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A radicalization of Haredi fatalist theology: Rabbi E.M.M. Shach's public addresses, 1988–1991

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ABSTRACT

In 1990, Rabbi Eliezer Shach was in a position to impact the future of the National Unity Government. His pivotal speech, which came to be known as the "Rabbits Address," triggered intense debates and led to the failure of the "stinking manoeuvre," after which Ashkenazi Haredi (Ultraorthodox) parties were unwilling to align with the Left – a development that has significantly altered coalition dynamics in Israel ever since. It is maintained here that the video recording of that speech and other events possess great scholarly value and offer a window into late-twentieth-century Mitnagdic thought and the sector's self-perception. A performative analysis of video-texts suggests "potent fatalism" as one source of the religious-ideological appeal of Haredism. Compared to his earlier writings, these speeches mark a radicalization of the fatalist component of his theology and ideology; they promote a faith-based fatalism at the expense of human agency within the limits of Divine providence. His rejection of a coalition with the dovish Left was predicated on historical tensions, not foreign policy or security concerns. These findings suggest contemporary Haredi political alignment with the hawkish right is a tacit rejection of Shach's fatalism.

KEYWORDS

Haredim; Degel ha-Torah; performance; political theology; Eliezer Shach

Introduction

In the 1970s, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach was a central architect of the *Torato Umanuto* arrangement allowed full-time yeshiva students to defer military service.[1] The agreement reflected Shach's staunch opposition to Zionism and the secular nature of the Israeli state. *Torato Umanuto* celebrated the "prime directive" of Haredism, Torah study, and governed the growth of a cloistered society. In Shach's day, Haredi political parties supported right wing parties even though they stood in stark contradiction to the dovish Haredi way.[2] And yet, over the last three decades, what began as a Haredi compromise with the

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Right has resulted in the adoption of an incoherent "hawkish" fatalism. Haredi discourse has embraced right wing ideologies in "security" matters, developed ethno-nationalist sensibilities, and, most recently, welcomes a new political conservatism and populism.[3] While firmly rejecting conscription, the Haredi public has become a key pillar of the ruling right-wing coalition and increasingly aligned itself with the "security" agenda of the far-right.

Recently, Itamar Ben Ami offered a revaluation of the relationship between Haredim and the State of Israel. His thesis is that Haredi political representation created Israeli Haredism and was not a product thereof. Ben Ami focused on "two moments": the establishment of Israel and the present day "robust right-wing Israeli coalition."[4] The third moment of interest, mentioned by Ben Ami only in passing, occurred in the early 1990s. This article considers several public addresses (including the Rabbits Address) by Shach in 1988–1991 – a period of tense political intrigue in Israel – with the focus on the religious ideology they reveal. A closer look at Shach's alliance with the right, will highlight contradictory elements of contemporary haredi ideology.

The Rabbits Address in context

The evening of 26 March 1990, was a unique political moment in Israel. Rabbi Eliezer Shach (Lithuania, 1898 – Israel, 2001) addressed a large crowd of followers at the Yad Eliyahu Arena in Tel Aviv. The sizeable gallery of national and international journalists in attendance expected Shach to offer a dramatic political announcement that would determine the fate of the leftwing government that Shimon Peres was trying to form. In what came to be known as the "Rabbits Address,"[5] Shach voiced his religious outlook. Among the various points he made, it was his attack on secular kibbutzim for their severance from Jewish tradition that received the most attention.

Academic scholarship has traditionally focused on written texts. Until the twentieth century, oral presentations, delivered, "consumed," and immediately forgotten, were inaccessible to researchers which in turn shaped scholarly norms and methods. It thus comes as no surprise that although scholars recognize the importance of Shach's public sermons, academic literature on Shach engages only with written sources. Moshe Hellinger noted that although Shach never presented his worldview in book form, "a careful study of his writings, his yeshiva lectures and public deliberations" proves that he had a systematic worldview built on a small number of "basic concepts."[6] However when he contemplated Shach's "public deliberations," he meant the printed versions "collected and published by his students"[7] and did not consider it necessary to consult oral sources. Eliav Taub and Benjamin Brown analyse ideological and political aspects of Shach's life-project but do not touch upon the significance of aesthetics, poetics, and other channels of tacit cultural negotiations because the printed text does "shout out" these questions.[8] Similarly, Avishai Ben

Haim's monograph lists multiple sources on which his work is based: letters, interviews, and transcripts.[9] Although the book offers insightful readings of these texts, Ben Haim quotes the printed versions even though these are edited renditions of *oral* sermons that can and should be consulted as recorded footage. Shach's public speeches deserve meticulous consideration: they open a window onto his understanding of the Jewish condition in modern, secular Israel. As I have argued elsewhere this holds as a general rule: if scholars would regularly reference not only the printed essay, but also public performances, the oral repertoire would be given its due respect as a space for academic contemplation.[10]

The Rabbis address and similar public sermons, which speak on more than one level and were delivered to various audiences, were subsequently edited for print by anonymous hands whose interventions went beyond cosmetic improvement. Because these addresses were really speech acts, not essays, the appropriate way to interpret them must consider more than the words and their dictionary meaning. For example, Shach's intermittent use of Yiddish (ranging from individual words to entire paragraphs) a component often ignored by both Haredi and non-Haredi reporters, as well as by much of the academic scholarship,[11] has a significant semiotic function. To contextualize these addresses, the essay begins with a review of earlier printed sermons and of the political climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The argument advanced here is that Shach offered his community an inspiring religious ideology communicated to his audience both in form and in content. The "Rabbits Address" and, more significantly, other all-but forgotten speeches, such as at a 1988 election rally in Bnei Brak, are prime sources for understanding his views. Specifically, Shach's performance, comprising both verbal and non-verbal communication, expresses what I call "potent fatalism."

Previous scholarship described Shach as an ideologue and anti-Zionist, a promoter of Haredi "simple faith" and "indeliberate theology."[12] Some claim Shach never came to terms with the drastic changes brought about by the State of Israel. In fact, Shach acknowledged and feared these changes because they induce a false sense of stability and security, based on trust in American-brokered diplomacy (the Labour Alignment) or military might (both Labour and the Likud). As a religious fatalist, no earthly political gain could reassure him. Shach's fatalism was an existential stance that provided intellectual and emotional substance to the Haredi worldview or ideology (*hashkafah*).

Such fatalism is not compatible with hawkish nationalism. Indeed, choosing between what Shach considered to be "bad" and "worse," and with Labour Zionism's long history of assaults on religious Judaism a decisive factor, in 1990 Shach ultimately opted for Shamir and the Likud over Peres and Labour. Even so, he did not fantasize that Shamir would improve the Jews' security in the Land of Israel. In Shach's mind, the Jews' physical situation would remain bleak, regardless of human activities, until the coming of the

Messiah. Furthermore, the moment in which he opted for Shamir, marked a radicalization of the fatalist component in his theology and an elimination of his previous focus on human agency via repentance.

