



Israel Analysis Group—Session II
Professor Aviad Kleinberg, July 10, 2006

Meyrav Wurmser:

... This group's purpose is to discuss Israel in a manner that is not usual in Washington. Let me first tell you what we're not here to do: we are not here to discuss Israeli-Palestinian issues despite the recent crisis; we will also not be discussing the upcoming convergence plan or the precise location of the security fence. This group's discussions are set on the premise that there is more to Israel than just the conflict. We will look at Israel as a changing society that is in the midst of great existential threat, yet it is struggling at the same time with great societal, political and cultural questions. The issue at the core of this discussion is Israel's changing identity in an age when Zionist idealism and the patriotic culture that it created are in decline, and when the upcoming convergence is likely to deepen questions like the secular-Israeli divide and the connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. These questions of identity are frequently ignored in town, and in a town where a lot of people know the most minute details of the Arab-Israeli conflict – Israeli society beyond the conflict is largely ignored. Therefore we are here to discuss those questions. During each one of our seven meetings we will hear from highly accomplished Israeli speakers and commentators that can offer unique insight into the questions that shape Israeli society today. Although each meeting will open with a formal presentation, we are gathered around the table as colleagues, not as speaker and an audience. We are all part of a debate and a discussion and your comments and thoughts are valued. And now let me present our speaker today – Aviad Kleinberg. Prof. Kleinberg has been dubbed by several leading Israeli newspapers as the country's most promising young intellectual. He is Professor of History at Tel Aviv University, Director of Tel Aviv University Press, and a columnist for *Yediot Ahronoth* newspaper. Kleinberg is the author of *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (1997) and the translator of St. Augustine's *Confessions* into Hebrew. Prof. Kleinberg was asked to speak about "*What is Next For Zionism? Post-Zionism and New Zionism*". Prof. Kleinberg – please.

AVIAD KLEINBERG:

Thank you very much. First, I am glad to be here, and I am glad to be part of this ongoing discussion which I think is happening in Israel as well as in other places. When I am thinking about Zionism – if you asked the young Israeli man or woman what does the term bring to mind, what does he or she think when they hear the word Zionism, and if you are not his or her history professor or history teacher (in which case he would of course say that Zionism is a political movement that initiated this whole idea of granting the Jewish people a home-land), then I think my guess would be that he would say that Zionism or the word *Zionut* brings to mind a certain type of rhetoric and a certain set of

clichés. In fact in Hebrew Zionism is very often used in that sense – when you say *Maspik im hazionut* (enough with Zionism) what you say in fact is enough with that type of speak which is making excessive use of the ????(4:22) of let's dry the swamps etc. or the comparative of what we had to go through – everything that you do is not enough, not good enough, not enthusiastic enough etc. So Zionism in that sense is something that is obsolete, it is speaking about values, not necessarily about political values – for example, if you say “this is Zionism” without quotation marks, which is the real Zionism – what you mean is not necessarily taking a political position. If you're doing something for your community, if you're doing something for your society, then you are doing Zionism – without quotation marks. Those cases when what you're doing is “Zionism” with quotation marks – in a sense Zionism has become an expression of that old type of talk which is no longer relevant – that's one thing.

What does Zionism mean to most Arabs? For most Arabs Zionism is in fact a substitute for the state of Israel or sometimes to Jewishness or Jews in general. They are never against Israel – they are against the Zionist entity, they are against Zionist leaders, they are against Zionist occupation army, they are against Zionism in general. If you listen to Ahmadinejad he does not say clearly and simply that he's an anti-Semite, cause of course he's not an anti-Semite, he's OK, he is only an anti-Zionist, and Zionism in that sense is seen as a replacement or as a substitute for Israel. In other words, because anti-Judaism or anti-Jewishness is seen as somewhat unrespectable in the West, you use that substitute term – Zionism – and then you are OK because Zionism is just an ideology that the state of Israel should of course get rid of – together with itself (joking – LB).

Now the funny or the strange thing is that you have another way of thinking about Zionism, which I think is not typical for people outside of Israel as inside of Israel, and that is thinking about Zionism as another term for patriotism. I think that is a common mistake. Zionism in that sense is seen as an equivalent to being a true blue American, it is equivalent to being as French as escargots, or whatever you want. It is “that thing”, it is that type of attachment to your country that is expressed supposedly in Zionism. Necessarily I think for most Israelis this is not the way they think about it. But let me begin in the end – patriotism is alive and kicking in Israel. Within the Jewish population I think it is practically impossible to find people or groups who are hostile or even indifferent to the state and what it represents. That does not mean necessarily that those people, that everyone in Israel supports the government – in fact, it's typical in Israel that practically nobody supports the government – but nevertheless, Israelis define their national identity in political terms. They do not identify themselves only in terms of cultural habitués – namely belonging to a certain linguistic environment or to a certain sense typical locales or to certain self-evidences like the French “pfff” which is a way of being French. It is clearly and evidently also in terms of belonging and feeling responsibility to the symbols of statehood and its manifestations – the most important is probably the army, which was chosen, I should stress, by Ben Gurion as the leading symbol of Israeli statehood and Israeli together-ness for all kinds of reasons that we might elaborate on later on. The army is seen by all Israelis, or by overwhelming majority as something they identify with – I see doubts but I will talk about them later – it is “our children” it is “our army” even when we have out problems with this or that policy, the

army is seen as something representing “us”. It’s the flag and it’s the state. The state of Israel is seen as something that the Israelis, the Jewish population actually, identify with strongly. Not only that, more and more this includes even – I should say that cause I think it’s important – it includes even those groups that originally were ideologically opposed to exactly that aspect of the Jewish state. I am thinking particularly about the ultra-orthodox camp – theoretically that camp came to Israel after defining itself as being in the state of exile in Israel – *galut Israel beartzo* (the exile of Israel in its own country). Theoretically, the state of Israel should not have happened – it should not have happened in the way it did – by secular people who are not obeying the commandments of god – it should have happened as part of the messianic plan. Since it did not happen in some ways, we definitely or deliberately do not identify with those symbols of statehood – as the famous song of *neturei carta* “in their laws we do not believe, their flags we do not accept, the army etc.” – they give a whole list of things that supposedly are there. So even that group, the ultra-orthodox, which saw statehood as something in a way marginal, something that just happened, unlike other things – Jewishness is something they feel very strongly about – even that group has moved towards, if you want, the basic premises of Israeli étatism. And that did not happen through major clear declarations, it has happened as things often happen in cultures and societies in a state of gradual change, it has happened simply by adopting certain aspects without even acknowledging them. To digress for just a minute – to something typical of the way things are happening in groups that adopt ideologies that theoretically are against their own – think for example of the whole group of *Shas* which is an ultra-orthodox group that is supposedly trying to bring back the old crown – *lehashiv atara leyoshna*. Now bringing back the old crown, one would assume, would be to reproduce the type of existence that one had in north Africa and if you want traditional or religious community. In fact if you look at the entire leadership, not only is it not conservative – it is in fact revolutionary cause they adopted western models, western ideas while claiming to reestablish their own ideas. The same is happening very often in the ultra-orthodox camp – you see those people accepting political positions, cultural positions that were supposedly not theirs. They are part of this commune of the state of Israel which in some ways has become self-evident. Self evident to such an extent that it is seen that it is beyond words and beyond specific ideologies.

