

The Zionist Aspect of Religious-Zionist Policy in Palestine in View of the Holocaust¹ Hava Eshkoli (Wagman)

“Everything is null and void relative to the cause of the Jewish state”—Rabbi Meir Berlin, [Zionist] Inner Actions Committee, January 6, 1942.

The question of Zionist policy in view of the Holocaust has been the subject of public controversy since the Holocaust itself. In the first half of World War II, the Zionist leadership focused on enunciating the goals of its struggle and marshaling Jewish and world public opinion in favor of the establishment of a Jewish state. For this reason, anti-Zionist and post-Zionist circles—and even certain Zionist circles—portray the Zionist line of action during the war as a self-serving policy that carried on as if a greater Jewish problem did not exist. Zionist scholars, in contrast, point to the circumstances under which the Zionist stance in Palestine developed and the contemporary unawareness of the events in Europe culminating in the Holocaust.²

This article explores the extent to which the religious-Zionist policy in Palestine, i.e. that of Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi,³ allied itself with the overall Zionist policy that demanded precedence of most of the Zionist

¹ The article is a reworking of an issue taken up in my book on Religious Zionism in Palestine in view of the Holocaust. The book was written in the course of my work at the Finkler Institute for Holocaust Studies, Bar-Ilan University, and in my capacity as a research fellow at the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem. I thank Professors Dan Michman, Yehuda Bauer and Yisrael Gutman for their encouragement.

² See, for example, Hava Eshkoli, *Silence: Mapai and the Holocaust 1939–1942* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem:Yad Ben-Zvi, 1994); idem., “Mapai and the Fate of European Jewry 1933–1945,” *Kivunim*, (Hebrew), 8 (1995), pp. 141–159; Dina Porat, *An Entangled Leadership* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986) ; English edition: *The Blue and Yellow Stars of David* (Cambridge 1990); *Arrow in the Dark*(Hebrew) (Sede Boqer and Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion Heritage Center, 1998).

³ The Mizrachi movement, established in 1902, on the basis of a tripartite slogan—“Eretz [the Land of] Israel for the People of Israel in accordance with the Torah of Israel”—has always waged a two-front struggle: against the domination of secularism in the Zionist movement, on the one hand; and against the anti-Zionist leanings of the *haredim* (ultra-orthodox) on the other. It is a middle class movement in its social orientation. The Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi federation was established by religious pioneers (*haluzim*) on Passover in 1922, on the basis of the Torah va-Avodah ideology, which coupled basic Mizrachi ideals with a call for social justice and productive life in Eretz Israel. True to this ideology, Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi followed a path similar to that of the Labor Movement in Palestine and was active in the “conquest of labor”(injecting Jewish laborers into all aspects of productive labor in Palestine), the Haganah, clandestine immigration, organizing Aliya Bet and rural settlement.

movement's resources during so momentous a period for the Jewish people. It also discusses the extent to which the traditional Jewish values of kindness and mutual responsibility impeded the religious-Zionist plans for redemption. In other words, did religious Zionism react from the perspective of rescue, or of redemption?

The pioneering religious-Zionist theorists, Rabbis Zevi Hirsch Kalischer and Judah Alkalai, considered the return to Zion as a phase in the messianic redemption. The founder of the Mizrachi movement, Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, in contrast, stressed that Zionism aims simply to alleviate the misery of fellow Jews, while Rabbi Samuel Mohilewer justified collaboration with non-Orthodox Jews because of the danger that beset the Jewish people. Although, at first, Mizrachi preferred statehood over Eretz Israel and sided with Herzl in the "Uganda affair," the movement later changed its mind.⁴

Moshe Unna, a founding member of the Religious Kibbutz Movement, said in this connection:

"God has treated the Zionist movement, Religious Zionism, and the entire Jewish people with charity. Thus, at the decisive historical hour, the idea of rescuing the [Jewish] people superseded the idea of the Redemption, and it was this that determined the spiritual direction and provided guidance in how to act.... National rescue and redemption "coexisted" within the Zionist movement in varying degrees of intensity."⁵

The coexistence of the ideas of rescue and of redemption found expression in various statements by the leader of Mizrachi, Rabbi Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan), as far back as the 1930s. In a discussion about Zionist policy on *aliyah* (Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel) in the spring of 1935, he stressed the need to show compassion toward Diaspora Jewry in its anguish and argued that "Zionism is foremost a question of absorbing the largest number

⁴According to Shlomo Zalman Shragai, Mizrachi bases itself totally on the idea of belief in the advent of the Messiah and full redemption, which Jews are required to promote by means of their actions in building Eretz Israel. See his "The Calculus of Religious Zionism and the Torah va-Avodah Movement," Yitzhak Raphael and Shlomo Zalman Shragai, eds., *The Book of Religious Zionism*, A (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1977), p. 241.

⁵Moshe Unna, *On Separate Paths: The Religious Parties in Israel* (Hebrew) (Alon Shevut: Yad Shapira, 1984), p. 47.

of Jews in Eretz Israel and not a question of a workers' *aliyah*.”⁶ However, in a discussion in the spring of 1937, in the midst of the partition controversy, Rabbi Berlin elevated the fundamental of redemption to a position of primacy:

“Who among us is inured to the agonies of the Jews, perish the thought? When all is said and done, however, Zionism did not arise from the Jews’ agonies. Today, these two matters [*aliyah* and building the country] are complementary, but after all, they may be mutually opposed in some future situation, and then the question is which comes first. We Zionists must insist that building the country comes first; the return of the Jews to their country as a people in its state takes priority even over *aliyah* and assisting Jews.”⁷

This prioritization of the redemption fundamental found expression in the position adopted by Rabbi Berlin and a decisive majority in the Mizrachi movement against the partition plan. Rabbi Moses Avigdor Amiel, chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, argued at that time that one neither negotiates over nor sells off a sacred object, and Rabbi Jacob Moses Harlap, a leading figure at Merkaz Harav *Yeshivah*, stated that,

“Even if they save a few Jewish souls from their dire situation in the Diaspora by establishing a toehold in part [of Eretz Israel] that they will call a Jewish state, this does not give them license to hack away at the Jews’ hearts and eyes.”⁸

In contrast, the leader of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi, Moshe Shapira, and Mizrachi members from Germany abstained in the vote on the partition plan.

The 1939 White Paper, which threatened the redemption dream of Zionist political sovereignty in Eretz Israel, stunned the Mizrachi movement. In the

⁶Meeting of the Zionist General Council. See Aviva Halamish, “Immigration and Immigrant-Absorption Policy of the Zionist Organization, 1931–1937,” (Hebrew), Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1995, p. 348.

⁷Meeting of plenary Zionist General Council, April 21, 1937, Central Zionist Archives (CZA) S 5/2141. See Anita Shapira, *Visions in Conflict* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1988), pp. 322–323.

⁸See Shulamit Eliash, “The Jewish Community in Palestine and the Peel Report of July 1937,” (Hebrew), M.A. dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 1971, pp. 114–115.

aftermath of what they called the “Embezzlement Paper,” Rabbi Berlin demanded a policy of total non-cooperation with the British regime. He advocated a public “Gandhism,” i.e., passive resistance and public education in the willingness to make economic sacrifices that would allow the Yishuv to forego government support. “Let us not wait until they hand us a Jewish state. We should create it ourselves,” Rabbi Berlin asserted, urging the Mizrachi movement to spearhead a war in which the spirit of Yavne and the spirit of Massada would converge.⁹

The First Years of the War

Shortly after the war began, Rabbi Berlin reemphasized the believers’ duty to carry their beliefs to fruition:

“If we believe the Messiah will come and gather our far-flung [exiles] in the chosen land, we should act on this belief. There are two ways to accomplish this: Eretz Israel as a political concept and Eretz Israel as a territorial concept—Jewish territory.”¹⁰

Rabbi Berlin developed this idea in early 1941, at the outset of the dispute in the Yishuv about the goals of Zionism. In an internal Mizrachi debate, he warned that those not fully rooted in Judaism were sometimes influenced by the defeatist spirit of other peoples and leaders. Therefore, he said, the Mizrachi movement had a unique political role to play:

“Who knows if it will not be our own fate, members of the Mizrachi, whose political outlooks are based on Torah and tradition, on messianic hope, on unshakable trust in divine Providence ... to stand in the breach and insist on full, vehement political Zionism in the future?”¹¹ (Italics added)

⁹Speech by Rabbi Berlin at World Mizrachi Conference, Av 5699 (August 1939), Religious-Zionist Archives (RZA), Mossad Harav Kook, World Center, Conference File 10/9 B/94.

¹⁰Remarks by Rabbi Berlin, “Jewish Country and Jewish Territory” (December 1939), see Nathan Bistricki, ed., *Torah and Building* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Jewish National Fund, 1950), p. 44.

¹¹Remarks by Rabbi Berlin at meeting of the Inner Mizrachi Main Committee, January 21, 1941. See Yitzhak Arigur, *Ilan ve-Nofo: Biography of the Late Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1951), p. 297.