Haredism, from the same root as the Hebrew *ḥaradah* "anxiety," is linked with traditionalism or conservatism and stringency in matters of Halakhah. More generally, though, this anxiety sustains the fatalistic philosophy explored below. And yet, the contemporary coalition between the extreme right and haredi parties hints at an unacknowledged rejection of anxiety, a key component of their late leader's theology.

Ideological-theological shifts

Rabbi Shach was one of the most respected religious authorities of non-Hassidic "Lithuanian" Jewry in the second half of the twentieth century.[13] His rabbinic career began in Europe, where he held a succession of positions in highly esteemed yeshivot, including some with a Hassidic orientation. During the Second World War he and his family escaped from Europe and found refuge in Mandatory Palestine. He was soon invited to join the senior faculty of the prestigious Ponevezh yeshiva in Bnei Brak. His rise to national and international rabbinic prominence was not immediate. Shach joined the Council of Torah Sages (the body of religious leaders that guides the Agudat Yisrael party) in 1959, but his staunchly negative assessment of Zionism, influenced by the ideological line of Elchonon Bunim Wasserman was not mainstream at that time.[14] Shach became dean of Ponevezh in 1969, after the death of its founder, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman. Through the years, Shach's orations were often written up by his students and printed in publications such as *Diglenu*, the organ of the Young Guard of Agudat Israel (published 1939–1998).[15] By the 1980s, Shach had transformed what would today be considered a moderate and tolerant Haredi sector into a cloistered society.[16] Rabbinic censorship of Haredi media outlets, ensured the purity of the haredi enclave while also serving as an organ of political power.[17] Although there were more haredim devoted to full-time Torah study than ever before, and the pull of secularism was no longer the great threat it was, Shach was certain that the enclave was the only way to preserve the Jewish way.[18]

Scholarly considerations of his religious philosophy have focused on his post-holocaust theology as well as the religious meaning of modern Israel. Benjamin Brown showed that Shach developed an earlier haredi objections to learning God's will from reality. This position, strongly articulated by Wasserman's 1937 famous treatise *Ikveta de-Meshicha* (The Footsteps of the Messiah), posits that earthly success does not teach of divine support. Wasserman presented a dreary picture of history, recommending that Jews should not even fight back against the "Hamans" that rise against the people of Israel.[19] Shach developed this idea further to claim that history is too

unruly and complex for a human to know how to "read" it properly. Jews must rely on the great sages of the day to explicate god's will from the Torah. What is permanent in a broad historical perspective, according to Shach, is the Jewish people have consistently been hated and persecuted and indeed the world is given to the rule of forces of evil.[20] However, the fatalism of both Wasserman and pre-1990 Shach is curbed by the workings of divine retribution. Or, as Wasserman stated: "There is only one way to guard our survival: to make peace between us and our father in heaven, guardian of Israel, and then there will peace on Israel."[21]

Much has been written about Shach's post holocaust theology based on a transcript written up by an anonymous hand and printed in Yated Ne'eman of a 26 December 1990 sermon. I could not definitively identify a recording of this event and will thus reference the transcription. The address discusses theological meaning of the holocaust, Shach stated that man is evil by nature, and at some unknown time when the sins will reach a critical level, the Jews may suffer a second holocaust. No one can foresee when calamity will hit. Shach admits that he feels terrible anxiety because he knows god's punishment is inevitable, it as the outcome of a cumulative reckoning of sins across generations:

> The Holy One, blessed be He, kept the account, one by one—a long account stretching over hundreds of years […] We have no idea over how many years this account will stretch, or when the cup of sins will be full.[22]

Previous scholarship has interpreted his claim – that the Holocaust was a punishment for sin – as a tacit call for repentance, a safeguard against future calamity.[23] I argue, however, that his statement does not empower the individual or even a single generation with the ability to prevent another Holocaust. And indeed, his horrified description of the Israeli culture of sin is not complemented by a call for religious outreach or civil protests. Drawing on the edited transcripts that have been published and the recordings of public addresses currently accessible online, I argue that Shach's adoption of a fatalist perspective – understanding war and calamity as inevitable – culminated in the 1990s. This assessment reflects the corpus available to me at present; it may require revision should further unpublished oral sources come to light.

In his earlier sermon-based essays, Shach states that war is an eternal horror that the Jews will have to endure until the End of Days and the Redemption. These sermons highlight a mystical interpretation (Sitra Aḥra) of war and its effects, a simplistic model of Divine retribution, but also a way out of calamity via repentance. In contrast, his later speeches (the primary focus of this essay), which were broadcasted and accessible beyond the Haredi community, exclude mentions of kabbalistic theories and tone down the empowering aspects of Providence.

For example, in 1974 Shach offered a model of Divine retribution in which disasters are caused by desecration of the Sabbath:

> Now we have seen that all the nations hate us; even America is offering support now only because of political calculations, and those who move closer to non-Jews cause disaster. So too those who are desecrate the Sabbath now, without a legitimate need, are bringing (heaven forbid) disaster on the people of Israel. Desecrating the Sabbath when life is not a stake brings calamity. The [Yom Kippur] war was not a matter of chance; it came to show us that each and every day we are dependent on the will and mercies of the Blessed Name.[24]

This model, even though simplistic, is empowering, because it means that catastrophe can be limited, and even avoided by repentance. Another source, a written transcript of a December 1973 address at the Ponevezh yeshiva, states that war affects men's hearts; naturally gentle people have had their hearts and brows hardened by of the devilish power of the Sitra Aḥrah:

> In this time of war, we must know that the war is not limited to the battlefield, but rather 'the earth was corrupted'—that the *sitra aḥra* descended to the world, with the impure force of murder and cruelty, and the effects of war and its cruelty are spreading through the world […] And only Torah study and fear of God and acts of loving-kindness can shield against this influence.[25]

This means that human actions affect the world. What is more, quoting from Maimonides' *Code* as support, Shach asserts that war is an unnatural condition and the result of misdeeds.[26] But Shach takes the argument further and asserts that it is forbidden to think of war as a natural occurrence:

> It is forbidden to think this is an accident, that is, that six years have passed since the last war, for over twenty years they don't want peace, so it is natural that such a situation results in war. It is the path of cruelty, as Maimonides says, to think that [war is natural]. Instead, the true notion must be that our condition is bad because of our misdeeds, and not because of the natural order of things.[27]

By contrast, the potent fatalism I find in the 1988–1991 addresses, does not empower man by providing an explanatory mechanism and working principle that can put an end to the horrors. From this I conclude that his later sermons downplay earlier themes of human agency. This shift is more than a tactical adaptation for lay people and non-Haredim; it is a radicalized fatalism that leaves humans with little space for manoeuvre.