However, there are of course groups that do not share that common and I will talk about them briefly – who does not share this common Israeli assumption? That this is the land, that we have right for the land, that this land is ours even if it’s not for ideological visions, it is ours by the more self evident and clear fact that we have been born here, that our parents came here, that we have died and shed blood on this soil – this land is ours, and the state is a clear, even an ideal representation of the aspirations of the Jewish people, all this is assumed to be, to a large extent, self evident. They don’t even need to be discussed. Who does not share that? And I would say there are three small groups, and then there is a larger group which I will discuss in greater length. The three small groups – one group is the conservative ultra-orthodox, those who still continue the ideology, old ideology, of Israel being a totally external extraneous development, and of course the typical example of that is *mea she’arim* and *neturei carta* but we are talking about a very very small group indeed and as I was trying to explain this group is in fact getting smaller and smaller. Even a group like *agudat Israel* which are supposed to identify with this

type of alienation towards the ideas of the state has now been part of the coalition, and in fact is quite right wing. The other group is a small group but an important group, which you will probably discuss in length – I would call them disillusioned religious Zionists. Religious Zionists have not only been part of that common thing but were in fact extreme representatives of it – following the teachings of rabbi Kook father and son, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook and his son rabbi Yehuda Zvi Kook, they considered the state not simply a means, the state was in a sense sacred – sacred and holy. The state and the army were sacred and holy, the land of Israel was sacred and holy. That group has undergone a severe crisis after the disengagement. In fact this crisis has been ongoing – it started with the Oslo agreements and it continued until recently – but recently what you see is something you did not see before – if in the past failures or temporary retreats have been seen as exactly that – temporary retreats when in the end history will regain its due course, I think there is a real moral, ethical, cultural, social (you can use whatever you want) crisis in certain elements in religious Zionism. They feel betrayed, not only in a strong sense by history, in a way that they will never express they feel betrayed by god because there have been promises – before the disengagement there were important rabbis who promised, did not simply say or suggested that that might be, they promised that the disengagement would not take place, that it will simply not happen. And that group feels a strong crisis of leadership, a strong crisis of its own faith, and the way ??? (16:03) thinks about itself, but even more importantly it feels that at its hour of direst need the entire community, and the state as an expression of that community, the lay secular community of Israel, and the army and the police – all of those in fact have been instrumental in bringing about their disaster. Because that is how the disengagement is seen – it is a disaster and other things are seen as proof of that. Within that group, and Meyrav can tell you much more about this, I just learned earlier that she is writing a book about this, within that group there are elements that now feel alienated from the state, feel alienated from the army, feel alienated from the symbols of the state. Some of them even speak about the land of *Judea* instead of the state of Israel – trying to create or recreate this small state of ??? (17:01), but even though they do not speak about that, they're taking the distance from the state and from what the state represents – not going to combat units, not volunteering, not sharing – as I said again, because they feel betrayed. The third group, which I think draws most fire, though I would argue is extremely insignificant in some ways, is the so-called professional post-Zionists. Those people who are secular people who are opposed to Zionism for ideological reasons – because it is post-structuralist, post-colonialist, whatever they want – everything is part of that old project of the West doing terrible things to the East and in that sense they feel that the country does not represent them etc. In fact, to some extent the country does not have a legitimate enough basis, some of them are talking about a big secular bi-national or multi-national state etc. I will argue that this group, of so-called post-Zionists is an extremely small group. In fact, when you try to think of who exactly are those people, you are thinking about a group of three, four, perhaps five – and I am not talking about people who are supporters, I am talking about people who are actually expressing themselves, who are willing to do things, trying to change the situation in some ways – we are talking about a very small group. And in fact one of the pillars of that group has had a change of heart...

Harold Rhode:

If it's three or four mention their names.

Aviad Kleinberg:

Well I think there's Ilan Pappé, who is one person, there's Tanya Reinhardt, and there's Benny Morris who is now no longer part of that group. There are of course other ??? (19:14) but if you are thinking about that particular group, not only are the numbers small but their influence is extremely limited. Not one of them is a full professor, not one of them has an institute, their resources are extremely limited, their access to the press is limited – all of these things I think have been highly inflated for all kinds of reasons by the press and other people because it is nice to see that as a group that in fact imposes a real danger. I am willing to talk about it more if you want but I really think it is a small and relatively insignificant group.

In addition to those marginal groups there is a larger group that I will call for the sake of argument “globalizers” if you want – the hellenizers. That group, which is not insignificant and is not marginal – these are people who believe in money and in instant gratification, and they, like their brethren elsewhere in the West are part of an ideology that stresses rights instead of duties – the idea that if you do too much for the state (which is what the definition of Zionism I started with – giving yourself, doing things, volunteering) they do not want to do any of these things – they want to do other things, they want to live a good living etc. They are in some way, in part of this general rejection of nationalism, do not speak in strong national terms. But I must say that in Israel, in most cases, in the overwhelming majority of cases, they are still strongly committed to the idea of the state. Not only are they committed to the idea of the state, they are committed to the old preset or tenants of Zionism. So, even when their willingness to pay the price has become more limited than in the past, when commitment to the state was an article of faith to the middle class (volunteering, state run and state directed altruism that was part of being Israeli, state-run volunteering). But nevertheless, in that group which I would say the overwhelming majority of my students in some ways belong to – we're thinking about middle class Israelis who in some ways are playing with the idea of globalization, of being part of the global village, of being like the gentiles, of being like the nations of normalcy as a tenant of faith. Nevertheless, when it comes to asking hard questions, they tend to be not only as I said patriotic, but to accept the Zionist definition of what patriotism is. So, patriotism I would say is alive and the question is what about Zionism. What is Zionism as it is seen in Israel?