Indeed, Rabbi Berlin worked prodigiously to fulfill this destiny. When the Zionist General Council debated the goals of Zionism at a meeting in the autumn of 1941, Rabbi Berlin staunchly rejected the view of the head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, Moshe Shertok, that the time to present political demands had not yet come. However, Rabbi Berlin did not offer messianic arguments in this national setting; instead, he stressed general political considerations. First, reliance on miracles should be avoided, he advised; a specific program should be formulated at once, and people in various locations should be instructed in it in advance of the postwar era. Otherwise, Zionism would be defeated. Second, a minimalist demand was out of the question, for it would rule out the possibility of any real achievement.. Third, basic demands, such as protection of Jews' rights in the Diaspora, should not be raised concurrently with the Zionist cause; instead, the focus should be on the following demand: "*Only Eretz Israel, and only Eretz Israel as a state, and Eretz Israel as a state that can receive millions of Jews.*"¹² (italics added)

By this time, in fact, Mizrachi activist Daniel Syrakis had warned that only a grand Zionist plan that offered a radical solution to the Jewish problem would be assured of international acceptance and implementation. "Therefore, Eretz Israel within its historical borders should become a Jewish state with full Jewish rule."¹³

Another stalwart in the Zionist political struggle was the Mizrachi delegate to the Jewish Agency Executive, Rabbi Judah Leib Fishman (Maimon). In a discussion in the Executive in April 1941, Rabbi Fishman warned vehemently that it would be a sin and a crime if, at the propitious moment of the postwar peace conference, the Zionists would allow their aspirations to expire in silence: "After forty years of political Zionism, we ought to express our demand overtly: *Eretz Israel as a Jewish State*"¹⁴(italics added).

¹²Remarks by Rabbi Berlin, meeting of the Inner Zionist General Council, September 10, 1941, CZA, S 25/1840.

¹³Remarks by Syrakis, meeting of the Inner Zionist General Council, August 26, 1941, CZA, S 25/1857.

¹⁴Rabbi Fishman made it clear at this debate that, however strong his messianic beliefs were, he did not believe Eretz Israel could be secured without conquest. For that purpose, national forces should be created; Meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, April 6, 1941, CZA 33/2. See

The position of Rabbis Fishman and Berlin on Zionist policy reflected a broad consensus in the Mizrachi movement and was manifested in the political resolutions of Mizrachi institutions.¹⁵ Thus, the Mizrachi activists were among the first, at the beginning of the war, to undertake the task of phrasing the “goals of the war.”¹⁶ Even in the throes of the war, they were the main forces that advocated the formulation of a maximalist program and the political struggle to attain it.

The Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi circles were in total agreement regarding the ultimate goal of Zionism. When the White Paper was issued, they proclaimed, “No obstacle will frighten us; divine providence has tasked us with establishing a homeland for these people, and to carry out this imperative we, backed by the doleful nation in exile, will advance toward our destiny: Jewish dominion in Zion.”¹⁷

However, the path to the goal, according to the movement’s leader, Moshe Shapira, should include “abundant action instead of abundant rhetoric.” This emphasis was also manifested in references to the Zionist program. Rabbi Elimelech Neifeld took issue with two matters in this context. One of them was the timing of the plan. “The objective conditions are such,” he explained, “that occasionally one must adjust rhetoric to reality. And the reality is such that no program can be outwardly aimed.” The second bone of contention was the Zionist distinction between the Eretz Israel and Diaspora issues. The fact of mass annihilation was nebulous at that time, and the question of whether the Zionist institutions would have to attend to the rights of Diaspora Jewry after the war was taken up for debate. Neifeld stated: “Eretz Israel is not ready to receive millions [of Jews] and solve the Diaspora question. For this reason, we should also find a solution to the Diaspora Jewry issue.”¹⁸

also Geula Bat-Yehuda, *Rabbi Maimon and His Times* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1979) pp. 484–486.

¹⁵For example, Inner Mizrachi Main Committee, RZA World Center, 1941 (38-50), 41/1.

¹⁶See, for example, Prof. Pik, meeting of Zionist General Council, December 27, 1939, CZA, S 25/1858.

¹⁷*Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Federation—Report to the Eighth Conference*, Tel Aviv, 1942, pp. 33–34.

¹⁸Meeting of the Inner Zionist General Council, September 10, 1941, CZA, S 25/ 1840. Notably, Moshe Unna, one of the most important intellectuals in the Torah va-Avodah movement, also opposed the “Biltmore plan.” See Yeshayahu Klinov to Moshe Shapira,

Mizrachi resisted this trend. At a meeting of the movement's World Center in November 1941, Rabbi Fishman warned that, by linking a solution to the Jewish problem in Poland and Romania with the Eretz Israel question, they were diminishing the latter. Syrkis, who previously had spoken of the need to reinstate the evacuation formula, now stated resolutely: *"We should establish a Jewish state even at the expense of the Diaspora"* (emphasis added). The following phrasing was then adopted unanimously: "Eretz Israel as a Jewish state as the only solution to the problem of the Jews and Judaism worldwide."¹⁹

At a meeting of the Zionist Small Actions Committee in January 1942, Rabbi Berlin sharpened the debate over future arrangements and defined the terms of the debate as "Jewish statehood" versus "pity for millions of Jews." He feared that pity for European Jewry—concern for their entitlements and a search for territories—would defeat the statehood cause. Therefore, he counseled against the view that millions of Jews should not be forsaken on behalf of Eretz Israel:

"It is wartime now, and we observe the sacrifices that countries are making ... millions of soldiers, and we have no right to abandon our only path, the only thing left to us, by which we may survive, and by any other way we may not survive.

The Eretz Israel issue is the only possible solution.... The nation should show that it is doing something for Eretz Israel; otherwise, we are dead.

...It is our duty to instill the awareness of building Eretz Israel as a Jewish state, [the awareness] that this is the only current issue for which we not only may but also must forfeit anything that stands in our way.... *Everything is null and void relative to the cause of the Jewish state.*"²⁰ [italics added]

February 22, 1942, CZA, S 25/2085. With regard to the institutions' attitude toward the postwar rights of Diaspora Jewry, see, for example Eshkoli, *Silence*, p. 320.

¹⁹Meeting of World Center of Mizrahi with Political Committee (elected at a session of the Main Committee), November 17, 1941, Beit Meir (joint consultation between Mizrahi and activists in General Zionists A and B).

²⁰Remarks by Rabbi Berlin, meeting of Inner General Zionist Council, January 6, 1942, CZA, S 25/1840. See also his "Pity and What Transcends It," *Hatsofe*, January 23, 1942. In this article, Rabbi Berlin advocates an end to the use of pity to explain Zionist demands: "Our demands, claims, and justice are too lofty for that."

Notably, the messianic sentiment was so strong that Rabbi Berlin and others in the movement believed that the Diaspora had no future.²¹ Therefore, instead of fighting for Jewish civil and existential rights in the Diaspora after the war, Zionism should focus on the Zionist cause.

Even though there was no awareness of the Holocaust at that time, as stated, Rabbi Berlin's remarks sparked a furor. The head of the Jewish Agency's Immigration Department, Eliahu Dobkin, condemned them as a slip of the tongue and pointless argumentation. Shertok wrote to Rabbi Berlin, "Your conclusion that the Yishuv in Palestine will be the main subject of our claim to the nations at the end of the war appeals to me in its content but not in its form, because we must maintain the appearance of the Jewish people as a globally dispersed bloc that wishes to ingather and consolidate itself."²²

The focus on the Zionist cause continued to trouble Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi as well. At the World Mizrachi meetings in the spring and summer of 1942, the leaders of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi, Moshe Shapira and Isaiah Bernstein, denied that the two causes were in any way contradictory and insisted that the Diaspora problem must not be ignored. Rabbi Neifeld stressed again that it was the duty neither of the Bund nor of America but of Zionism to concern itself with the Jewish masses. Dr. Shmuel Zangwill Kahana, who had escaped from Poland after the war began, also warned against the entrenchment of a widespread Zionist fundamental of "Yishuvism" that would not solve the problem of the sufferings of world Jewry.

Amidst the influence of this internal criticism and under the pressure of the rising tide of reports about the mass murder of Jews in June 1942, the Mizrachi institutions finally decided to convene the Political Committee in order to debate the issue of struggling for the rights of Diaspora Jews.²³ Many others also did not understand the true nature of the mass murder. The issue of Diaspora Jewish rights was debated in all the National Institutions and in

²¹See, for example, Isaiah Bernstein, "Back to Building or Back to Exile?" *ibid.*, January 27, 1942. Discussions of this topic continued immediately after the war; see, for example, "Does the Diaspora Have a Tomorrow?," CZA, Broadsheets Shelf, Mizrachi.

²²Moshe Shertok to Rabbi Berlin, September 24, 1941, CZA, S 25/932.

²³Meeting of Mizrachi World Center, April 27, 1942, Beit Meir; meeting of Inner Mizrachi Main Committee, June 14–15, 1942, RZA, World Center, 1942, 41/1.

those of the movement until official notice about the mass murder arrived in November 1942.