The political context

Although Shach developed a fatalistic theological framework, Israeli haredism was characterized by powerful rabbinic leadership. The political moment of Rabbits Address was the product of three factors: the instability of the unity government, the Haredim's traditional dovish stand on foreign policy issues, and the rifts between the Haredi parties.

In 1990, a political alliance between Ashkenazi Haredim and the Left would have been almost a novelty – had it come to pass. After a short-lived period in Ben-Gurion's early governments (until late 1952), Haredi parties were not in

the coalition until Begin's historic victory in 1977. Haredim were not Zionist patriots. For decades, Haredi leaders spoke out against the State of Israel and participation in its government and grounded their objection to Zionism in its secularism. Their objection to the Left had roots in early twentieth-century Europe and was related to religious conservatism. The divisions between Haredim and Israeli governments surfaced in arguments over core issues such as conversion and compulsory military service for women. Historically, though, Haredim were adamantly opposed to the hawkish foreign policy favoured by the Israeli Right. In a letter to Prime Minister Menachem Begin, dated 17 April 1978, Shach offered a succinct view of his religious ideology and then stated:

> In my opinion it is advisable not to insist on the settlements. I would like his honor to know that a concession made only for the sake of peace is not a concession. When God has mercy on us and the appointed time comes everything will be returned to us. I do not hesitate to rule that according to halakha there is no prohibition to give up part of Eretz Israel for the sake of peace.[28]

Indeed, most Haredi leaders opposed territorial expansionism. Shach and others celebrated the peace treaty with Egypt, including the return of Sinai, because it would reduce bloodshed. He continued to hold this position in the 1990s: Jewish land is less important than Jewish life. The rabbinic authority for the "oriental" communities (Mizrahim) and sponsor of the Shas party, Ovadia Yosef, agreed with this dovish position. But the spiritual leader of Habad, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, adopted a messianic worldview and was opposed to land-for-peace initiatives.[29]

The rift between Shach and Schneerson, predicated among other things on this messianic acceptance of Zionism, had political ramifications. When members of Habad joined Agudat Israel and the Agudat Israel Knesset list included a representative of Habad, the "Lithuanians" under Shach's tutelage established a separate party, Degel ha-Torah, which won two Knesset seats in 1988.[30] That year Rabbi Shach also sought to increase his influence by taking the Shas party under his wing as well.[31]

The unity governments of the late 1980s, first under Peres and then under Shamir, were ideologically incoherent. While Peres was invested in accepting American diplomatic efforts and negotiations with the Palestinians, Shamir, who had been one of the leaders of Lehi, was adamantly opposed to territorial compromise.[32] In 1990, facing an American ultimatum, Shamir fired Peres and Labour left the government. At this point a plan emerged, supported by some Haredi politicians: Haredi Knesset members would join Labour and its leftwing allies in a no-confidence vote and then support a Peres-led coalition. The Haredi camp was itself divided, however. Arieh Deri of Shas was willing to provide Peres with six votes for a new coalition but wanted the no-confidence motion to be passed with the support of Agudat Israel and Degel ha-Torah,

because his constituency's ideology favoured the Likud. Peres had worked hard to attract Agudat Israel to the left during his tenure as Minister of Finance (1988–1990) and also made promises to Shas and Degel ha-Torah. Rabbi Yosef tried to persuade Shach to play along with the no confidence vote, but Shach would not oblige. The no-confidence motion passed only because five of the six Shas Knesset members did not show up.[33] That was when Shach ordered Degel ha-Torah and Shas to vote against the Peres government and delivered the Rabbits Address. Peres would have been able to form a government without Degel ha-Torah anyway, but two Agudat Israel Knesset members, who were close to the Lubavitcher Rebbe announced that they would vote against Peres. The ramifications of the "stinking manoeuvre" and the Haredi parties' subsequent role as king-maker has had dramatic and lasting impact on coalition-building dynamics.[34]

I will not further consider these developments from a political perspective; such analysis has been offered elsewhere.[35] Instead, what follows here is a detailed account of public addresses, their content, and reception. I base my analysis on recordings, because the printed transcripts do not offer a reliable representation of the events and their aftermath.

Rabbi Shach's public speeches, 1988–1991

Much has been written about the "Rabbits Address," delivered before Peres's (unsuccessful) attempt to form a government, with regard to the immediate political context. However, this address and other rallies in those stormy years have not received sufficient scholarly attention as ideological and theological events; nor has their orality been examined. I argue that edited transcriptions of Shach's addresses are inadequate representations of both the denotative and emotive content of Shach's addresses. When they are heard in his voice, however, it is clear that more emphasis should be given to themes that are mentioned in Ben Haim's book only in passing or not at all. Existing scholarship has failed to address the most radical formulations, their undertones, and implications because they either do not appear in print or they appear as passing remarks.

In the "Rabbits Address," Shach reflected on the remarkable resilience of the Jewish people, who had survived centuries of persecution despite being a small and vulnerable people: wars are followed by more wars, the big nations are constantly arming themselves, and no political arrangement can ensure the safety of the Jewish state. The secret to Jewish survival, he explained, is the Jews' deep connection to their ancestors and their commitment to the Torah. Shach criticized "kibbutz" Jews who had severed the ties to their heritage and abandoned core Jewish values such as Shabbat and Yom Kippur. He attacked their ideology, dubbed it a "new Torah," and took special aim at their eating rabbit. He then moved on to critique modern Jewish nationalism, arguing that territory alone does not define the Jewish nation. The real power of the Jewish people

does not lie in land or military might but in their spiritual strength, connection to the Torah, and commitment to Jewish tradition.