In this part of my presentation I want to talk about what I would call the old melting pot and the new. What is Zionism first – it is a political program which was meant to give the Jewish people a homeland and a state. As such for most Israelis it lost its relevance, and it lost it not because it has become obsolete but in fact because all the major articles of that program have been fulfilled. I mean we have a state, and we have a state that is seen by most of its inhabitants now as self evident. The second is a culture program – Zionism did not start as a political program – in fact the political program was just one of the instruments to achieving the cultural program which was to create, to heal, so to speak, the Jewish people – to create a new Jew, to create a “healthy” Judaism –bringing the Jews

to the land of Israel was seen as just a mean to do that but there were other means – for example, reinventing the language, creating a different type of together-ness, creating a different type of attitude towards nature, towards the body, towards violence – all of these things were part of normalizing the Jew. Also, it meant extending the borders of Jewishness so it includes modernity. If you're thinking about A. B. Yehoshua speaking not so long ago about similar things – I think that in some way in his strange and somehow abstruse way this is what he was trying to say. What Yehoshua was trying to say is that in Israel you can be very Jewish and you can be really Jewish (I forget the comparative, the comparative always raises some sort of opposition), without constantly feeling in opposition to your community and your society. Because part of being in the Diaspora was that "I'm Jewish and I'm not..." whatever – I'm other things. It's not normal, not natural to be Jewish. "I have to do specific things in order to maintain my Jewishness". In the land of Israel the idea was that you can be a Jew naturally without thinking about that. Now I think in some ways, that idea, both of these things worked together and many young people in Israel feel that they have now become what the founding fathers, with all their misgivings and nostalgia, have wished them to be. They feel that their Israeli-ness and their Jewishness are self-evident, that they are natural, that they don't have to think about them not because they are weaker, but indeed because they are stronger. I would suggest in fact that some of the old discussions that have been part of the public sphere in Israel, of history, rights and things like that, do not in fact express weakness or a weaker commitment to the idea of the state, but in fact they express a stronger sense of security and self-assured-ness – we can now speak of these things because even if not everything that we did was right we feel that we have a right to be here and even we don't have a right – we're here and we're not going anywhere. That's it.

Let's go back to the old melting pot and the new – what created that Israeli together-ness, that feeling that we are all part of that new existence which was what the founding fathers were trying to achieve – and as I said what Ben-Gurion was trying to achieve partly through his insistence on a militia army which in his mind played the role not simply of a military force protecting the country, but as a "socializer" in the state. So his idea of schools, of the army, of the big socializing instruments was to create something that people who come from different cultures, who speak different languages, who have very little in common besides their religion – and remember that he was undermining that thing that was supposed to be the most important thing that is in common to all Jews – supposedly all Jews have one thing in common: you take them to the synagogue and they can pray the same prayers in the same language – now Ben-Gurion was undermining that, and he had to do something instead. That something instead was his vague idea Israeli-ness and his vague idea of the melting pot. That title, or that idea of the melting pot was – to use a term that was used by ??? (27:43) – one of the most important political thinkers on medieval philosophy – Ulman (?) makes a distinction between ascending and descending theories of power. That was descending – it came from above, it was synthetic if you want, it was ideological, and it was centered around synthetic symbols of the new state. Everybody had to be like this mythical creature who was the new Israeli. There were very few real new Israelis, but the idea was there, and everybody had to conform. So in that sense there was a strong sense of conformism, and there was a strong

sense of everybody having to be in a sense giving up something of what they came with – that is true by the way for everyone, it is true for oriental Jews who had to give up part of their heritage and who feel strongly offended by that, but it's also true for Ashkenazi Jews – who, I remind you, had to give up their language – Yiddish and not Hebrew was the real language of Jews in the Diaspora, and until the early 60s it was in fact illegal in Israel to have Yiddish theater – I remind you that the father of Mike Burstein was actually arrested because they dared do Yiddish theater. Of course they were released quickly, because that's Israel – we have a revolving door (joking – LB). I think in that sense you can see a moment in the 70s where that old type of melting pot has collapsed. It has to do with all kinds of things – with what was seen as the defeat – the *mehdal* – the disaster of the '73 war, with the gradual rise of the Likud to power – in all kinds of ways it was seen that that old melting pot ceased to be seen as something that is our common project and began to be seen as something that is the project of a political elite and of a specific sector within the population. As such, it no longer fit. But I think that something happened instead – it's easy to think that once that type of, as I said, old Zionism is gone what you find is nothing, what you find is a society that lacks anything in common, but I think in fact that we are witnessing a very interesting creation of what I would call the new melting pot – and the new melting pot is ascending – it comes from below, it's organic, it's inconsistent, it's full of contradictions, it's not part of an ideology, there isn't anybody thinking exactly what it should be. But nevertheless, I find it extremely powerful. I find it a strong integrating process which serves, and has served, Israel well in its hour of need, in spite of all the cracks – it was go (?? 30:55) with the territories or go (?? (30:58)) with the melting pot in general. Let me give you two examples – both of them ambivalent, and both of them have brighter and darker sides to them. The first is the emergence of what I call “the new religion” in Israel – that new religion, which appeared in Israel more or less with the rise of the Likud in '77 – is the so-called return of the supernatural to Israel, return of the supernatural to the Jewish religion and to Israeli politics – it began around the charismatic figure of the Baba Sali, Baba Israel Abu-Hatzera, who in the small village in the south, Netivot, who has created, founded – and I urge each and everyone of you to go to Netivot as it is now one of the most interesting, impressive, lively places in Israel – he created a new religious center in a place where there was absolutely nothing before. Now, this is not easy in Israel, because wherever you dig, you know if you want to plant a tree, you dig three ancient cities, five temples, everybody has been here – it's very hard to find virgin soil – and Netivot is exactly that. But what happened around that was the small emergence of a whole network – an entire topography – this is something I am writing about now – this is a new sacred topography of the state of Israel – holy sites everywhere: in the Galilee, Negev, Judea – everywhere – new holy sites, and new charismatic leaders. The reaction to that was that “the old secular modernist Zionism is collapsing, what are we going to do now? We are sliding back into the dark middle ages” – and as a medievalist I must tell you that in Israel as elsewhere the middle ages are considered to be the most horrible, the darkest, the most terrible period on earth. It's not exactly that I would like to live in the middle ages but I beg to differ... (joking – LB) Anyway, this was seen as part of that, the dwindling of the energies of the founding fathers and what they represented, it was the return of old-time religion. But if you look at what was actually happening around those holy sites you realize a number of extremely interesting things – a) the old distinctions between Ashkenazi and Sephardic

for example has been blurred – in those places, even though most of the suppliers are Sephardic, the consumers are a mixed group – not only are they Ashkenazi and Sephardic but in fact some of them are secular. The other thing is interesting in itself – this new type of religion represents a privatization of religion – because in those places you can come and go as you please - in the organic community the local rabbi or the local holy man was part of your everyday life, you saw him everyday, you had everyday interactions with him, he told you what to do, you'd ask him what you need etc. Nowadays, what you see in those places is an emergence of something different – people come, they come as they please, and they leave as they please. And more important than that – it is a meeting place – people from all over Israel meet in those places, they exchange ideas. And, you see on the one hand an emergence of a certain type of architecture, a certain kind of buildings, and also blurring of the edges – and I should add one more thing – I won't discuss this any longer now – but there was a clear distinction between two types of holy sites – the national holy sites which are mostly in the territories so to speak, and which are mostly run by people who are settlers, and there are the new type of holy places – those are mostly within the green line, partly because it's less dangerous, it's easier, it's more accessible etc, but those places, as I was saying, represent a new kind of together-ness, and a new type of acceptance, and a new type of interchange and intermingling.

