the whole Muslim world and ignite the war of Gog and Magog, so paving the way for the final acts of the End Time.<sup>44</sup>

The lack of commitment by the secular State to their goals leads them to the conviction that it is illegitimate, and may be resisted, if necessary by force, to prepare the way for a messianic Kingdom of Israel under a Sanhedrin promulgating *halacha*. If the majority of Jews are not ready for the final redemption it must be forced upon them, if necessary through great suffering. Democracy is an alien, gentile system which is to be replaced by a messianic theocracy.<sup>45</sup>

38 Rabbi Chaim Richman, 'Why Build Another Temple?', The Temple Institute Website.

39 I. Shahak and N. Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, 7.

40 'Objectives of the Temple Mount Faithful' and 'The Prophetic Endtime Promises of G-d Continue to be Fulfilled', *The Temple Mount Faithful*, 26 February 2004.

41 Gershon Goldenberg, *The End of Days*, 5.

42 Goldenberg, *The End of Days*, 5; Rabbi Chaim Richman, 'About the Temple Institute', the Temple Institute website; Richman, 'Focus on the Holy Temple', *Restoration*, September 1996.

43 Gideon Aran, 'Redemption as a Catastrophe', 174.

44 Uri Avneria, 'The Temple Mount Bombers', *Media Monitors Network*, 19 September 2004; Khalid Amayreh, 'Hardline Threats to al-Aqsa Mosque', Aljazeera Net, 25 July 2004; Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press 1994, 64.

45 Ehud Sprinzak, 'Kach and Meir Kahane'.

In March 2005 Israeli television reported on a secret meeting of radicals from some thirty different groups, discussing ways of taking over the Temple Mount from the Muslim authorities in an attempt to thwart the ongoing peace negotiations with the new Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas (which included an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza). Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmad Qurei'a warned that any attack against al-Aqsa would lead to a violent explosion in the region – which is just what the radical groups want.<sup>46</sup>

Various scenarios of the redemption process are provided by these radical groups. One such is as follows:<sup>47</sup>

- The founding of the State of Israel, and its God-given victories
- The gathering of the exiles into the Promised Land
- The liberation and consecration of the Temple Mount
- The rebuilding of the Third Temple
- The coming of the Messiah, son of David, King of Israel.

For the radicals, gentiles, including Palestinians, have no part in the Kingdom because they represent Satanic forces of evil that always fight against God's true people, Israel, who carry in themselves the divine spark of redemption.<sup>48</sup> More radical fringe groups such as *Kahane-Kach* equated the Palestinians to the biblical Amalekites who should be exterminated.

### Abstract

Orthodox Jews are a small minority of the minority of religious Jews in Israel. Some are anti-Zionist even to the extent of not recognising the State of Israel. Other Orthodox Jews are messianic fundamentalists and Zionists. These ideas are found especially in Gush Enumim, 'The Bloc of the Faithful', which teaches that the Jewish people should occupy the whole land of Israel and rebuild the Temple. Some more radical groups are prepared to use any means to hasten this.

---

46 'Jewish plot over Temple Mount', BBC News, 17 March 2005; Imigo Gilmore, 'Palestinians and Israelis Take New Step on Peace Path', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 2005.

47 'Vision of Redemption', *The Temple Mount Faithful*, [www.templemountfaithful.org/vision.htm](http://www.templemountfaithful.org/vision.htm)

48 'The National Religious Party and the Religious Settlers', in I. Shahak and N. Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*.