Nevertheless, the party institutions mobilized in support of the “Biltmore plan,” which had been approved at that time at a conference of American Zionists. The “commonwealth” plan, designed to assure unlimited Jewish immigration and extensive settlement, prompted concern in various Yishuv circles. The Mizrachi institutions chose not to reassert that “the Zionist goal is the redemption of the Jewish people by its return to our land—Eretz Israel, and its establishment as a Jewish state.” Instead, they instructed their delegates to the Zionist institutions to ensure that the Hebrew phrasing referred explicitly to a Jewish state and not a commonwealth.²⁴ Rabbi Fishman insisted on this stipulation and protested against the omission of a religious rationale—the divine promise concerning Eretz Israel—in the wording of the plan.²⁵

The growing numbers of reports on the grim fate of Jewish population centers in Eastern Europe only stiffened the Zionist resolve. The World Center of Mizrachi proclaimed: “This catastrophic situation shows in full fury the need to find an absolute and final solution for the global Jewish problem.”²⁶

However, in early November 1942, as the Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi institutions continued to debate the Zionist policy in advance of approval of the “Biltmore plan,” Yisrael Gan-Zevi, a journalist and a Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi activist, criticized the plan acridly:

“All these arguments about this or that platform for the future ... what substance of any kind, what meaning of any kind, will they have if those for whom the platform is concerned will in the meantime have become, Heaven forbid, a host of poltergeists?

Anyone who answers these questions for himself by speaking of “mobilization” and “a political campaign in London and Washington” will be

²⁴Meeting of Inner World Mizrachi Main Committee, July 9, 1942, RZA World Center, 41/1; Resolutions of Main Committee, October 20, 1942, RZA, 1945, 22/1.

²⁵As he expressed it, this, of all rationales, would appeal to the emotions of non-Jews who deemed the Bible holy. Rabbi Fishman offered to travel to the United States and organize the rabbinical community there for information activity in this vein. Meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, October 11, 1942, CZA; Bat-Yehuda, *Rabbi Maimon*, p. 489.

²⁶World Center of Mizrachi, November 9, 1942—Policy Proposals, Beit Meir.

feared to have lost his sense of reality. *Mobilization and a political campaign are two branches of work for the future, which, I admit, is more important than any dispute, but they have nothing to do with the curse of the present* [italics in the original]”.

Gan-Zvi cited Greece and Poland as examples of countries that temporarily set aside political interests in order to rescue their people. He demanded that the Zionist leadership adopt a “Red Star of David” strategy, in which as many Jews as possible would be “grabbed and rescued.”²⁷

The Second Half of the War

On November 23, 1942, the Jewish National Institutions in Palestine released an official statement about the Nazis’ systematic annihilation of European Jewry. While the Yishuv plunged into deep bereavement, the question is whether this new awareness of the fate of European Jewry led to a change in the Zionist policy of Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi?

Rabbi Berlin went on a lengthy mission to the United States (January 1943–January 1944) shortly after the month of mourning over the murder of European Jewry. In talks with leading Democratic and Republican senators and representatives, Vice President Henry Wallace, among others, Rabbi Berlin described the tragic plight of world Jewry; brought up the matter of American silence in view of “the terrible things that are happening to the Jews in the Nazi-occupied areas”; and decried the Americans’ disinterest in receiving information and seeking a way to thwart the Jews’ extermination. “Are those who can help but fail to help not guilty of what is continuing to happen?” he asked them boldly, demanding that the United States (1) offer to shelter the Jews—provisionally or permanently—even within the limits of the immigration laws; (2) urge Great Britain to open the gates of Palestine even before the end of the war; (3) seek a Congressional resolution to assist Polish Jewry; and (4) promise that millions of Jews would be given the right to enter the United States immediately after the war.

²⁷Yisrael Gan-Zvi, “Red Star of David Strategy,” *Hatsofe*, November 3, 1942.

Although Rabbi Berlin devoted a considerable part of his mission to efforts connected with rescue affairs, the main point of his trip was the cause of Jewish statehood. Rabbi Berlin, who, like Ben-Gurion, correctly gauged the rising importance of the United States in the future world leadership, made perceptible efforts in these meetings to explain the Zionist cause. He demanded that the Americans make an unequivocal commitment to the establishment of a commonwealth, i.e., a Jewish state, in Palestine. In his summary of the talks, he reported to Palestine that he had become even more strongly convinced of the urgent need to clarify the Zionist goals: “so they should not refer to Palestine and Zionism as if they were a laboratory for social experiments and agricultural feats.”²⁸

In the many rallies that he attended after he returned to Palestine, Rabbi Berlin repeatedly stressed additional conclusions:

- a. Zionist policy at this time must demand the Elimination of the state of exile.... Jews cannot exist in the Diaspora. *Diaspora Jewry is dying and only by building Eretz Israel can rescue and redemption take place.*
- b. We must present our demands courageously and boldly at this time; we must not be silent. *If we cry out, God will hear our entreaties and we will win!*²⁹ [italics added].
- c. The Jews and Eretz Israel will have no hope unless religious Jewry places itself at the forefront of Zionism and becomes a determining and decisive player.³⁰

True to his views, upon his return to Palestine, Rabbi Berlin began to publish the first chapters of his book, *Basis of the Fundamentals of Political Zionism*, written during his mission in the United States, in the newspaper *Hatsofe*. The main theme in these articles was that the Mizrachi movement has a special role to play in Zionist political thinking and policy. Only Mizrachi

²⁸February 24, 1943, secret memorandum from Rabbi Meir Berlin about his meetings in the United States concerning Zionist and rescue affairs, RZA. For a lengthy description of the report, see Yitzhak Cohen, “The Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Movement and Its Responses to the Holocaust in 1939–1945,” (Hebrew). M.A. thesis, Haifa University, 1992, pp. 72–76; Arigur, *Ilan ve-Nofo*, pp. 330–342.

²⁹Remarks at mass rallies sponsored by Mizrachi and at a press conference in Tel Aviv upon his return from the United States, Arigur, *Ilan ve-Nofo*.

³⁰Meeting of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee, February 3, 1944; see report, “Rabbi Meir Berlin in Eretz Yisrael,” (Hebrew), RZA, World Center, 1944, 44/1.

can show the world that only Zionism can solve the Jewish problem; only Mizrachi can argue persuasively that the Jewish people cannot exist anywhere in the Diaspora as a people intent on maintaining its singularity. Without Eretz Israel, there is no Torah, no Hebrew language, no Sabbath, and no Jewish culture. Eretz Israel is part of the Jewish soul. Without it, Judaism is devoid of content. This, he says, is the rationale and the basis for Zionist policy.³¹

In the spirit of this attitude, the Mizrachi conference in America resolved to open a political office in Washington in order to consolidate the Jewish-Zionist assertions with respect to the fundamentals of the Jewish faith.³² In a speech at the Eighth Mizrachi Conference in Palestine (May 21–24, 1944), Rabbi Berlin sharpened this claim:

*“The Mizrachi has a political tone that other parties lack and that, in our absence, all of Zionism lacks. If all the Zionists’ demands were accompanied at this time not only by the rationale of the Jews’ agonies, the killings and the slaughters, but also by the transcendental basis of the demand—in the name of God and the words of the prophets—and if the demand would be to assure the survival and future of practical Judaism ... political Zionism would be stronger.”*³³ [italics added]

The other Mizrachi leader and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, Rabbi Judah Leib Fishman, was also guided by messianic fervor for the Zionist cause. However, unlike Rabbi Berlin, he was utterly pessimistic about the possibility of deliverance at human hands, as he remarked in May 1943:

“Only God can effect rescue; we must only lament our losses. I see no likelihood [of rescue] by natural means. I will focus only on the question of the Zionist solution, because we must attain it now and only now, and if we lose this opportunity, who knows what we will yet experience until we attain it? The vision of our precursors, the spiritual giants Nachmanides, Rabbi David

³¹“Zionist Policy and Mizrachi,” remarks at a district conference of Mizrachi teachers in Tel Aviv, November 2, 1942, in Arigur, *Ilan ve-Nofo*, p. 329.

³²Ibid., p. 338; see also meeting of Mizrachi World Center, January 17, 1944, Beit Meir.

³³See *Ha’Olam*, May 25, 1944.

Kimche, and Rabbi Z. H. Kalischer can come to pass only now..."³⁴[italics added]

The Mizrachi leaders were not complacent about the eventual outcome of the "Biltmore plan." Although the plan was adopted by a vote of twenty-two to four, many opponents both in Palestine and elsewhere wished to challenge it.³⁵ In order to further the work toward fulfilling the vision and fortifying the plan, Rabbi Fishman proposed that Ben-Gurion and representatives of all parties travel to America for the Zionist Congress and stay there until the end of the war. Other activists contented themselves with demanding that Rabbi Berlin stay in America until after the Congress and fight there for Zionism.³⁶ In late May 1943, the Inner Main Committee of Mizrachi formulated political resolutions that urged the leading institutions of the Zionist movement to plan extensive, vigorous political action in order to implement the "Biltmore plan."³⁷

As the war wound down, the Main Committee reaffirmed its support for the "Biltmore plan" and expressed its profound concern about the tendency of the political leadership to wrap the hope of establishing Palestine as a Jewish state "in mist." The Main Committee also implored the chief rabbis of Palestine to pledge their services to Jewish political action in order to attain full national liberation in Eretz Israel as a Jewish state and stated that, if the Zionist and Yishuv entities failed to authorize the chief rabbis to speak on their behalf, the World Center should do so.³⁸ Indeed, the Chief Rabbinate had staunch Zionist leanings and had even displayed its political prowess in the past. Opening the Eighth Mizrachi Conference, the Rabbinate projected the voice of the Torah and the outcry of the Jewish people to the democratic world:

³⁴Meeting of Inner Main Committee of Mizrachi, May 10, 1943, RZA, World Central Committee, 404.