The other thing is new politics as the blurring of difference – now I'm not sure I'm too excited about that, because of course there is a heavy price to be paid for this general blurring of difference within the political sphere. But one has to note also the positive side, which is – when I say twenty years ago when I would go on the street, not only would there be an extreme hostility between, say, Sephardim and Ashkenazim – there were writings everywhere of “Ashke-natzim” and things like that. If you read the famous scene of Amos Oz of *Here and there in the land of Israel* of Bet-Shemesh, there is something extremely frightening in the emotion that is being put into this tension between old and new comers, Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Much of that has now been, I'm not saying disappeared, but has lost its power. The downtrodden so-to-speak, have managed to find enough of the old cake to feel better about their belonging to here. The other thing is of course the differences between right and left – if right and left were clearly demarcated, I would say that what we are seeing is a slow process of everybody moving towards the center – as I was saying, there are good elements to that and there are bad elements to that – but I think it also serves in Israel as an integrating force, something that helps people define themselves in terms of something that is common, that belongs to everyone, in which there aren't strong hostilities and strong hatreds. Now, the Israeli patch work is gradually forming – patch after patch, and it's full of contradictions, and it's full of all the new resentments – but I would like to argue that it seems they are stronger than they appear at first sight and that the pattern is full of life. And yet, not all is well. I would just say this in order to finish and maybe open the discussion with that, because I think what happens is that on the one hand we find what I defined as the new melting pot, we have found a new together-ness which is less painful than the old together-ness and is much less violent than it used to be, partly, among other things, because it was seen as organic and not as synthetic – but what we see is a dangerous lack of new leadership. And what we see also is a strong sense that we are lacking tasks that are beyond mere existence and coexistence – I just want to remind you that existence and

coexistence are one of the most important projects of Zionism in the early years. I think that a country that wants to move on, that faces serious challenges, needs more than that. Perhaps with that we can start our discussion. Thank you.

Meyrav Wurmser:

Thank you so much. I would like to open this discussion with a quick question – the picture you are portraying is one in which you are saying – Zionism is not dead but it has no purpose other than existence and coexistence. What is Zionism today?

Aviad Kleinberg:

I think that's a good question. I think what we need are purposes for Israel, I think what we need is a set of ideals, and I am not sure that the old Zionism can serve that purpose. It all depends on what you mean by that. If what you mean by that is "do we have a right on that land?" – the answer is yes. In that sense Zionism is important; "is this the land of the Jewish people?" – the answer is yes, this is the land of the Jewish people. But I think there is almost an overwhelming consensus on that, amongst almost all of those groups. But if Zionism is more than that, or if what we need now is a set of national tasks, if what we need now is a new national leadership, then personally I don't care if you call that Zionism or if you call that Israeli-ness or you call that patriotism – Zionism is not a religion for me, it's just a name. In that sense, if we are talking about the same thing....
(cut out – LB)

Ori Nir:

Present but missing – or *Nochahim Nifkadim* – in your analysis are the Arabs and I wanted to ask you to talk a little bit about that. Do they have a place in Zionist...

Aviad Kleinberg:

They're not Zionists.

Ori Nir:

Well here is the issue – the small groups that you pointed out as being excluded from the Zionist ethos within the Jewish population are in fact small. This group is not all, and not blankly only anti-Zionist. Some of them are not Zionists but they don't care that much. They are present in a Zionist state and they tolerate Zionism. And my question is therefore – is there a place, or is there a common denominator that can be strong enough, built by both communities in Israel, where Zionism is less dominant than it is today, perhaps, but is strong enough to include people who are not anti-Zionists but just indifferent to Zionism?

Aviad Kleinberg:

Absolutely. But I think one of the reasons why I think one should be careful with the term Zionism is that Arabs feel excluded by that. But they don't necessarily feel excluded by patriotism, I think many of them are in fact patriotic. I mean, there is a minority in this group that actually wants to see the demise of the state of Israel, I assume, and I mean that I know that some of them are that – but I think many of them don't. Some of them are different and some of them actually love the country, they love that particular

combination – they want to have a better place in it. They think they have a right to have a better place in it and I agree. I think once we agree that what we need now is that we have succeeded in creating the Jewish homeland, that that place Israel has a strong sense of its Jewishness, then I think there should be a place for Arabs in that, if you want, new melting pot. And I think in many ways this is exactly what they are saying to us – “keep us in, we want to be in – if you exclude us then we will have no choice but to find other models to identify with, but if you include us we want to be in”. And in fact one of the researches of Sami Smocha – he has done a series of researches which are quite interesting – found the overwhelming majority of Arab Israelis identify with the state of Israel, do not want to live under Palestinian rule, not only because there is more money, and because this is a first world country and that is a third world country – they’ve gotten used to be Israeli. And they want to be Israeli. I think this is something that we should definitely encourage, certainly not exclude.

Thomas Neumann:

Two question: One, are we letting Zionism be defined for us by other people? And the other question is – Zionism used to be something noble, it used to be a dream, it used to be “land of milk and honey” – neither of those expressions pertain to Zionism today at all.

Aviad Kleinberg:

Let me go a step back. First, as I was saying, Zionism was a political program and it was a cultural project. In some ways, the reason why Zionism now as a catch-phrase, as an ideology is weaker is that it has been extremely successful – as historians will tell you – the only ideological movement, revolutionary ideological movement that succeeded in the 20th century is Zionism – the others – communism is gone, Nazism is gone, fascism is gone, Zionism has succeeded beyond its wildest expectations. Now, if we insist on calling idealism, if we insist on calling patriotism Zionism then a) you exclude all of those who are not part of that pie, and b) it’s in a sense trying to force new life into a project that has already been successful and in that sense has served its purpose (45:10).

Tom Neumann (TN): The dream was wider than that. The dream was long-range. It was a dream of being an example. It was a dream of being better than other countries. It could be inclusive. It doesn’t have to be exclusive.

AK: Sure, but why call it Zionism? [inaudible] Milk and honey were part of the Bible...[inaudible]

TN: It was part of the Zionist model. It was part of that dream. It is Zionism.