Some months later, on 5 September 1990, Shach's annual *Yarḥei Kallah*[36] address was delivered at the Ponevezh yeshiva in Bnei Brak. It received the usual coverage in the Haredi press but was also reported in the general press, where it spawned lively debate. Referring to his speech at Yad Eliyahu (the "Rabbits Address"), Shach clarified that he did not question the Jewishness of secular Israelis – but then reiterated his harsh criticism of their brand of Judaism. Never before had a *Yarḥei Kallah* sermon been of interest to a general Israeli audience. After that, though, it seems that interest waned and his later major public address remained within the confines of the Haredi community.[37]

Shach was very much aware of the several linguistic-ideological communities within Haredi society and Israel at large. Among the former, the continued use of Yiddish constituted an endearing commitment to tradition; for mainstream Israelis it was a mark of stagnation. The decline of Yiddish in Israel was dictated and promoted by the Mapai governments' of the early years after independence, so Yiddish played an important role within the Lithuanian Haredi community as a counter-cultural statement. For example, in his annual summer address of 1991, Shach began by apologizing that he would be switching between Hebrew and Yiddish, because not all those present "speak the same language."[38] Not all the Haredim in the audience understood Yiddish, and certainly not the journalists present. This comment was left out of the published version of the sermon, which is entirely in Hebrew. From the recordings I have been able to locate, it seems that in his previous annual lectures Shach simply switched into Yiddish a minute or two into his talk with no introductory apology, even though this left the many Sephardim there at sea.[39] This exemplifies why the video recordings, which of course retain the shifts between Hebrew in Yiddish, are important.

A bilingual speaker alternating between two languages in entire conversations, individual sentences, or parts of sentences is "code switching." In the case of Shach's dramatic addresses, his code switching should not be naïvely dismissed as a biographical curiosity. For him, Yiddish and Modern Hebrew represented rival ideologies.[40] Simeon Baumel, one of the few scholars to comment on the function of Yiddish in Rabbi Shach's addresses, noted that the Yiddish passages were often translated/transcribed into archaic Hebrew for publication.[41] However, Baumel discussed the presence of Yiddish only in broad terms, writing that Shach spoke "in Yiddish and sometimes in archaic Hebrew, often changing the nature of the language to suit his listeners, the topic being covered, or his own emotional state at the time."[42] The video footage, however, reveals that Shach switched into Yiddish to signal emotional upheaval, fear, indignation, and sorrow. He also switched into Yiddish when mentioning great rabbis of previous generations. In fact, what Baumel saw as a socio-linguistic phenomenon is also a hermeneutical and performative event.

One address received unprecedented attention in the Israeli press – the Rabbits Address with which we began, delivered at the Yad Eliyahu Arena in Tel Aviv in March 1990. It was broadcast live on radio and television and, of course, printed in the Hebrew and English editions of the Degel ha-Torah daily, *Yated Ne'eman*.[43] Quotes from the address appeared in all Israeli newspapers, accompanied by commentaries and objections. Some newspapers, including *Ha'aretz,* even printed an edited transcript.[44]Hebrew University sociologist Baruch Kimmerling, a fierce opponent of religion's sway in Israeli life, published a favourable review of the address in *Haaretz*, in which he celebrated Shach's criticism of Israeli nationalism.[45] An otherwise unknown Committee for Israel's Sanctity inserted ads in two prominent dailies, *Maariv* and *Hadashot*, reprinting the "full transcript" together with the coopted Kimmerling's article, offered as proof of Haredi superiority over secular Zionism. But the dialogue that could have ensued from the sudden interest and circulation of Shach's worldview was stymied by a "language barrier" in the broad sense.

Unlike quotations from and edited transcripts of Rabbi Shach's addresses that give no hint of his use of Yiddish, reporters who covered them highlighted this performative code-switching. They treated it, however, as an exotic and archaic phenomenon, one that reflected just how irrelevant Rabbi Shach *should* be. A telling case is the report in *Hadashot* on an address delivered on 25 September 1991, which fell during the Sukkot festival when the Haredi *Yated Ne'eman* reporters were not working:

> What is always nice in Rabbi Eliezer Shach's rallies, and was nice also on Wednesday this week, is that none of the many thousands who attend know what rabbit he will pull out of his hat this time around. In truth, even when he does speak, it is not very clear what he says, including to those who hear Yiddish spoken already in preschool. Usually, after his addresses, the *Yated Ne'eman* reporters get together and decipher the recordings. But this week, because of the holiday, the newspaper isn't printed, and others had the honour of performing this holy duty.[46]

In another report, a switch to Yiddish is noted and linked to specific content: an attack on the Left (the Labour Alignment or *Ma'arakh*). The recording makes plain that the report is inaccurate, because Rabbi Shach switched into Yiddish a few sentences before he mentioned the *Ma'arakh*. Still, the journalist was conscious of the link between form and content:

> Suddenly, some fifteen minutes into his sermon of rebuke given in Hebrew, the rabbi switched into Yiddish and said: the Ma'arakh disengaged itself from the Jewish past. Broke its link with the past. They do not speak of observing Shabbat or fasting on Yom Kippur. What is the Ma'arakh? It has detached itself from its past. It has a new Torah.[47]

The reporter was obviously interested mainly in the emerging political alliances and was reporting on where he thought Shach would be steering Degel ha-Torah. Nevertheless, he noted when and about what issues the rabbi made

the linguistic shift. Yiddish expressed authenticity, conviction, and devotion to the life of Torah, not only to the core Lithuanian Haredi community but also to secular Israel. This code-switching was a vehicle to convey the great leader's spiritual authority precisely because, and not despite the fact that, many in the crowd, including distinguished rabbis sitting beside him as well as secular Israelis, were not fluent in Yiddish.

The Rabbits Address and its "Jewish" language was not taken seriously. Lamenting this failure, Adam Baruch qualified the address as a highpoint of Ashkenazi rabbinic political action in our time:

> This seminal speech should have been included in the Israeli curriculum. Because it has a clear Haredi historiographical dimension. Not small politics, but a statement regarding the Israeli present situation, the 'Holocaust' as a substance and as a physical action that have not ended. But Rabbi Shach's speech is not included in the curriculum. The secular Israeli system has reduced Rabbi Shach to the space between Agudat Israel and Degel ha-Torah. A species of blindness.[48]

Despite Shach's sudden visibility to the Israeli mainstream, these addresses failed to ignite a fruitful ideological exchange between Jewish traditionalism and secularism or between diasporic Judaism and territorial nationalism. This does not mean that he was irrelevant, however. The abundance of videos, transcripts, and journalistic reports and debates offers a path for considering the ethos of Lithuanian mitnagdic thinking in the late twentieth century and understanding its ideology.[49] First, I will offer the accepted version of Shach's theopolitical framing of contemporary Israel, based on the Rabbits Address. Then, moving to a video event that has not been discussed previously and paying attention to more than just the words, I will suggest a new reading of Shach's theology.