³⁵Remarks by E. Syrakis at meeting of Zionist General Council, May 18, 1943, CZA, S 25/297.

³⁶Continuation of Mizrachi Inner Main Committee meeting, May 17, 1943.

³⁷Mizrachi Inner Main Committee meeting, May 26, 1943, RZA, 1944, 22/1.

³⁸Inner Main Committee of the World Mizrachi federation, April 12, 1945, RZA. (The committee reported its September 16, 1942, decision concerning the Biltmore resolution.) Rabbi Fishman, speaking at the Jewish Agency Executive meeting on February 7, 1945, was one of the most vehement opponents of any backtracking from the Jerusalem-Biltmore plan. He was also unwilling to settle for the political and economic empowerment of the Jewish Agency in respect to *aliyah* and settlement; instead, he demanded, foremost—with the party's consent—"that we be assured that Eretz Israel will be a Jewish state." See Bat-Yehuda, *Rabbi Maimon*, p. 522.

Restore the Jews' property to its owners, give the Jewish people its land, the land of its forefathers, its prophets, and its kings, as its state! ... Once the Jews return to their land and settle in their state, all inhabitants of Eretz Israel will be at peace and the light of peace and liberty will radiate from [Eretz Israel] to the entire world....³⁹

Despite the awareness of the Holocaust, Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi also continued to adhere strongly to the Zionist cause and the "Biltmore plan." This was manifested prominently in remarks by the secretary of the Torah va-Avodah World Alliance, Moshe Krona, in February 1943, pursuant to reports about possibilities of rescue for ransom. In an article in *Hatsofe* entitled "Rescue and Redemption," Krona explained:

"We are duty-bound to take this action, but in so doing we dare not be distracted from the main point. The cause of *redemption* should be honored more than the cause of *rescue*.... [italics in the original] Despite all the woes that have buffeted our masses in the Diaspora ... all hope is not lost. Jewish masses, thirsting for salvation and hungering for full Zionist national redemption, still survive.... The agonies visited upon us need not narrow the horizons of our political vision; instead, they should broaden them. The helmsmen of our Jewish and Zionist policy must realize that the relief and rescue plans are but one segment in the plans of full redemption."⁴⁰

Krona frequently discussed the role of Zionism during the war. In an earlier article, at the beginning of the war, he asserted that the Jewish-Zionist question must not be portrayed as a matter for the Gentile nations' kindness. Instead, it should be posited as a matter of entitlement, in fact three entitlements. The first entitlement was the Jews' historical right to a Zionist solution to the Jewish problem; the second entitlement was the Jews' struggle war, and the third entitlement was to "what we have—our practical, constructive enterprise in this country."

³⁹Message from the Chief Rabbinate, *Ha-'Olam*, May 25, 1944.

⁴⁰Moshe Krona, "Rescue and Redemption," *Hatsofe*, February 5, 1943.

Krona believed that by clarifying the nature of the Zionist cause for Diaspora Jewry, the latter would no longer regard suffering and philanthropic aid as the essence of the relationship with the Jews in Palestine: "They will accustom themselves to viewing the national cause as the main and the noblest matter."⁴¹

Adhering to this approach even after there was wide spread awareness of what had transpired in the Holocaust, Krona published a summary article, "Zionism in the Test of the Times," in 1944. He again developed the fundamentals of his sober-minded view, in which the small advantages of the situation should be allowed to emerge from the immense bitterness of the war. As he put it, Zionism is an enterprise of immigration and settlement, and the political demand should also be based on meeting this condition: "Even during the current world war, Zionist policy should prefer ongoing, persistent practical endeavor over formal political negotiations."

Krona harbored other reasons for this perspective: (1) the Allies were being cautious about making promises and declarations while the war was still being fought; and (2) the Jewish people had no choice in this war but to participate with the Allies in their struggle against Nazism. Therefore, in Krona's opinion, the turn of the era of "pure politics" had not yet come, and, even in this period of tumult and outrage, one should take the high road and combine political negotiations with day-in, day-out action. "The complete political Zionism is steadily coalescing as a cohesive, solid Jewish force that aims to achieve a bold political solution while its hands engage in building and action."⁴²

It is true that, after awareness of the Holocaust sank in, the leader of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi, Moshe Shapira, attempted to shift the emphasis toward rescue, but even here the motive was Zionist, as he claimed:

"European Jewry is a very important and serious factor in all our political calculations and in the great and bitter struggle that we are about to face as a

⁴¹Moshe Krona, "In Days of Trial," *Ba-Metsar: Anthology of Current Affairs* (Hebrew), World Alliance of the Torah va- Avodah Movement, Tel Aviv, Sivan 5702 (Spring 1942), pp. 129–132.

⁴²Moshe Krona, "Zionism in the Test of the Times," Yitzhak Warfel, ed., *Areshet* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Association of Religious Writers, 1944), especially pp. 32–33.

people, for Jewish existence in Eretz Israel. If European Jewry is laid waste and annihilated at today's pace, perish the thought ... we will be lacking in mass.... The rescue of Jews in Europe is our rescue as a people."⁴³

Thus, rescue is a basis for Zionist policy.

Essentially, then, the Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee was a full partner in supporting the "Biltmore plan." In early 1945, the Committee made it clear that it considered the Jerusalem-Biltmore plan a program for the immediate fulfillment of Zionism by establishing Eretz Israel as a Jewish state. It also warned against players in the Yishuv and the Zionist movement whose actions and statements might impair the political struggle on behalf of that Jewish state.⁴⁴ Even Rabbi Neifeld, who attacked the timing of the plan at the beginning of the war, now reached the conclusion that the horrific disaster illustrated the urgency of solving the Jewish problem in the only way possible: Jewish statehood. Thus, the emphasis should be placed on this demand, without circumlocutions.⁴⁵

The Bnei Akiva religious-Zionist movement also favored the plan, and here, too, awareness of the Holocaust strengthened its support:

"The horrible disaster that has befallen our people in Europe should now become the only topic of our thoughts. We should keep it in mind day and night and allow it to guide all our actions....

"Our awareness that we have been orphaned and left to our own devices ... requires us to undertake duties vis-à-vis our nation, the surviving Jewish people, and ourselves ... *and to prevent, now and forever, a recurrence of the frightful and shocking actions that were perpetrated in the heart of Europe—the core of human civilization—against the Jewish nation* [As the Bible says,] "You shall be settled securely in your land." It is to make it our land that the Biltmore plan is designed"⁴⁶ [italics added].

⁴³Meeting of Mizrahi Inner Main Committee, May 10, 1943, RZA, World Center, 404.

⁴⁴Resolutions of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee, January 22, 1945, CZA, S 25/2083.

⁴⁵Abridged minutes of meeting of Inner Zionist General Council, March 5, 1945, RZA, World Center, 404.

⁴⁶S. Nahorai, "Facing the Holocaust," *Zera'im* (February 1944), p. 2.

Rabbi Berlin's remarks at the Eighth Mizrahi Conference (1944) seem to encapsulate the staunchness of the religious-Zionist stance on Zionist policy, a stance whose implications are perceptible to the present day:

"All of us, unanimously, favor full Zionism and Jewish statehood, but for us this is not the Biltmore plan but the *Sinai plan*. Moreover, *Jewish statehood is not our final goal; it is only an initial goal*. More precisely, it is the beginning of the goal, the primal wisdom, since we do not settle for statehood only..."⁴⁷

Mobilization for the British Army and its Connection with the Fate of European Jewry - The First Years of the War

One of the salient goals in the Zionist political struggle during the war era was mobilization for service in the British army and recognition of the Jewish people as a belligerent nation. In the spring of 1941, a leading exponent of the draft, the author Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann—known by his pen name "Rabbi Binyamin"—summed up religious Jewry's complex attitude toward induction:

"[The rabbis] agree unanimously that it is a great mitzvah to fight Amalek until his ultimate downfall and destruction However, they have three stipulations. First, the mess hall must be kosher.... Second, [the Jewish soldier] must fight right next to his home—his country.... He does not feel a worldwide, international responsibility. The third point is a different condition: if he is given his own flag and his own unit in all details and particulars, he will join the fray."⁴⁸

In fact, not only rabbis and religious leaders were of more than one mind on this issue; so were the general leadership and the Yishuv at large. The outbreak of the war on the heels of the White Paper (May 1939) gave rise to severe perplexity. On the one hand, the war seemed to present a historical opportunity to advance the Zionist enterprise after Britain had backtracked severely from its undertaking to the Jewish national home in the inter-war

⁴⁷ *Ha-'Olam*, May 25, 1944.