AK: I don’t think we have lost that dream. I don’t think we have lost that dream. People in Israel still want to have a good country; a country that they will be proud of. That noble dream—and this is what I was trying to tell you in the beginning—it’s easy to look at those people, and say... and think in the comparative. Okay, how can you compare yourself to the pioneers? How can you compare yourself to the founding fathers? But I tend to disagree. I’m looking at what people are doing now and I must say that, in some

strong sense—maybe I'm over-patriotic—I'm impressed. I'm impressed that Israelis, compared to other people, are willing to make sacrifices, are willing to grind their teeth and bear things that people in other places would not be willing to bear. They are willing to give up their lives; they are willing to give up their time and money and other strong things in a way that is almost beyond comparison in those countries that we are supposedly trying to imitate. If you ask me whether I would want young Israelis to be like young Frenchmen, my answer would be no. There is absolutely no comparison. There is absolutely no comparison. Young Israelis are knowledgeable; they are politically minded; they care about their country; they are willing to make sacrifices. I think all of these things should not be overlooked when comparing nostalgically to some legendary past.

Chaim Weizmann: Let's go back, not to the Jewish question, but to the Arab question. First of all, I think that it is very important what terms you use, because if you use "Zionism" instead of "Israelism," Arab-Israelis cannot identify with Zionism. They can identify with Israelism.

Harold Rhode (HR): What is Israelism?

Chaim Weizmann (CW): It's like being American. You don't ask yourself 'What is Americanism?'

Harold Rhode: Yes you do. Yes you do. We are a political nation based on democracy, freedom, and human rights. That Americans know.

CW: Okay. Israelism, if we start defining it now, it will also be democracy, human rights, civil rights, and being the state of the Jewish people.

AK: It's the homeland of the Jewish people. Absolutely. Of the Jewish people, not only of its inhabitants.

CW: It's not only the Jewish state. It's the state of the Jewish people.

AK: And we have a responsibility to Jews everywhere. And I think if you ask young Israelis, Do you think that the country should absorb, say, Ethiopian Jews who are poor, third-world, etc. without asking questions? The overwhelming majority will say yes. Here's *an* answer to your question.

CW: So now that we know what Israelism is, I think that there is, or there might be a coalition between your students, as you define them, the middle-high levels of Israeli Jews, and the Arabs toward building this Israelism, which is not yet built. It's in a process.

HR: And your definition doesn't work together with absorbing Ethiopian Jews who are poor.

CW: Why not? My definition goes very well with it. And I think people even my children's age will give you the same answer. And I agree 100% with Dr. Kleinberg about that. I don't see any difference between my father's view, my view, and my children's view, in this sense. If we are talking about this, and if we look at the phenomenon that over past few years Arab-Israelis are defining themselves as Palestinians, which is less Israeli, maybe the best interest of the State of Israel is to define Israelism and not Zionism, and to base itself on Israelism and not Zionsism.

AK; I think, again, and let me answer it on two levels. (A) I don't think that there is anything to be ashamed of in Zionism. I think that I'm a Zionist; the state was founded by Zionists; my parents came because they were Zionists, etc., etc. and I think that that's okay. It's part of our heritage. It's part of my heritage that I'm proud of. The question is whether that program, the program devised by Herzl, by Ben-Gurion in the 1930s, can now go, as they say in Hebrew, "one-to-one." Can it match the new goals, the new definitions, the new tasks of Israeli society? And I think the answer is no. I think that's part of healthy states, that they are evolving, that they do not simply stick to old ideologies. It's not Mexico with the party of the established revolution for 150 years. I mean, things change, and I think that it is good that they are changing.

As I said, again, as far as Arabs are concerned, I think that it's a problem. Because this is a Jewish state, because this is a Zionist state, they have a problem. Nevertheless, what I'm saying is that, and in this I agree with you, many of them are willing to live with that problem, and I think that what we are supposed to do is to help them live with it.

Peter Rosenblatt: You mentioned [A.B.] Yehoshua's statement here 2 months ago.

AK: Was it here?

PR: Here in Washington, at the American Jewish Committee on May 4th, I think.

AK: Wow, you remember.

PR: I was there.

Chaim Weizmann: It was the night before [Israel's] Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers.

PR: In any event, one aspect of what he said that you did not mention was his utter rejection of the diaspora.

AK: I think that that's nonsense.

PR: Well, whether it is or not, that is what he said. And what I'm asking you, since Zionism was originally directed at the diaspora with an ideological message... One can reject Yehoshua's old-fashioned definition of Zionism, but there is still a situation in which only 40% of the world's Jews are Israelis. And the question is...

AK: Haaretz published last week that we are finally the majority.

?: No that's not true. There are more Jews in Israel than there are in any other country. There are slightly more than there are in US, because there is 40 –something...

PR: You are a plurality. It's roughly 40-40-20. 40 [%] there, 40 [%] here, and 20 [%] everywhere else. The question is what, if any, meaning does Zionism have for Jews who are not in Israel, but in the diaspora, and is there any relevance to the term in a situation in which most of the sources of immigration to Israel have been more or less dried up.

AK: I don't know about that. I mean, if you asked me 20 years ago what were the chances of a million Russians coming to Israel, I would have said very, very small. But let's go back to Yehoshua. Again Yehoshua is thinking in the comparative mode—we are better than you, you are better than us, whatever. I think that the whole idea of founding the state of Israel was that there would be one place that is home for Jews. For Jews who choose to live there, they can live there in what we consider to be a normal state of affairs. Now in fact, ever since the first expulsion, there have always been Jews living elsewhere, and I don't think that being an Israeli involves, necessarily, having to disqualify everyone else who is not an Israeli. It does not involve saying that our way of life is good and your way of life is bad. We are doing that and you are doing that. Now, what does Zionism mean to you? Who am I to say? I think that you are much better qualified to tell me what it means to you. What does it mean to you?

PR: Well, when I first went to Israel, which was immediately after the establishment of the state, what I heard from Yehoshua two months ago was the uniform conviction of Israelis, namely that all Jews would eventually come to Israel, sooner rather than later, and that there really was no validity within any kind of definition of what a Jew was in the diaspora. Now your attitude reflects the extent to which that has changed in Israel. The question I'm asking you is what validity does Zionism today have in the diaspora?

AK: Again you are asking me to define what it means for you, which I don't know, but I will say two things. First, as an historian, I will tell you that this view that there is absolutely no validity to life elsewhere was probably much less widespread than you assume. This was the "official speak."

PR: It was certainly official, but it was also unofficial.