The Rabbits Address

Much has been written about Haredi *hashkafah* and its three pillars: the all-encompassing rule of Torah sages (*da'at Torah)*, halakhic stringency, and belief in generational decline.[50] The term *hashkafah*, rather than "religious philosophy" or "theology," reflects how "simple faith" and "undeliberative" theology have become the dominant mode of the Haredi religious discourse that expounds these basic pillars of thought. Their ramifications for the social, religious, and political spheres are certainly enormous.[51] Haredi society was deeply affected by the Holocaust. Faced with what seemed to be the failure of *da'at Torah,* as rabbis who preached against leaving Europe were proven to have been grossly mistaken, coupled with the success of Zionism, some Haredi rabbis even argued that God's will cannot be extrapolated from historical events.[52] The present generation is weak and only the great Torah Sages of the day, endowed with *da'at Torah,*[53] have the ability to guide the community. Because the modern world is increasingly hostile to Jews and Judaism, the

correct policy, enacted by the leading rabbis, is to raise the fences of halakhic stringency higher. Finally, a keystone of the Lithuanian haredi *hashkafah* is that the State of Israel is just another stage in the Jews' exile – this time among secular Jews rather than Gentiles.

The transcript of the Rabbits Address fully conveys these principles. The video, however, reveals something more – a raw, impassioned appeal grounded in Shach's sense of personal vulnerability. The edited text, which academics tend to consult in their work, reshapes this appeal into a more formal and generalized statement about Jewish survival and misrepresents Shach's performative appeal to his audience.

Here is a translation of his exact words:

> Gentlemen, we are living in terrible and dreadful times. There is not a day whose misfortune does not exceed the previous day's. The war did not begin now, and did not end now, rather it began with the first war [the First World War] which has not been followed by quiet and continues to the present. The Holy One Blessed be He knows the future. Every day, every person, every nation, arms in hand, are arming themselves with even more sophisticated weaponry. Only this, how can it not frighten people?[54]

The past is bleak and the future is bleak. When he says that God "knows the future" he does not use a comforting voice; it is not a promise that good will prevail or that redemption is near, but an assertion that suffering is an axiom. Shach continues:

> And we, the Jewish people, the smallest of all peoples, what are we among the nations? One lamb among seventy wolves. What are we capable of doing?
>
> Yet there is one thing which makes me happy and strengthens me and should strengthen every Jew, no matter where he is. He should be stronger than the one who has the biggest weapon. Stronger than America, stronger than Russia, stronger than anyone. The Jew needs to be stronger and indeed he is stronger. We aren't speaking empty theories, I am not giving you theories, I am telling you like it is [*mamash*]: The people of Israel to whom so much has happened, exile after exile, decrees after decrees against them, massacres and forced conversions, burning and killing. Many, many, powerful nations have attacked it to destroy the nation. We are alone, with empty hands. [*Here he raises his open hands, his voice at the point of breaking into a sob.*]
>
> We don't have weapons, we don't have — [*suddenly he stops in mid word, see below*] How can we have survived. And we, and we … prevailed. We have survived and exist What is the secret of this? What is the wonder of this?[55]

Remember that the arena is packed to the rafters. The event is highly charged with religious and emotional fervour. Thus, when the elderly rabbi says "we have survived and exist" his weakness enhances and amplifies his rhetoric. Shach continues:

> The sign is, the secret is, I am a Jew, and I am stronger than they are. They can kill me, but my children stay alive. My son inherits me and I will not go to the synagogue but

> my son will go to the synagogue. If I don't learn, my son will. I did not cut myself from the heritage of my ancestors. I did not sever the connection with my ancestors. The connection with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with the righteous elders. I live, you die. You are dead. I live and I will live.[56]

This passage embodies the logic of a hostile world where the Torah, as mediated by the sages, is the only hope for salvation. Here Shach ignores the existence of secular Judaism when he uses the collective "we"; but its presence is always in the background. "I did not sever" implies "but they did" Again it should be stressed that details of the oral address are important. Printed versions interfered with this text. One publication in English rendered his words as: "What is the secret of our survival? What is the explanation of this miracle? The Jew is indestructible. They can kill us, but our children will continue to cleave to the Torah."[57] But what Shach said, in his elderly and croaking voice, is almost an attack: "I live, you die." The interventions made when reducing the oral address to print change its timbre. This is why the original video footage is essential for a reevaluation of Shach's larger claim.

Later in his address he moves to a direct attack. In addition to a critique of secularization, Shach speaks against the political coherence of the Zionist emphasis on territory. This crucial point was stated much more emphatically at the 1988 election rally and is worthy of consideration.

Potent fatalism

Shach employed a shocking trope that has so far gone unexamined: Israel has no forests to which Jews can run away and hide. The implication is that another Holocaust is possible – in the Land of Israel! Were it to occur, the Jews' situation in Israel would be even worse than it had been in Europe. Shach did not explain himself further, but I believe this idea deserves attention. Twelve years earlier, Shach used this trope in historical context and in retrospective, but when he repeated it a decade later it functioned almost as a prophecy for the future.

> During the Second World War when the Germans stood near El Alamein and heaven forbid, if they had entered Eretz Israel and even if there were five million people here the destruction would have been great and it would have been worse than elsewhere because here there are no forests that partisans had, and from one side the sea and on all sides we are surrounded by enemies, and only God's hand turned their mind to go fight Russia and thereby rescue the saving remnant.[58]

Shach did not use the "no forests" trope in the "Rabbits Address," but it was one of the peeks of the election rally speech in Bnei Brak on 30 October 1988.[59] The oral version has received no attention. Scholars who relied on the printed text were using an edited version that reads: "There is no escape, we do not have a forest to escape into, but only to drown in the sea, Heaven forbid."

The video, however, shows that Rabbi Shach did not minimize the force of his words by appending "Heaven forbid." It also shows that Shach stopped speaking for almost ten seconds, broke down crying, and then proclaimed that he did not know if he was capable of continuing his address. Then he collected himself and, switching into Yiddish, mourned or even ranted about secular Jews who play soccer on the Ninth of Av. He kept breaking off and his syntax was no longer coherent. The printed version, though, translates the passage into full sentences in Hebrew:

> They on chariots, they on horses, they with weapons,[60] and they with Zionism, and they with games that have become some sort of idolatry, that if he didn't score with the ball and win the game, there is great mourning.[61]

Another version of the speech does include the Holocaust analogy and the metaphor of drowning in the Mediterranean: "Abroad the partisans flee to hide in the forests, here there are no forests, we have no place to run away other than the sea. I am not saying – heaven forbid – that this is what will be." But this version deletes a considerable amount of text, including the reference to the Ninth of Av.[62]

Here is the unedited text of the video, with no attempt to rephrase Rabbi Shach, even where the syntax is incoherent:

> We are Zionists! But Zion is not our name. The Torah! That is what obligates us. To put it another way, the Torah says 'Do not go up', and if you do go up you will not succeed.[63] The Land of Israel is guilty? So, someone says. 'We will be stronger, we have a Knesset and we are fighting along with Russia, fighting along with America … ' It's a joke! [If] America will close [the tap], will [not] support one day, won't send us [support] here, we will be exhausted by hunger. All of the Land of Israel lives from God! All of the Land of Israel lives from America.
>
> As for us? and we are an arrogant pauper.[64] Today it is worthwhile for America to have good relations with us, tomorrow there will be politics, tomorrow it will be different. Or as [the case of] Russia proves, when the state began it supported us. And who knows what will happen and we are surrounded by a hundred million Arabs.
>
> We can't even run away, we don't have a forest to escape to, only to drown in the sea.
>
> Who sustained us, who will sustain us? And we receive the teaching: The Torah is the only guarantee. It isn't —
>
> Gentlemen [*Rabbosai*], I don't know if I can continue speaking …
>
> [*Rabbi Shach's voice trails off, he sighs and cries. Some people, standing near enough to the microphone to be recorded, try to silence the already quiet audience, perhaps to alleviate the stress on the rabbi. Rabbi Shach continues, his voice breaking.*]
>
> I'm old and I don't know what tomorrow will hold. I don't know. If God helps and we succeed, but I don't know if I will live to see … But I know you will remind

> [yourselves], that there was one old man who reminded you to pray to God, that God will help us, that we should cleave to the Torah, study and study, keep studying, keep praying, keep praying. Prayer is our weapon of war, 'They with chariots'[65] and they with weapons, some with this, and some with that, some with Zionism, and some with games,
>
> [*Here Rabbi Shach switches from Hebrew to Yiddish and stops enunciating clearly. He is complaining that when he was young boys did not make soccer the focus of their life and rants about how soccer is now perceived as the greatest joy. I have done my best to parse the unclear recording.*]
>
> The Jew plays this idolatry? I don't remember games, and Heaven forbid, today our boys are playing. Today boys get together with a ball, it is everything. [It's] more, more, more [to them] than Tisha be'Av? More than everything, Heaven forbid! Did they find, did they find the ball, did they find it again, supreme happiness, and in this joy … Have you nothing else?![66]

From the video footage we see that those who were in the presence of their elderly and frail leader were deeply affected by his pessimism, his love of Torah, and his instructions to remember what the world is "really like." Pessimism is not equated with lack of faith, but rather it is the realism of the faithful who know the "world of man" as it "really is." By clinging to the "realism of pessimism," offered by Shach, a Haredi audience gains a feeling of being well-informed in realpolitik, realistic about the future, and devout in their belief in God. Furthermore, Shach paints optimism and strength as misguided and almost clownish positions: the world of men is horrible, especially for Jews; one must be delusional not to see that. Thus, clinging to the traditional Jewish way of life is a double move of embracing the reality of evil while finding solace in the folds of tradition.

Let us consider the performative poetics of Rabbi Shach's address, without dwelling for the moment on the theological or historical underpinnings of its content. The unlikely duo of rabbinic and political power with extreme frailty is not a mis-performance. The juxtaposition of a ruthless assessment of the political realm as transient and unreliable (unlike the Torah, which is forever), tempered by deep emotional turmoil, suggests that adopting such a contradiction can be heroic. Rabbi Shach does not perform a stoic acceptance of Jewish spiritual decline; his reaction to youngsters' playing soccer on Tisha be'Av is powerless yet explosive. He is horrified by them but too weak and powerless to fight them, and yet his weakness has dramatic power. So too, his acceptance of the possible annihilation of the Jewish inhabitants of modern Israel comes with a terrible emotional price tag. Yet for him, accepting this as an immutable reality, resigning himself to the turmoil of the world, upholding tradition in the face of human suffering past, present, and future, is the most noble of all possible reactions to the Jewish condition. A young, charismatic, healthy, and articulate man, speaking more or less the same words, could not have expressed the ambiguous position ("the might of the

meek pessimist") taken by Shach. Reading the text off the page misses this delicate aesthetic.

The celebration of powerlessness is in line with the Haredi rejection of Zionism.[67] Some scholars who have tried to parse the Haredi notion of Jewish existence in a modern Jewish state have pointed to the continuation of exile trope. Ravitzky critiqued the theopolitical claim, identified with Shach and others, that modern Israel is only "another exile," because he thought this position avoids "coming to grips" with the "profound change that has taken place in the situation of the Jewish people."[68] After reviewing the video footage, however, I think that Ravitzky misinterpreted Shach. In my understanding, Shach did come to grips with the profound change Israel meant for the Jewish people, but in a way wholly opposite to the Zionist reading: Jewish sovereignty is not an improvement but a danger. Furthermore, this position is more than mere polemic; it has existential (or ontological) and theological depth.

I must qualify my words with the warning that "Haredi existentialism"[69] is a misleading and unhelpful term. "Haredi ontology," albeit a very broad and even presumptuous coinage, is more suitable for my attempt to reconstruct an image of the Haredi faith-oriented *Weltanschauung*. A simplified statement of Haredi ontology is that human existence, the quality of life of every human being, and death are all to be attributed to the acts of the Deity.[70] The mindset of those who accept the total authority of Providence and their way of dealing with life may seem completely alien to a humanist, post-Enlightenment ontology of natural causes. However, in the context of post-Holocaust discourse, Haredi fatalism may resonate with the core anxieties of other possible ontologies and, what is more, offer a competing heroic narrative in which one is called to embrace the disastrous as inevitable. Whereas the Zionist ethos, including the Religious Zionist version, is one of empowered human capacity to govern and control Jewish destiny (with or without Divine help), the Haredi alternative is clear: one cannot control anything in this vile world of men. Of course, although the Haredi is not an empowered individual endowed with the capacity to shape the world, Haredim do in fact engage in the most worldly political manoeuvres. Thus, faced with a global pandemic, Haredi activism was steered towards ensuring that no government policy would not harm the world of Torah.[71] Activism that draws on fatalism taken in a positive sense may seem paradoxical, but it is simply the product of a dualism that contrasts the human ephemeral world with the eternal Divine world.

The fatalist believes the world is not a place for human wellbeing, but a space for turmoil, pain, unrest, and danger. In such a violent world, the fatalist can adopt a defiant attitude. This existential defiance empowers those faced with chaos. If this rings a bell with Nietzschean *amor fati*, love of fate, this is no coincidence. In religious terms, however, the knowledge that everything is

from Heaven actually empowers one who believes that human beings are powerless to control the world.