⁴⁸ Rabbi Binyamin, "Something," *Moznaim* 12 (Spring 1941), pp. 385–386.

period. On the other hand, distrust of Britain was rampant; many believed that the Yishuv should concentrate on building the country in order to prepare a base for the absorption of European Jewry after the war. Those who considered the war a historic opportunity to promote the Zionist enterprise promoted the slogan of induction into the British army. Those who distrusted Britain preferred to mobilize for the Yishuv's own defense organizations.

In the controversy about "priorities in mobilization" that evolved at the beginning of the war,⁴⁹ Religious Zionism, practically speaking, adopted the stance of the National Institutions concerning limited mobilization. Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi, for example, urged a controlled mobilization of its young men for the British army, so as not to impair the economic, defense, and social capacity of its struggling young kibbutzim. The *Hatsofe* editorial writer stressed the same point.⁵⁰

The purpose of mobilization was also a source of debate. Was it only to protect Eretz Israel, or was it also in order to be part of the European front? At the beginning of the war, Rabbi Meir Berlin stressed the immediate interest in mobilization, i.e., the defense of Eretz Israel. As long as the White Paper remained in effect, he argued, the Yishuv must protect itself in its homeland. "This is neither an act of vengeance nor a settling of scores on our part; rather, it is the fact that we must protect our locations and cannot simultaneously protect locations somewhere in France."⁵¹ He adhered to this position in view of the threat of German invasion of Palestine and the danger of a renewed Arab uprising in the spring of 1941:

"Now we have one front that is extremely close and difficult—the Arab front. Perforce, with every young man who is removed from the country now, we are giving over our forces to those who are not as much ours as the front here....

⁴⁹See Yehuda Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, pp. 83-84, 146-155; Eshkoli, *Silence*, pp. 68-73.

⁵⁰*Hatsofe*, September 10, 1939, p. 2. See Meir Edelstein, "The Religious Movements in Eretz Israel and Their Attitude Toward the Holocaust 1939-1942" (Hebrew), M.A. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993, p. 76. Concerning the problem of manpower shortage in Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi settlements, see Dov Knohl, ed., *Be-hitnadev 'am—Religious Volunteers in the Second World War* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Moresheet, 1989), Part A, pp. 75-76.

⁵¹Meeting of Zionist General Council, December 7, 1939, CZA, S 25/1834. See also Ariel Levanon, "Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan: His Responses to the Holocaust" (Hebrew), Final Paper, under guidance of the author, Noam Academy, 1997.

My purpose now is not to defend the ideological point, meaning whether it is not necessary to help the British. I say, yes! But we come first.... The direct menace is [to Kibbutz] Hanita and not to Sidon, because others will [defend] Sidon but will not come to the defense of Hanita if something happens there.”⁵²

Other Mizrachi activists, including Rabbi Fishman and Daniel Syrkis, also opposed the dispatch of Jewish brigades from Palestine. Rabbi Fishman remained in the opposition even after most of his colleagues changed their minds.⁵³

Other Mizrachi stalwarts disagreed with this stance from the outset. Professor Hayyim Pick, a former Mizrachi leader in Germany, asserted already in late 1939: “We consider full mobilization necessary and we should go to fight everywhere, not for England but for ourselves. The war against Hitler is our war.... We should mobilize under any conditions and must not link this cause to anything else.”⁵⁴

Moshe Shapira took a pragmatic approach toward mobilization outside of Palestine. From the very beginning of the war, Shapira stated that if a Jewish brigade came into being, it might also fight on the western front. In the autumn of 1941, after the threat of the invasion of Palestine was temporarily lifted, he stressed that long-term Zionist considerations favored mobilization for the western front:

We are fighting for ourselves, and when we reach the juncture of Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel as soon as the armistice is declared ... it will not

⁵²Meeting of Zionist General Council, May 7, 1941, CZA, S 25/1856.

⁵³Syrkis argued, “If we give over another 10,000 boys, we will not remedy the situation but we will have abandoned Eretz Israel,” *ibid.*; remarks by Rabbi Fishman in meetings of the Jewish Agency Executive, October 22, 1939, April 20, 1941. See Bat-Yehuda, *Rabbi Maimon*, pp. 477, 487.

⁵⁴Meeting of the Inner Zionist General Council, December 27, 1939, CZA, S 25/1858. Interestingly, later in the war, Prof. Hayyim Pick referred to the mobilization issue in the context of the phrasing of a Zionist program, of all things. “How a Jew can give his life, to go even to Tobruk, if he doesn’t even know why he’s doing it?” he wondered.

take place with permission from the High Commissioner. Only the soldiers returning from the front will make it possible.⁵⁵

A different argument in favor of mobilization for the western front, more strongly related to the fate of European Jewry, was raised at the beginning of the war by Rabbi Dr. Isaiah Wolfsberg, a Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi theorist. Wolfsberg, formerly a leading figure in the pacifist Mizrahi movement in Germany, now called for a revision of the pacifistic mindset. He argued that anyone who believed that one could be neutral vis-à-vis the Jews at such a fateful time was naive. Pacifism was appropriate for times in which the belligerents did not regard the problem of the Jews and Judaism as a main issue. It was mistaken to think that Zionism and the Yishuv could make do by defending Palestine in the event of an attack on its borders. Sagacious self-defense must be displayed on existing fronts:

“For our survival, resurrection, and future as Jews ... [and for] the fate of humankind ... it is our duty to come to the assistance of the tremendous edifice of countries and society that have drawn on the Jewish Torah.”⁵⁶

Another exponent of unconditional mobilization irrespective of profit-and-loss calculations was Rabbi Binyamin—a colorful figure who allied himself with both Religious Zionism and Brit Shalom. Since the spring of 1941, Rabbi Binyamin had been arguing repeatedly that the war of the Almighty, i.e., the Jews, against Ashmadai (the king of demons), i.e., Hitler and Nazism, is not “someone else’s war in which we ought to help; rather, it is our war exclusively, in which others are helping us.” This war is one of those events in world history “in which consciously assumed mortal danger ... is the pinnacle of life, the exaltation [of life]”⁵⁷; “It is a compulsory war, a war of *mitzvah*, a war

⁵⁵Meeting of Mizrahi Inner Main Committee, October 20, 1941, RZA, and Edelstein, “Religious Movements,” p. 86. Shapira’s remarks at the beginning of the war: meeting of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee, November 6, 1939; Edelstein, *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁵⁶Dr. I. Wolfsberg, “Remarks about Pacifism,” *Ba-Mishor* (January 25, 1940), p. 6.

⁵⁷Rabbi Binyamin, “Something,” *Moznaim*, 12 (Spring 1941), pp. 385–386.

of holiness, a war of life, a war of honor”, “the central idea in Jewish life today.”⁵⁸

In contrast, “*a kosher mess hall, home and country, the Jewish exclusivity of the flag and the unit—all of these begin only after the defeat of Ashmadai*”⁵⁹ [emphasis added]. Rabbi Binyamin proposed that the issue of volunteering,be thoroughly studied, under three premises: (1) rejection of any thought and action that serves no real purpose in the current effort, i.e., defeating Nazism; (2) the Yishuv’s potential contribution to this struggle of titans should not be disparaged. An additional 10,000 Jewish soldiers from Palestine could tip the scales in the direction of victory at the crucial moment; (3) every Jewish man and woman should participate in the war effort and should pledge all physical and mental forces and all spiritual and material possessions to this all-out struggle. Jews should willingly cede possessions to the families of those who were mobilized and concern themselves with the fate of the soldiers and their families. If the awakening does not come from above, from the leadership, then it must come from below.⁶⁰ Evaders should be neither forgiven nor absolved. Evasion is the epitome of selfishness, an escape from the Jewish fraternity, and a desecration of God’s name, Rabbi Binyamin warned.⁶¹

Advocacy of unconditional mobilization was unusual at the beginning the war. At that point, specifically Jewish-national mobilization was emphasized. In June 1940, the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee declared its concurrence with the demands of the Zionist movement and the Yishuv from the British government, “to allow the Jewish people to participate with its strength and might as *a people* for the triumph of good, and to allow the Jewish Yishuv to defend this country....”⁶²

⁵⁸Idem., “*Be-hitnadev ‘am* (Mobilization in the Yishuv As It Is—and As It Should Be),” *Ha-hed*, Year 17, a-b (Autumn 1942), p. 13.

⁵⁹Rabbi Binyamin, “Something,” *Moznaim*, 12 (Spring 1941), pp. 385–386.

⁶⁰Rabbi Binyamin, “Remarks about Mobilization,” *Ba-meitsar*, pp. 107–113.

⁶¹Rabbi Binyamin, “At This Time of Jewish Suffering,” remarks at a conference of Hebrew writers in Jerusalem, July 12–13, 1942, *Moznaim*, 14 (August 1942), pp. 378–380; *ibid.*, “On the Writers’ Conference and Its Results,” remarks at writers’ gathering in Tel Aviv, July 1942, *ibid.*, 15 (September 1942), p. 69.