AK: I'm thinking of my parents, my uncles, my friends, my relatives, we all lived very well with the parts of our families, with friends, with people living elsewhere and we never thought that there was anything wrong with that in itself. You have to remember that there were two things. In the '40s, there was still this feeling that the diaspora is a death trap for Jews because we have tried living in the diaspora and it ended in a horrible, horrible disaster. That was a strong feeling: Come over because things are collapsing or might collapse even in the most benign countries like the United States. By the way, I'll tell you another thing, another story. In the '60s, my uncle, who managed to escape on time and was not sent to Treblinka like the rest of my father's family, called and said, 'Look, your state is about to be run over by the Arabs, save at least the children. This is

the Jewish way. Save the children. Send the children to France so that we can save them. I mean, if you are stupid enough to be idealistic, to be a Zionist, and if you stay there, if you die you die. But save the children. You have to worry about future generations.’ And my parents had to think about it. To think about how maybe this time we’re not running away. That’s it, we’re staying here. I would say that nowadays, in most cases, the question would not even arise. Israelis are Israelis and that’s it. This is home. [Before] it wasn’t self-evident. Now what does that mean for you? I think it means all kinds of things. We are theoretically the center. We are that place where Jewish—and I’m not only saying Israeli, but Jewish—culture is evolving because I think that looking at Jewish culture simply in terms of religious culture would be a big mistake. Jewish culture is evolving in Israel. [A.B.] Yehoshua, with all the stupid things that he says, is part of the way of creating new Jewish culture because that was the way culture was created in the old days when we had sovereignty in our own land. Now if you care about that, I think that this is an enormous resource. But I think that, in a way, you represent something more authentic. You represent the continuation much more than the State of Israel. The State of Israel is the product of a revolution. It goes against history. Judaism was created in the diaspora, and people in the diaspora are continuing to do what Jews have been doing: creating a life, cultural wealth, cultural riches, creating things which are part of Jewish life in the diaspora. I think that the dialogue between those two existences is extremely important.

PR: That is, if I may continue just one more [minute], that is not a view that seems to be widely shared at least in the younger generation in Israel today, where one perceives a lack concern of any kind with the diaspora.

AK: That’s right. I think that’s true. They don’t care about anything. But it’s part of—and here I’m feeling old again... They don’t care because they’re young, because they’re busy with other things, because we have been for too long... Part of the old melting part, as I have defined it, was to say that the diaspora is bad because we were constantly afraid that the young children would run away, that they would not stay, that—they had this joke—the last person would close the light. We had that fear. But I think that one of the things that happened is that (A) we are now a nation of more than 6 million people. This is different from being a nation of a million and a half or 2 million. This is a middle-sized nation. There are more Israelis than there are Finns, which is a big achievement. I didn’t expect that to happen.

?: There are more Israelis than the population of Ireland.

AK: More Israelis than Irish? Really? ... So I think there was that fear. And I think that in the same way... One of the things that you see lately in the younger generation is a growing interest in their religious heritage, not because they are trying to be “born again” or *chozrim b’tshuva* [penitents]. For many years they refused to open the Gemara because that meant for them being part of the *galut* [diaspora], because that for them meant being religious. But now all of a sudden, they feel secure enough to want to go back. I think in that sense we now have a moment where a different type of dialogue is possible—not just the dialogue between donors and donees, not just the dialogue between those who are

worthwhile and others who are not, too weak to be the real thing, namely Israeli. I think that that kind of dialogue is now possible. The young generation, and this is how I ended, is mostly confused and looking for a new way, not just existence and co-existence, but they're looking for an ideology, to help create a new ideology, which I think should be much more dialogic than it was before.

Ariel Cohen (AC): Thank you for your presentation and I think it's quite positive and hopeful, which is good, because a lot of Israelis and Jews like to complain. We all do. But I will try to raise some questions about the presentation in a critical manner. First of all, the main medium today everywhere, including in Israel, is television. When I go to Israel and switch on the television—and I lived there for 11 years—not much has changed. You have some new channels, but essentially, you have the same Chaim Yavins, the same Yaron Londons, the same Dudu Gilboas are still on television. Not much has changed.

AK: Who's Dudu Gilboa?

AC: Dudu Gilboa: he's a personality on television. He does foreign affairs. That's why I pay attention to him. So Israeli television is still secular, left-wing, and Ashkenazi. Very few Sefardim, very few religious people, very few right wingers, if any. Name me some. Second, in the last government, in the coalition, not a single Russian member of Knesset—maybe in Kadima they got some token woman. Essentially, no Russians.

AK: Actually, that's not true.

AC: I'll expect you to answer. No Russians, which is roughly a million people. Thirdly, I was there in April and I was there now in late June, and all the talk, before the recent Gaza events happened, was about social justice. When you focus exclusively or excessively on social justice, you, in my opinion, neglect the real regional threats, primarily the jihadi threat that is growing in the region, that is enveloping Israel, making Israel a focal point of that hatred. So I'm wondering if you can integrate the definition of Zionism as an ideology that provides security for the Jewish people, that provides a security answer to the Jewish people in Israel where yet again the dominant establishment is asleep at the wheel, as they were in '73, in the 'conceptzia,' in Oslo, and, I submit to you, they are now with the disengagement.

AK: So Russians and security.

AC: And television as the domination of old establishments that you were talking about. The new melting pot is not catching up. A lot of elites are looking at the new melting pot, when you're talking about religion, for example, with disdain. They despise them. They think that they are medieval, they are irrational, etc., etc. I don't see any respect for religion in Israel.

AK; Well, I think one can, especially in a country like Israel that is constantly facing serious threats from all directions, it will be hard to find a moment where everyone will be happy and satisfied. I think people are dissatisfied about almost everything.

Let me answer those questions: As far as television is concerned, just to remind you, the Israeli left has controlled the country from the '20s until '77. After that, this has no longer been the case. It is simply not true that the media doesn't have Sephardim; it does have Sephardim. It does not exactly represent the population—it has not enough Arabs, not enough religious Jews, not enough women, it has all kinds of things that are not enough. But I think that if you looked at things, I would say, 30 years ago, things would be infinitely worse as far as those people are concerned. Second thing is you say that there are no Russians in the government. Of course there are. In previous governments there have been. But you ignore the fact that there are now significant numbers of Sephardi Jews in the government, which is also something that would have been unthinkable. The Sephardi Jew had the typical role of being the Minister of Police, the Minister of Communications. You know have Sephardim as the Chief of Staff. You have a Sephardi as the Minister of Defense. You have a Sephardi as President, etc., etc., etc. I mean, we're going places. And the Russians, this is really the last minority I would worry about. I have never seen such quick, fantastic, extremely successful integration in anything. These people arrived as new immigrants, what, 20 years ago? They are now holding positions, sending their children to the best schools, they definitely have not become the margins of society. But granted, it's not good enough yet. And as for social justice, I think one thing that Israelis are *not* indifferent to, it is security. In fact, this is a country that is obsessed with questions of security. The whole idea of talking, for a change, about social justice, has not been 'we've been doing this all along'; it has been 'we have never been doing this at all; we have only been talking about security and about nothing else. And this is a very primitive idea of what security is. Security is not just the number of tanks and missiles you have. Security is something much more complicated and complex, which we have not been dealing with. If you look even at my area, my sphere, [history] you have a million books about every attack and every offensive and defensive in every war of the Israeli army. But you don't have a single book about religion in Israel. You don't have a single book about the family in Israel. A single book! There are all kinds of collections of essays. A single book about the family in Israel? There's nothing. A single book about religion in Israel? There are certain aspects that we simply do not see. Just as you cannot say, look, we are now going to neglect security because we have other things to do, you cannot say we are now doing security and we are going to neglect other things. Because if there is a threat, it is exactly that threat, that elements within this population—the poor, the disenfranchised, and also the settlers, who are undergoing an extremely, extremely painful crisis, and the government is not paying enough attention to what is happening for that group of idealists, of people who, even if you do not agree with them, are not egotistical or indifferent [CHECK]. Quite the opposite.