That is Rabbi Shach's position in his public addresses. Although to suggest that the Rabbits Address is a religious adaptation of Nietzschean *amor fati* may be too extreme a formulation, overtones of *amor fati* can be heard in the fatalist "no forest" trope. Instead of presenting an assurance that God will save us from the "next calamity," Shach embraces calamity. His message of "brace yourself" assumes that disaster lurks just beyond the horizon and no guarantees, military or religious, can protect against it. Finally, because God governs the world, both the good and the bad are His will. Therefore, to loosely use philosophical terms, *amor Dei* is *amor fati*. With such a worldview, the choice between the peace proposals of the Left and the ethnic nationalism of the Right seems to be almost equal. And yet, at this point in time, Shach decided to realign with the Right despite its toxic territorial agenda, because of the perceived gains the rest of its platform could bring for Jewish existence in Israel. From this I conclude that Shach's rejection of the Labour-led coalition occurred when his fatalism reached a new peak and subsequently created an ideological incongruity: support of hawkish policies and theological fatalism. Thus, Shach's tactical coalition with the Right resulted in ideological incoherence which triggered a complex "patriotization" of Haredi society via their identification with a hawkish Right.[72]

Conclusion

Rabbi Shach was perhaps the most influential Haredi leader of the twentieth century. He developed fatalism as a religious ideology and conveyed it to his community in dramatic addresses. For the majority of his rabbinic career he was mostly unknown to the general Israeli public. Then, between 1988 and 1991, political manoeuvres brought his addresses into the limelight. His fatalism was perceived as an attack on secular Israel and the Zionist ethos. The fatalistic notion of "love of fate" as "love of God" (*amor fati, amor Dei*) gives religious value to faith amidst suffering. My claim, based on these addresses, both as preserved in video and as quoted and debated in the newspapers of the day, is that a fatalist theology is ideologically powerful and could sustain the haredi *hashkafah*.

When Shach encouraged the founding of Degel ha-Torah and Shas, his "exile among Jews" mentality insisted that provoking the gentile nations by war or settlement enterprises is sinful. Shach was utterly opposed to any version of Zionism. He chose a coalition with the Right because of the historical strife between Labour Zionism and the Haredim. In fact, in the 1990s, when the Haredi parties deepened their political alliance with the Israeli Right, it was in spite of its hawkish agenda and not because of it.

The relationship between political conservatism and religious radicalism does not fully explain the Haredi slide to hyper-nationalism. Perhaps the stark contradiction between Shach's "love of fate" and the hawkish "love of

might" sheds light on a secondary explanation of this political dynamic: early twenty-first-century Haredi hawkishness and super-patriotism is not only a notable political shift but also a partial rejection of Haredi fatalist theology.

Today, many Haredim are deeply invested in Israel as a space for Jewish security – precisely what Rabbi Shach denied. This leads to an ideologically confused hybrid where hawkish right wing nationalism is sometimes blended with anti-Zionism. For example, in the aftermath of the 7 October 2023 massacre in southern Israel, the haredi society reacted in seemingly contradictory ways. On the one hand, Yeshiva leaders called for total immersion in Torah study and the Lithuanian Haredi printed ("official") press gave less expression to the IDF's part in the war. Yet on the other hand, parallel channels reported on IDF soldiers with expressions of appreciation, if not admiration and haredi men and women got involved in spontaneous support-initiatives to fellow Israelis.[73] A few months later, amidst a prolonged war, Israel's Haredi population of approximately 1,392,000 – comprising 13.9% of the total population – was engaged in a vigorous campaign to preserve blanket draft exemptions for yeshiva students.[74] And yet, a survey conducted in November 2024 found that 64% of Haredim supported re-establishing Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, and 78.5% favoured imposing military governance over the territory which would require more draftees or repeatedly extended reserve duty.[75]

Given the world is governed by divine providence, the fatalist position promogulated by Shach negated Israeli offensiveness and gave tacit or silent support to military defensiveness. The trope used to fight against drafting Haredi men, "We will die and not enlist," masquerades as a fatalist position whereby human military actions cannot change the Divine plan (but learning Torah does have power to influence providence). However, mainstream Haredi patriotism no longer leads to calling the secular prime minister to take the dovish route and avoid conflict. Instead, Haredi voters favour the aggressive tack, which Shach would have deemed clownish (ineffective) and illegitimate (as a matter of faith).

Notes

1. Keren-Kratz, "From Integration to Segregation," 27.
2. Neuberger, "The Haredim in Israeli Politics," 87.
3. Miller, "Shnei Musagim Shel Harediyut Yemanit."
4. Ben Ami, "Ultra-Orthodox Judaism," 160.
5. It acquired this name not because it was the first or only time Rabbi Shach used that image, but because it was the first time that a Shach sermon received such detailed press coverage.
6. Hellinger, "The Criticism of Democracy," 123–40, 124.
7. Hellinger, "The Criticism of Democracy," 124.
8. Brown, "Rabbi E.M. Shach"; Taub, *Rabbis in Politics*.
9. Ben Haim, *The man of vision*.

10. Schramm, "Oral Torah."
11. Menachem Friedman noted the heavily accented Hebrew as a significant language barrier for contemporary Israeli audeiences (but did not mention Yiddish). He also noted that Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, sitting to Shach's left throughout the Rabbits Address, required a simultaneous translation. Friedman provided this information as a curiosity and did not give the contents of the speech any consideration, beyond stating it was "simplistic." See Friedman, "Documenting Israel: The Religious Sector," 32–4.
12. Brown defines indeliberate theology as "a theology whose creators and proponents do not consciously acknowledge as theology, and sometimes even deny it. In our case, we are perhaps even talking about something more paradoxical – an antitheological theology, religious thought that expresses opposition to theological creativity." See Brown, "The Comeback of 'Simple Faith,'" 130–97, 196.
13. Biographical accounts are available in Taub, *Rabbis in Politics*, 15–17; Čejka and Kořan, *Rabbis of Our Time*, 132–6.
14. Halevy, "Against the tide," 242n.78. On Wasserman and his influence on Shach see Brown, "The Fundamental Components," 48–9.
15. A collection of such texts is printed in a collection of letters by Aguda rabbis and Diglenu articles titled Hashkafatenu.
16. This take on trends within the Lithuanian Haredi community has been described by many scholars: Friedman, "Haredim Confront the Modern City," 74–6; Keren-Kratz, "From Integration to Segregation," 86. More recently, Halevi offered a detailed account of changes within Haredi society after the 1967 war and proved that Rabbi Shach's position was an outlier at first: Halevy, "Against the tide," 241n81.
17. Ben Haim, *The Haredim*, 160.
18. Friedman, "Rabbi Shach," 326.
19. Wasserman, *Ikveta De-Meshicha*, 26.
20. Brown, "Learning God's Will," 98–9.
21. Wasserman, *Ikveta De-Meshicha*, 28.
22. English translation in Porat, "Amalek's Accomplices", 711.
23. Shach, "Vesa'ar Mitholel," 4; Reiser, "The Holocaust as an (UN)Exceptional Phenomenon," 46; Caplan, *Besod hasi'ach*, 140. As of yet, I have not found a sound or video recording corresponding to the transcript printed in Yated Ne'eman.
24. Hashkafatenu, 13.
25. Hashkafatenu, 14–5.
26. Hashkafatenu, 16.
27. Hashkafatenu, 16.
28. "Letter from Rabbi Shach to President Begin." The letter was published on the Kikar Hashabat website, listing MK Moshe Gafni as the source: Cohen, "Gafni ḥasaf mikhtav."
29. Brown, "Haredi Judaism and the State," 123.
30. The division between Hasidic supporters of Agudat Israel and Lithuanian supporters of Degel Ha-Torah was absolute. Belz Hasidim, for example, supported Shach.
31. Neuberger, "The Haredim in Israeli Politics," 80.
32. Mualem, "Yitzhak Shamir and the Unity of Contradictions."
33. Navot, *Political Corruption in Israel*, 144–4.
34. In 1990, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef decided the Shas party should cast off Shach's patronage; Shas was the only Haredi party to join the government formed by Yitzhak Rabin in 1992. Taub, *Rabbis in Politics*, 14.
35. Taub, *Rabbis in Politics*; Ben Haim, *The Man of Vision.*