⁶²Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee Council—Political Resolutions, June 25, 1940; see Edelstein, “Religious Movements,” p. 78.

However, after the Nazi invasion of the Balkans, in the spring of 1941, the Jewish motive in general and the vengeance motive in particular began to stand out in the pro-mobilization arguments. Shlomo Zalman Shragai counseled:

“The Jewish people has a request: give us a chance to fight as a people and to avenge the blood of our sons and daughters, my sacred whom Hitler has befouled; give us a chance to fight as a people to destroy Hitler and his teachings!... The purpose of our participation in this war as the Jewish people is to stress and underscore the special cause for which the Jewish people should fight Hitler, his abominable doctrine, in which all nations acquiesced for many years and failed to halt the global Nazi plague as long as it afflicted us and our flesh only.”⁶³

A salient linkage between the fate of Jewry in occupied Europe and mobilization is also evident in Shragai’s response to an allegation raised at a meeting of the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee, i.e., that mobilization might lead to tougher measures against the Jews in the Nazi-occupied countries. “If word about the Jewish army were to slip into Polish Jewry, it would raise the Jews’ morale,” he argued.⁶⁴

From then on, the movement newspapers and the debates within the movement institutions were increasingly vehement in stressing the direct relationship between the mobilization movement and the Jewish catastrophe. In April 1942, the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee proclaimed:

“In this war of *mitzvah* against the world’s greatest tormentors and villains, the gravity of this moment in the world, as the enemy stands at the gates of our country, *the voice of the blood of our brethren, being savaged throughout the Diaspora*, it is a Jewish and Zionist imperative for all of us to make the effort to

⁶³Shlomo Zalman Shragai, *Processes of Change and Redemption* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1959 (chapter on “Zionist Tension—Unlike the Other Nations,” April 1941), p. 41.

⁶⁴Meeting of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee, May 13, 1941, Religious – Zionist Archives, Bar-Ilan University(RZA-BIU), file 93; see Edelstein, “Religious Movements,” p. 87.

mobilize all Jewish forces in this country, including members of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi, to fight in the war campaigns of all kinds...."⁶⁵ [emphasis added].

The Central Committee resolutions, published a short time later, honed this view of the war as

"...a war of the people of the prophets of truth and righteousness, the bearers of faith and ethics in the world, against the dominion of evil and malice and the filth of idolatry, which has risen to lay waste to man's world and, foremost, to destroy, massacre, and exterminate God's people.[This is what makes mobilization] *a great and sacred imperative ... an unconditional duty, a general duty, national-religious, Jewish and human, that applies in particular to every person of religious outlook, to carry out with the utmost devotion*"⁶⁶ [italics added].

Pursuant to this position, Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi, which had opposed sanctions thus far, decided to follow the Histadrut's lead and require its members to mobilize on the basis of the National Institutions' call-up orders, on pain of expulsion from its ranks.⁶⁷

In late 1941, after the Yishuv received grim reports about the fate of East European Jewry following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Rabbi Berlin also began to stress the nexus of mobilization and the Jewish catastrophe. "We are sworn, and we rise from the depths of our Jewish passion, to pledge our forces to bring the day of revenge and retribution nearer," he asserted.⁶⁸ In the summer of 1942, as the battles on the Egyptian front ceased temporarily, he clarified that the main duty of mobilization did not pertain to that front:

⁶⁵World Central Committee, *Bulletin*, April 20, 1942; meeting of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee, May 12–13, 1942, *ibid.*, p. 152. As for the movement's press, see, for example, "The Mobilization," *Ba-mishor* 93 (January 2, 1942).

⁶⁶See resolutions of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee on mobilization, *Hatsofe*, May 17, 1942, and Rabbi Berlin's article the next day.

⁶⁷See Yoav Gelber, *Volunteering and Its Role in Zionist and Yishuv Policy 1939–1942* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: 1979), p. 538. Rabbi Fishman, in the Jewish Agency Executive, and Rabbi Berlin and Shragai, in the Va'ad Leummi Executive, always opposed sanctions against evaders.

⁶⁸B. [R. Meir Berlin], "The Outcry of Blood and the Shout of Rescue," *Hatsofe*, December 3, 1941; *ibid.*, "The Voice of Our Brethren's Blood," *Hatsofe*, January 11, 1942.

“The main thing [is] that there is a great and horrific enemy ... and this enemy is venting his spleen against the myriads of our brethren, snared between his tentacles in all the countries he has occupied.... There is no greater desecration of God’s name than the ascendancy of this villain, this Satan on earth, and his victory, perish the thought, will mean the obliteration of Jewry. And there is no greater sanctification of God’s name than the defeat of this villain and the extirpation of the Hitlerist defilement in the world.”⁶⁹

Not only did Rabbi Berlin favor immediate mobilization and urge the religious community to stand at the forefront of those calling on themselves and others to take part, but he also agreed to dispatch some of those who were mobilized to a front outside Palestine.

The fact that these personalities emphasized the mobilization-Holocaust nexus does not mean that they had abandoned the expectation of postwar political and security gains for having been mobilized. This expectation, enunciated vaguely in a broadsheet of the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee in April 1942, was expressed more clearly in internal discussions. As far back as 1941, Rabbi Fishman emphasized that “our dream of a Jewish country and [our] future demands” were important elements in the mobilization calculations.⁷⁰ At a meeting of the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee in May 1942, Shapira made it clear that his movement “regarded Jewish mobilization as the future army and a future political fact.”⁷¹

Thus, at this stage, the movement’s stalwarts expressed various motives for mobilization but did not contest the basic need to mobilize and to compromise on the terms of the mobilization, such as stipulations concerning service in Palestine only and matters related to *kashrut* (kosher food). Several publications, foremost by Edelstein, devoted lengthy discussion to the *kashrut* problem as one of the obstacles to induction into the British Army.⁷²

⁶⁹Ibid., “Valorously to God’s Assistance,” *Hatsofe*, August 2, 1942.

⁷⁰Meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, October 26, 1941, CZA, Minutes.

⁷¹Meeting of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee, May 12–13, 1942, RZA, BIU, File 93.

⁷²Edelstein, “Religious Movements,” pp. 75–87, 149–160; Cohen, “Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi,” pp. 116–126.

Here I would like to address myself to a small aspect of the issue—the primacy of mobilization in the eyes of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi activists, despite their many misgivings. After the National Institutions issued a general mobilization order for single men aged twenty to thirty in May 1941—coinciding with the threat of a German invasion of Palestine—the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee urged the movement’s members to defend the homeland by enlisting in all branches of service. Mizrahi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi also pressured the Chief Rabbinate to make an explicit pro-mobilization statement despite the reservations. Although the Chief Rabbinate refrained from doing so, the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi mobilization committee resolved in November of that year to impose sanctions on draft-dodging members--depriving them of the right to work. In a lecture before the Eighth Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi Convention in February 1942, Isaiah Bernstein stressed that,

“...we should be the first in this war, even by offering up our lives, lest we stumble by consuming forbidden foods.... If there were such an atmosphere, no one would interfere with the mobilization; women and mothers would personally send their sons to the front. Since there is no such atmosphere, there are all sorts of possibilities of draft-dodging on religious grounds.”⁷³

Shragai seconded this line and added, “even by being willing to forfeit their share in the afterworld.”⁷⁴ When the danger of a German invasion of Palestine resurfaced in the second half of 1942, both Mizrahi and the Chief Rabbinate prodded to treat the mobilization with greater celerity. In a meeting at the home of Chief Rabbi Herzog, a committee was elected to help observant soldiers by supplying kosher food and religious appurtenances. At that time, *Hatsofe* reported that the sons of the chief rabbi of Haifa, Yehoshua Kaniel, and of Mizrahi leaders Daniel Syrkis and Prof. Hayyim Pick had enlisted. Additional Mizrahi leaders, including Rabbi Moshe Ostrovsky (Hameiri) and

⁷³Remarks at the Eighth Conference, RZA-BIU, Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi, File 226.

⁷⁴See Edelstein, “Religious Movements,” p. 153.

David Zvi Pinkas, stressed that the demand for kashrut in the army was not grounds for draft evasion.⁷⁵

The Second Half of the War

How did the National Institutions' statement, in November 1942, about the existence of a plan for the systematic extermination of the Jews affect the movement's attitude toward mobilization? It transpires that the mobilization slogan, "To the ghetto destroyers' companies!"—which was popular at this time among soldiers and advocates of mobilization in the Yishuv—had also made inroads among Religious Zionists. Rabbi Berlin explained that since the extent of the enemy's brutality and corruption had become clear, the lust for revenge had escalated many times over: "We must transform all the rage in our hearts, all the fury that kindles inside us, into one tremendous force of vengeance brigades against our mortal enemies, the murderers of our brothers and sisters, our elderly, and our children."⁷⁶

Hatsofe stated that the cause of Jewish mobilization in Eretz Israel had become a national mission of the highest and most sacred order. "To liberate our afflicted brethren and smash their prison walls is not only a duty but also a great privilege, for which no sacrifice is too dear."⁷⁷ However, Rabbi Fishman—a consistent opponent of the departure of Jewish brigades from Palestine—protested the use of the "destroying-the-ghettos" slogan and warned that "one must not use disasters for propaganda."⁷⁸

Nevertheless, his position did not reflect the spirit of the movement. Yoav Gelber states that even as general mobilization in the Yishuv declined, the reports about the Holocaust led to an awakening in National Religious circles in late 1942 and early 1943. Members of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi, who

"...as individuals were the vanguard of volunteering among the Orthodox, now attempted to transform volunteering into a prescriptive religious precept in every sense and to induce the national institutions to recognize the need to

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 155–156.