If you're asking me if I'm happy with what this government is doing, the answer is no. If you're asking me if what I call the new melting pot now moving from being patchwork to being a smooth surface, then the answer is also no. Does it have holes and loose ends and things? Yes, definitely. But are we moving in an interesting and healthy direction? I think the answer is yes. I think Israel is an extremely mobile society. I think that if you're looking for the most important characteristic of a healthy society is mobility. Israel is a

mobile society. You can move from place to place. You can go places no matter where you've gone. We have pockets of poverty, of course, but we don't have a group that, as a group, has been left behind. Jews, I'm talking about.

Questioner: Can you talk a little about people who leave Jerusalem, who leave Israel

AK: I think that there are people who leave, but it's no longer perceived as...I think people are leaving and people are coming. Certainly in the past *yeridah*, leaving, was seen as an existential threat. It no longer is.

Questioner: What is the dynamic? Who is leaving? What are the percentages versus *aliyah* [people coming]?

AK: Latest studies have shown that the people who are leaving are the people who are leaving everywhere—young, successful professionals who find better jobs elsewhere. But they are not leaving because they do not like the country. They are leaving because they can get more money in the states.

Hillel Fradkin (HF): I also want to thank you very much for the talk. It was very interesting and, I think, very helpful, and maybe you could give me a little more help. I have really two questions: one, I think, fairly simple and the other probably involves different parts. The first question really is this: I understood you to be saying that Zionism is still used without quotation marks to convey the sense of public service or devotion to the common good or something like that, so that it still has that positive meaning.

AK: Yes.

HF: That probably bears on Mr. Neumann's question earlier about what Zionism would mean in the future, if it still bears that meaning, that it still is an expression of some ideal of the society. The other question that I wanted to ask was about this new melting pot and its different parts, and how they might go together, if they go together. It would be unfair to ask you if they will go together. First, you spoke about the professional post-Zionists as being one very small group that doesn't accept this. I guess a standard way that Israel appeared in recent years was the following: yes, there is a small group of professional post-Zionists and their impact is likely to be small. But the question is their influence on what you called the "globalizers," and I wanted to ask you a little bit about that. You seem to suggest that that is not a very powerful factor in Israeli society now.

AK: If you look at people like Ilan Pappé, he exists *only* abroad. In Israel, he does not exist.

HF: So the more powerful thing is really happening somehow or other on the religious side of things, and there seem to be several parts to it. That's what I wanted to ask you. There's a kind of new religiosity which sounds extremely interesting. Then there's the old religiosity, which is shrinking. And then there's this wounded religiosity of some

people from the settler movement for the reasons you mentioned. Some of these things Mey and I heard when we did interviews [in Israel] in January. I wonder how even without the disengagement and the impact that had on the religious Zionist movement, how the new religiosity goes together with the new religiosity. I don't mean the Neturei Karta. I just mean people for whom their respective traditions, whether they are Sephardic or Ashkenazic, have their communal expressions, have their established ways, with something else that is growing up uniquely Israeli. I mean you have, in a sense, something you're describing as the second growth on Israeli territory or soil. The first being religious Zionism and now something else.

AK: That's right.

HF: To the extent that these two things are aware of one another, how do they go together, or how might they go together? I mean, there are certain reasons for thinking that the new religiosity might prove to be the more abiding one, because it would be more rooted in authentic Israeli experience. Then that would raise the question—and I guess this is the final part of this question—a little like Peter's. Would the old religion go on in the diaspora in its old ways. It has, of course, links to the old religiosity in Israel, whatever it is, the Chassidim and so forth. But now there will be this new thing, which, in a way, can only grow in Israel because it's really a product of Israel. How would that work? Well, I don't mean to ask how will that work. It just seems to me to be an interesting aspect to all of this.

AK: Absolutely. I think it is interesting. First, I think that these are very good questions. Some of them are exactly the challenges that Israeli society is now dealing with. Some in a more mature way; some in a less mature way. I think that the Israeli indifference to the plight of the settlers is a big mistake politically and culturally. And I think that it's something that we are going to pay for. Not that you have to accept their way or that you have to accept their positions. But there is this group that is extremely committed that is now undergoing a crisis, and together with that crisis is a strong sense that the rest of society does not care at all. I think that this is idiotic, to put it mildly, and irresponsible, as far as the community is concerned. But, let's for a moment look at Sephardi Jews because with the settlers, you are talking about a leadership, at least, that is mostly Ashkenazi.

Israel is a unique community, as you know. In Israel there are 50% Sephardim. In the diaspora, those communities do not tend to live together. They are separate. There are those who live here and those who live there. Now two things happened. The first is the emergence of "Sephardiness," which is an invention. There is no Sephardiness. There are Iraqi Jews, and there are Moroccan Jews, and there are Chalabi Jews, and there are Indian Jews, and there is nothing Sephardi about them. In some places there was a Sephardi leadership. In some places, not even that. Okay? So Sephardiness was, in a sense, invented in Israel, just as, to some extent, "Ashkenaziness" has been invented in Israel. But also it was invented as a second best. It arrived in Israel when there were others who were seen as better—better equipped, better educated, etc. And in some ways it's true. There is no comparison between the product of a Lithuanian *yeshiva*, if what you are aiming at is knowledge of the *Gemara*, and the product of the village of Tafila (?), which

is the village of the Baba Sali in Southern Morocco. That community was placed in a position that was politically, socially, and culturally inferior, and it had to live with that even though it was the majority. They were the majority. Sephardi Jews were... This is one of the products of Zionism. Ben Gurion did not say, "Look, We do not want to have so many North African Jews." He said, "We want everyone. If you're coming, you're coming, and that's it. You become a citizen right away." But in a slow and gradual process, that community has managed to manipulate state symbols, its own symbols, in very dramatic ways, in a way that enabled it to feel that it belongs, that it is a part. Now it happened in two very different spheres. The one thing is the victory of the Likud. The funny thing is that the victory of Likud was the victory of Ashkenazim. They were almost all Ashkenazim, except for David Levy. In fact, in most spheres, there were more Sephardim in Labor than there were in Likud. So here you have the most important thing that the Likud did: it f**ked the Labor party, to use a strong expression. This was important, positive, good, beneficent, whatever you want. First thing. At the same time, and I don't think that this is meaningless, at the same time, that community found ways of empowering itself. What I'm trying to say is that that empowerment (a) did not exclude others, if you're looking at the whole set of new charismatic leaders. By the way, 95% of them are Sephardi. Ashkenazi charisma is dead. It's not for nothing that when the rebbe of Lubavitch is dying, there is no successor. Ashkenazi charisma is dead, but Sephardi charisma is not. And you find in those places an integration. You find a willingness to accept everyone. You find a willingness in those communities to avail themselves of the services of the other. That's one thing. The other thing that I was saying was about Shas. Again, on the one hand, you could look at Shas and say "look..." I remember there was this interview between, or a panel discussion with Aryeh Deri and Shulamit Aloni. Aryeh Deri was saying to Shulamit Aloni, "Look, you're grandfather," he said, "looked like me." And he's right. Her grandfather looked like him. But his grandfather did not look like him! What I'm saying here...