36. During the summer and spring vacations, many yeshivot host short study term for working men. This term is called Yarchey kallah, after the convocations for a similar purpose held in the communities of Babylonia in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.
37. On September 27, 1991, Rabbi Shach was quoted in the general press; e.g., "Asur Lanu", Hadashot, 33. Later speeches were not.
38. Opening Address Yarchey Kalla 1989, min 2:12, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhuMyZ58dh0. This comment does not appear in Shach, *Makhshevet Zekenim*, 199.
39. One could explain this 1991 shift as an attempt to be more inclusive towards rabbi Ovadia Yosef's constituency, who voted for Shas.
40. Baumel, *Sacred Speakers*.
41. Baumel, *Sacred Speakers*, 52.
42. Baumel, *Sacred Speakers*, 53.
43. "HaRav Shach in an Address to the Nation." 1–2.
44. The title chosen by the Ha'aretz editor was taken from Shach's address, "Each and every day is more cursed than the previous one". This is a paraphrase from the talmudic discussion (bSotah 49a) of the condition of life since the destruction of the Temple. Shach, "Ein Yom," 2.
45. Shach and Kimmerling, "She'elot Le-Lo Ma'ane!! Ekhai – Heykhan Atem u-Bame Atem Yehudim," 10.
46. "Asur Lanu," 33.
47. The reporter, Daniel Aviv, mentioned that Shach began with Hebrew. He quoted Shach as saying that he was happy to be at the rally and would be saying words of Torah without any politics. Aviv, "Harav Avar Le-Idish," 3.
48. Baruch, *Betom Lev*, 92–93.
49. The majority of Rabbi Shach recordings date from the 1980s onwards. Even so, the available accounts of his earlier years, necessarily based on printed works, are insightful. See: Halevy, "Against the tide," 221–46.
50. These pillars have been formulated in different ways and debated at length against the backdrop of historical, sociological, cultural, halakhic, and theological developments. Samet, for example, highlighted sectarianism, anti-modernism, and stringency. Samet, "The Beginnings of Orthodoxy," 249–69.
51. For example, Menachem Friedman coined the term "society of learners," Emanuel Sivan focused on "the Enclave Culture", and, more recently, Spiegel suggested the term "interpretive community". See: Friedman, "About Miracles," 232–4 ; Almond, Strong Religion; Spiegel, "On the Merits," 7–40.
52. Schweid, From Ruin to Salvation; Rabkin, *A Threat from Within*.
53. Significant attention has been given to the concept of Da'at Torah, considered through halakhic and social lenses, as well as political and theological ones. Kaplan argued that this is a new development the endows rabbis with authority in domains never before assigned to Torah scholars. See Kaplan, "Daas Torah." In Brown's analysis, the idea is that the Torah masters of each generation find everything in the Torah and are granted "political infallibility." See Brown, "Jewish Political Theology," 255–89.
54. Yad Eliyahu, https://www2.kolhalashon.com/#/regularSite/playShiur/1203982/-1/0/false.
55. Yad Eliyahu.
56. Yad Eliyahu.
57. "HaRav Shach in an Address to the Nation."
58. "Letter from Rabbi Shach to President Begin."

59. The address was given much attention in Yated Ne'eman, including a transcript of the address, both in the daily newspaper and its weekend supplement. I have found no mention of the rally in the general press. Shach used this trope again at the start of his Yarhey Kallah speech on August 30, 1989, but I have found it only in written form.
60. Quoting Ps. 20:8, which implies the end of the verse "but we call on the name of the Lord our God."
61. Ve-Zaraḥ Ha-Shemesh, 220.
62. Shach, *Bazot Ani Bote'ach*, 86.
63. Num. 14:42. The context is Moses' warning to the people not to attempt to penetrate Canaan by force after the Lord has decreed 40 years in the wilderness as punishment for the sin of the spies.
64. bPes.113b.
65. Ps. 20:8.
66. Rabbi Shach Address, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DbKZMHSzE0.
67. Schweid, *From Ruin to Salvation*, 27.
68. There are, of course, alternatives and sub-divisions, as Ravitzky himself notes. Ravitzky, "Exile in the Holy Land," 101.
69. Gellmann argued strongly against imposing western and Christian philosophies on the works of Hassidic masters. See Gellman, "Hasidic Existentialism?" 393–417. However, although Existentialism denotes a group of philosophical responses to the problems of modernity, it can be understood in broader terms as thoughts about existence. Indeed, references to "existential poetry" or "existential film" are generally not references to any particular philosophical school of thought.
70. Reines, "Ontology, Demography, and the Silent Holocaust," 479.
71. Lavie et al., "Unveiling the 'Totem'."
72. Sarto noted a rise in neo-revisionism defined as "a preference for territorial maximalism and forceful unilateral policies" (Sarto, Israel Under Siege, 170). According to Sarto, the Haredi adoption of neo-revisionism (not dampened by their insistence on military exemption) is explained by financial factors: fast-growing Haredi towns built beyond the green line. In my opinion, this explanation does not cover the full picture.
73. Leon, "The Day After"; Hachoen, "Neither Seen nor Found," 270; Cooper, "Hasidim Praying for IDF Soldiers."
74. Cahaner and Malach, *Annual Statistical Report* 2024.
75. Israeli Voice Index – November 2024.

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