⁷⁶B., "To Grieve and Mourn, to Rescue and Avenge!" *Hatsofe*, November 25, 1942.

⁷⁷"On Our War Agenda: The Ghetto Destroyers' Companies," *ibid.*, November 25, 1942.

⁷⁸Meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, November 29, 1942, CZA, Minutes. See also Gelber, *Volunteering*, p. 688.

find a setting that would permit the maintenance of the religious way of life to the greatest possible extent.”⁷⁹

In December 1942, although the *kashrut* problem had not yet been fully resolved, a conference of rabbis to encourage mobilization took place. Chief Rabbi Amiel of Tel Aviv stressed the duty of the Orthodox to carry on in the tradition of the Hasmoneans:

“When [the Jews] ask God to avenge the blood of his servants, they must be worthy of saying, “We did our duty.”... Religious Jewry should set an example for others and should follow the path of the Hasmoneans, who embodied the verse, “with paeans to God in their throats and double-edged swords in their hands.”⁸⁰

Sephardi Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Ouziel added another perspective. He protested the doubt embedded in the question, “What power have we got?” “On the contrary, each one of us must know that if he cooperates, our power will grow.... We have to realize that the enemy’s defeat and our deliverance will come not by power but by the spirit of God, Who alone will give us the power to fight the enemy.”⁸¹

At the same conference, Pinkas, a Mizrachi activist, urged the Orthodox to mobilize for the war and then solve the question of *kashrut* once they were there. “If we have large religious companies, kosher mess halls will be created for them,” he argued. Shragai stipulated that “ the war against Amalek is God’s war; those who side with God are summoned to fight it. Therefore, there is no question about religious and non-religious [inductees].”⁸² The Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi activists people continued to urge the rabbinate to come out explicitly in favor of mobilization, notwithstanding the halakhic inhibitions:

⁷⁹Yoav Gelber, *The Struggle for a Jewish Army*(Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi,, 1981), , p. 53.

⁸⁰ “Conference of Rabbis to Encourage Mobilization,” *Hatsofe*, December 9, 1942. In the matter of Rabbi Amiel’s stance, see Eshkoli, “Religious Zionist Responses in Mandatory Palestine to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 11(2) (Fall 1997), pp.213-238.

⁸¹ “Conference of Rabbis to Encourage Mobilization,” *Hatsofe*, December 9, 1942.

⁸² Ibid.

“A more visible initiative by the leading rabbis in this matter would make the Torah camp more respected and sizable. *Since we have rules that guide us in respect to saving an individual’s life ... is there no way to find halakhic support for action to save our afflicted, captive nation?* There is no need to desecrate the Sabbath and allow [the soldiers] to eat non-kosher food due to silliness. Instead, at this fateful hour, the greatest authorities of the generation should teach the young Orthodox Jews ... what may and may not be done.... The cause of the nation, its future, its fate, and its life—depend on this decision”⁸³ [italics added].

In March 1943, after the observance of *kashrut* in military mess halls was arranged and the chief rabbis issued a broadsheet to the Yishuv to enlist in the Jewish brigades “wholeheartedly and willingly,”⁸⁴ Rabbi Berlin again noted the special duty of religious Jewry, as the standard bearers of God’s Torah, to mobilize:

“It is this traditional Jewry, this eternal Jewry, that has set the noble example of utmost devotion and self-sacrifice in the sanctification of God’s name in all of the most difficult eras in our history for thousands of years—and it is only natural and correct that [this Jewry] will spearhead the holy war that is taking place today....”⁸⁵

Rabbi Berlin was disappointed to find that religious Jewry was not participating in the mobilization enterprise at the expected level in view of the spiritual aspect of the matter and the tradition of the forefathers. Thus, he praised the Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi stance, which stipulated from the outset that, “Hurdles must be overcome and fought continually and indefatigably until they are eliminated, but the matter is so great and holy that no difficulties, even

⁸³I. Wolfsberg (Aviad), “[Remarks] about the Mobilization,” *Hatsofe*, February 18, 1943.

⁸⁴Broadsheet by Rabbis Herzog and Ouziel: “Arise and Awaken for the Holy War,” *ibid.*, March 1, 1943. See also the call of the Chief Rabbinate of Tel Aviv and Jaffa to mobilize for a compulsory war against the Jews’ enemies, *ibid.*, April 9, 1943. The Chief Rabbinate declared Saturday, March 27, 1943, as “Jewish Mobilization Sabbath” in Tel Aviv. See Gelber, *Struggle for a Jewish Army*, p. 55.

⁸⁵B., “Wholeheartedly and Willingly,” *Hatsofe*, March 2, 1943

spiritual, may serve as a pretext for inaction.”⁸⁶ Now that conditions that refuted the anti-mobilization rationales had been created, Rabbi Berlin called for new momentum among observant Jews for this obligatory (*mitzvah*) war.

In May 1943, as relations between the National Institutions and the government of Palestine deteriorated in the aftermath of the search of the Jewish induction offices, it was decided to deactivate the offices. Concurrently, as the direct involvement of Palestine in the war seemed to be approaching its end, some Yishuv leaders again linked mobilization with the Yishuv’s struggle against the authorities and considered this a major issue that overshadowed other war-related considerations. Ben-Gurion preferred to keep the offices shuttered as a matter of principle, and in this he had Rabbi Fishman’s backing.⁸⁷

In the summer of 1943, when the British ordered the Jewish units to ship out from Palestine, Rabbi Fishman adhered consistently to the position he had developed out of the principles in which he believed. While Ben-Gurion advocated obeying this order, only Rabbi Fishman demanded that the soldiers be instructed to disobey.⁸⁸ Syrakis demanded that the mobilization for the British forces be suspended and that only an internal induction be considered. At a meeting of the Zionist General Council, he explained two reasons for this action. The first was national dignity; submission thus far, he said, had been unrequited. The second was national interest—concern for the Yishuv’s security after the war in view of the Arab ferment and a British hostility that would impede the return of the inducted men to Palestine at the crucial moment. “*Shouldn’t we now take care of ourselves first of all and forget the Hitler patriotism?* [emphasis added]. Why should we give more today after this goring and spitting in our faces?” he protested.⁸⁹ Shragai, in contrast, argued that there was no Zionist rationale for halting the mobilization, even for reasons of dignity.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, May 9, 1943; see also Gelber, *Struggle for a Jewish Army*, p. 70.

⁸⁸Gelber, *ibid.*, pp. 87, 202.

⁸⁹Meeting of Inner Zionist General Council, June 24, 1943, CZA, S 25/298; May 18, 1943, *ibid.*, S 25/297.

If the purpose of induction is to meet the government's wishes—very well, we've got to go away. But if it is a national enterprise—then all the hurdles that the government has placed in our path cannot force us to stop the activity.... The demands and claims that we will make at the end of the war, the whole thing is related not only to mobilization for the Jewish auxiliary police but also, and in the main, for the army.⁹⁰

Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi had adopted a similar decision the day before. In fact, Rabbi Berlin also believed that the induction operation should resume.⁹¹ In the summer of 1943, tension on the Middle East front eased, and the flow of inductees also ebbed because of the relations with the mandatory government. At that time, he emphasized again that only for the Jewish people should the Yishuv pledge its full mental and material resources in this war. Although there were many ways of reckoning the matter, the one total reckoning was the simplest: "The war is continuing and it is ours. It pertains to what is dearest to us."⁹²

The announcement of the British War Cabinet, in September 1944, concerning the formation of a "Jewish Brigade" that would serve at the front was greeted skeptically in the Yishuv. Some thought it pointless to discuss a combat formation with the end of the war in sight. Rabbi Fishman decried all of the government's negotiations in this matter as mocking the poor. "Instead, we should fight for our political resurrection," he declared. Shapira, on the other hand, stressed the Jewish moral achievement:

"If they send our boys to serve as a corps in an occupation army in Germany, it would be a great thing. We're always talking about war against the Germans. For the Germans—in Germany itself—it would be a severe moral blow to see Jewish soldiers circulating in the streets of Berlin wearing the Star of David.... If the unit were created only to participate in the conquest of Germany, it would suffice for us."⁹³

⁹⁰Ibid., June 24, 1943.

⁹¹Rabbi Berlin, "[Remarks] About Opening the Induction Bureaus," *Hatsofe*, June 28, 1943.

⁹²B., "Plainly Speaking," *ibid.*, August 13, 1943. In this article, Rabbi Berlin quoted the remarks of a Jewish soldier at an induction rally in Haifa.