HF: That's actually, physically, what I find to be the most bizarre aspect.

AK: But I think it's not bizarre. You know the religious community, people don't think of it in those terms—that's why I'm here. People are thinking of it as Westernizing, partly through the Zionist movement, partly through other means. And there is the religious community that is also Westernizing itself, but at the same time claims and demands and is deliberately trying not to disappear into that other group, but to maintain something that is truly its own. I think that that type of compromise—on the one hand taking things from the other group, which that other group has to offer, and at the same time not disappearing and not feeling this huge and horrible resentment that the downtrodden, so to speak, feel, I think this is exactly the type of healing, harmonious process that I find in Israel that in fact are not in my camp—left wing, intellectual, etc.—my kind of people like to laugh at those things because they're primitive, because etc., etc., you name it. I think that it is not appreciated enough how delicate, how complicated, and how successful this patchwork is. I think that the success of a state like Israel does not depend only on the vision of the founding fathers. I had a professor in university who used to say that a great man is like a horrible disease: You survive him somehow, but there's a price to pay. The vision of the founding fathers was an extremely aggressive,

violent vision, and there was no option. There was no alternative. It was against the horrible odds that they had to fight. I truly believe that this was the only way to do it. Nevertheless, now is the time to heal those wounds. And I think those wounds are being hidden, strangely, and I think we should applaud the healing process in Israel.

Meyrav Wurmser: We're almost out of time, so Natan [Gutmann] and Harold [Rhode], please ask your questions one after the other.

Natan Guttman (NG): Very quickly, you were talking about the blurring of the edges in the Israeli patchwork, about the differences between religious and non-religious, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, left and right, as time goes by. What about the class issue, which seems to be emerging? What about the gaps between poor and rich which never seemed to be a characteristic of Israeli society and now seem to be emerging all of a sudden? Is this only a political fashion or is there something authentic about it?

AK: I think you're right, but when we try to do these things Ariel Cohen says "You're talking about social justice all the time!"

NG: But is it an authentic feeling within Israeli society? Is there a class issue emerging?

AK: Yes, I think definitely.

Harold Rhode (HR): Two things: Number one, I'm thinking of a Haredi family that I know in Israel. The husband was born in NY, and the wife was born in Israel, and the language at home is Yiddish, but it is extremely important to the wife that the kids speak an excellent Hebrew, and I asked her why? "Because I'm an Israeli." Now I don't know what she means by that because her values are clearly from the community. This is a woman whom I know very well and I cannot really figure it out, yet there's clearly something there. And at the same time, of you look at the Hasidim of Gur, where they went, they don't teach in Yiddish anymore. Their language at home is Hebrew. So something is in your story here.

The second thing, which is maybe outside of the purview here—but Meyrav, you can stop me if it is—on the question of the Arabs, Israel clearly also has a role in the general area that it lives. While it may be difficult, and whatever this Israeli definition is, to include those who see as a long-term enemy the destruction of the state. It's hard to see how they could identify with the state. There are groups in the Middle East, and within Israel, among Arabs or those, shall we say, who speak Arabic, who are very much on the cusp of this problem and they are the Druze, who are loyal usually to whatever state they live in. If you talk with Druze about their experiences in Israel and about why they are angry with the army, it's invariably because the army (or, they say, the Jews) who refuse to understand how the Arabs look at the world. By "the Arabs," they mean Sunnis, in this case. And the other potential are the Christians because clearly in this state, those two groups know that they are swimming in a Sunni sea, as is Israel, and as we're watching what's going on in the Sunni world, this can be very, very scary. And that, by the way, one would also say of Shiites. And the question is: is there any place for a role for Israel for being the vanguard or whatever?

AK: You mean in regional politics?

HR: Yeah. Definitely something is going on here. I can tell you from personal experience. I was in the war in Iraq as a civilian, and I had many discussions with Shiites who are clearly not anti-Israel. What was even more interesting was with Iraqi Sunnis—again, it's outside the purview, but I am the last, so I guess...--Iraqi Sunnis who insisted to me that they were not Arab, they were Iraqi. And I said, "What do you mean?" And their response was, "You're American. You speak English. Are you English?" And I said, "Of course not." "Well, it's the same thing. Why should we like the Arabs if they supported all the tyranny against us with this Saddam character." So there's something for Israel to play with if it's smart. I don't know where to go with it, but I do know that these trends exist. I would say with Sufis, the mystics, as well. Sunnis, Sufis, there's something for your guys.

AK: As I was saying, I think that sometimes it's the price that one has to pay. While there are positive aspects in that globalization because very often it comes with ideas of human rights, because it comes with ideas of blunting the edges, etc., it also comes with growing gaps within the country. I think that there is an awareness of that. I think that the last elections campaign was an attempt, for the first time in our history since the '50s, to deal with that issue. But the price that we are paying in the long run is—as we all know, this might not disintegrate Israeli or Jewish national feelings, but it can simply disintegrate the state. So yes, I think that there is an awareness of that. What we're doing is altogether a different question.

As for your comments, I think that (a) it's not simply that those people are choosing to speak Hebrew, but as I said, you find people who are not supposed to have such an up-to-date Hebrew and they are speaking perfectly, which means that there is something within that culture that they supposedly despise so much that they are absorbing even though they are denying it, because that kind of language means that they are consuming parts of the culture that supposedly they are not.

As for the last question, I think that it's a good question, but as you know, Ben-Gurion was trying to do that. He tried to create a triangle of power between the non-Arab states, which was supposed to be in the beginning Iran, Turkey, Israel, then Ethiopia. I don't think it's going to work. I think we're still too different. I think we're better off not trying to lead anything within that region. As long as we try to keep ourselves out of trouble and out of harm's way, I'd be satisfied.

Meyrav: Thank you all for being here. Aviad, thank you for a fabulous talk. We'll see you here in September. We're taking a break for the month of August.