⁹³Meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, September 3, 1944, CZA, Minutes.

Rabbi Berlin also lauded the important turning point in the Jews' status but stressed the Jewish statehood aspect as well:

"We are worthy and deserving of being recognized and known in our struggle, in our own image, as *the fighting Jewish people* And we hope there will be a continuation—full recognition of our national rights, the restoration of our dignity and political status as an equally entitled people among the nations."⁹⁴

Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi did not content itself with statements. Its institutions decided to impose tougher controls on those liable for induction, to take measures against evaders, and to follow through urgently on induction in the movement's circles.⁹⁵

Despite the passionate mobilization propaganda and the upturn in activity starting in early 1943, the actual religious-Zionist response fell far short of the level needed to establish a religious company. In the month following the chief rabbis' pronouncement, in late February 1943, only forty new volunteers reported.⁹⁶ They joined the 700–800 members of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi who had joined the British army by the end of November 1942, among more than 18,000 volunteers from the Yishuv as a whole.⁹⁷

It is of interest to compare the religious-Zionist attitude toward mobilization with that of the ultra-Orthodox, non-Zionist Agudat Israel and Po'alei Agudat Israel. When the war broke out, both movements urged their members to volunteer to help Britain in accordance with the goals set forth by the Zionist Executive. In conjunction with Mizrachi/Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi, they sought to create a separate religious company that would facilitate maintaining a religious way of life with regard to the Sabbath, kosher food, etc. However, unlike Mizrachi/Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi, which continued to struggle for a "kosher" mobilization, Agudat Israel rescinded its participation in the induction activities as soon as it realized that the National Institutions were not taking

⁹⁴B., "Jewish Brigade," *Hatsofe*, September 21, 1944.

⁹⁵Resolutions of Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrachi Central Committee, January 22, 1945, CZA, S 25/2083.

⁹⁶Regarding mobilization activity among the religious, see "Mobilization Action in Religious Circles," *Hatsofe*, April 4, 1943; see also Gelber, *Struggle for a Jewish Army*, p. 56.

⁹⁷"Hebrew Soldiers in the Libyan Campaigns!" *Hatsofe*, November 12, 1942; see also Edelstein, "Religious Movements," p. 160.

these demands seriously. However, it repeatedly expressed its willingness to offer the British government full assistance in its war against the Nazis, since this was an obligatory war in defense of the Jewish people,⁹⁸ and it required its members to contribute to a relief chest for the “Hebrew soldier.”

A turnabout of sorts occurred in the second half of 1942, when the danger of a German invasion of Palestine mounted. Then Agudat Israel and Po’alei Agudat Israel explored the possibility of having members enlist in the Jewish auxiliary police, where it would be easier to maintain a religious way of life. The World Executive Committee of Agudat Israel-Po’alei Agudat Israel favored the motion, and it was approved by the movement’s prominent rabbis: the Hazon Ish, the Gerrer *Rebbe*, and Rabbis Meltzer, Dushinsky, and Soloveitchik. Several dozen members of these movements, mostly from Po’alei Agudat Israel, subsequently joined coast guard companies. A few other young ultra-Orthodox Jews joined the army on an individual basis. Several ultra-Orthodox rabbis, including Dushinsky and Jacob Friedman, favored military induction. Others, including Dr. Isaac Breuer, one of Agudah’s leaders, preferred to wait for the government to promulgate a compulsory draft law.⁹⁹

Conclusions

The attitude of Religious Zionism toward the mobilization issue was complex and diverse. Generally speaking, in the first half of the war, two camps were discernible. One was represented by the leaders of Mizrachi, Rabbis Berlin and Fishman, who lent absolute primacy to the Zionist interest in Eretz Israel and opposed any debarkation of Jewish combat formations from the country. The second camp, headed by the leaders of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi—Shapira, Shragai, and Wolfsberg—took an approach that was more pragmatic yet also Jewish-ethical, i.e., that the forces should be divided between the Palestinian and the western fronts. As the influx of reports about the extermination of

⁹⁸Edelstein, pp. 76–77, 85.

⁹⁹In this matter, see *ibid.*, pp. 161–164. See also Moshe Blau, “Brief Survey of Activities of the Agudat Israel Central Committee in Palestine, Sivan [Spring] 1941–Sivan [Spring] 1944,” *Agudat Israel in Palestine in View of the Holocaust* (Hebrew), Ph.D. dissertation, Bar-Ilan University (in progress). Blau speaks of hundreds of ultra-Orthodox volunteers, but this estimate is inaccurate. I thank Haim Shalem for making this document available to me.

European Jewry gained more and more credence, the “Jewish motive” became more forceful among the pro-mobilization advocates.

Rabbi Berlin, thus, acquiesced at that time with regard to removing forces from Palestine. Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi augmented the enthusiastic mobilization propaganda with vigorous organizational action meant to enable religious soldiers more easily to maintain their traditional way of life. However, by the time practical arrangements were concluded with the authorities and the Chief Rabbinate officially came out in favor of mobilization, the danger of an invasion of Palestine and the peak period of mobilization had passed. Thus, we find a large discrepancy between the ideological fervor and scope of the religious-Zionist mobilization propaganda and the actual mobilization: the movement membership, which accounted for 15 percent of the population of the Yishuv, in fact generated about 5 percent of the volunteers.

An examination of the attitudes of Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi in comparison to those of the ruling party, Mapai, reveals some interesting findings. In the matter of mobilization, at first the Mizrachi leadership took a rigid Yishuv-centric approach, as did the leaders of the Histadrut and Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad, while the heads of the National Institutions—Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi—took a more compromising approach. The latter, for example, were willing to send a unit flying the colors of Eretz Israel to the western front. The leaders of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi, in contrast, took a pragmatic, Jewish-ethical position from the outset, similar to that of Ha-Po’el ha-Za’ir and the Mapai (Labor) World Union.

A somewhat similar distinction was evident with regard to the statehood issue. The Mizrachi leaders, like those of the Jewish Agency Executive in general, initially advocated a focus on Zionist activity, while the heads of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi—like Ha-Po’el ha-Za’ir and the Mapai World Union—believed it the duty of Zionism, among its other tasks, to deal with the problem of the postwar entitlements of Diaspora Jewry. Interestingly, Mizrachi—whose main hinterland was in the Diaspora and before the war had attributed greater importance to religious educational activity among Jews there—adopted a more rigidly Yishuv-centric approach during the war than that of Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi, which included a strong element of negation of the Diaspora in its

ideology.¹⁰⁰ This may be instructive as to how little the concept of “negation of the Diaspora,” in itself, may indicate actual indifference toward and estrangement from the Jewish presence outside of Eretz Israel.

Messianic fervor—in tandem with a realistic Zionist policy, which sought to exploit the political circumstances of World War II in order to promote the Zionist cause—placed Religious Zionism at the forefront of the camp that struggled to create a Jewish state in Palestine. Whereas, Mapai was torn between Ben-Gurion’s synthesis of the political and the practical, and the extreme practical approach of Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad (which split into separate factions for this reason), Mizrachi and Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi maintained a broad and stable consensus on the statehood issue. In this matter—unlike on the induction issue—Mizrachi’s position was in total contrast to that of Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad and the Left generally. In this respect, the leaders of Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi fully sided with Ben-Gurion. They promoted and supported his policy and even attempted to advance it by means of the ideology and the special tools of Religious Zionism.

The preference in Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi of the cause of redemption over the cause of rescue affected the movement’s general rescue policy, of course. However, this preference did not make the movement indifferent to the fate of European Jewry and did not make it shirk from assistance and rescue actions. Instead, it was an expression of acquiescence in a divine process coupled with sober political vision. As Krona said, “The relief and rescue plans are but one chapter in the plans for full redemption.”¹⁰¹

Within the ambit of this chapter, Mizrachi/Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrachi criticized the modus operandi of the leadership in certain fields, fashioned a singular religious rescue policy, attempted to promote various relief and rescue actions on behalf of the Yishuv, and, especially, to take care of its members—an

¹⁰⁰See Eliezer Don Yihye, “Religious Zionism and Questions of Immigration and Immigrant Absorption in the Yishuv,” in Devora Hachohen, ed., *Ingathering of the Exiles — Jewish Immigration to Palestine—Myth and Reality* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: 1998), especially pp. 81–84.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

issue that cannot be discussed at length here.¹⁰² Essentially, by the imperative of its faith and under the circumstances in which the Yishuv found itself during the war, the Mizrachi movement did not consider itself and the Yishuv to be main players with regard to responsibility for relief and rescue. On the other hand, when it came to the issue of “redemption,” it believed that no other redeemers existed.

Translated from the Hebrew by Naftali Greenwood

Source: *Yad Vashem Studies* Vol. 29, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 281- 320.

¹⁰²In this matter, see Hava Eshkoli, “Religious Zionism faces of the Holocaust: The Activities of Ha-Brit Ha-Olamit Torah va-Avodah” (Hebrew), *Cathedra* 76 (1995), pp. 147–172; Eshkoli, *Religious Zionism in Eretz Israel in View of the Holocaust* (Hebrew, in press).