

## Reform Judaism Grapples with Zionism

**T**he problem of most Zionist publications is four-fold: a) They concentrate on Israel political events over which Diaspora Jews have little input, i.e., the Israel-Palestinian peace process; this avoids their dealing with the *real* issues affecting Zionism throughout the world, including the purpose and meaning of Diaspora Zionism, other than to express standard pro-Israel sentiments. (How do Diaspora Zionists differ from other pro-Israel Jews?) b) Their articles are by-and-large descriptive in nature and saccarine in taste. They portray Israel in non-critical, quasi-propagandistic terms. Doesn't the Jewish state have *any* problems of Jewish significance that Diaspora Jews should share? c) Most magazines are merely self-serving house organs that report on and praise their own pro-Israel activities; (they rarely present issues affecting *klal yisrael*). d) Zionist publications hardly reflect a cross-section of thoughtful readers on ideological issues, thereby avoiding fresh thinking and analytical evaluation, but prefer instead to spoon-feed and talk-down to their memberships.

Of all the current publications emanating from political parties in the World Zionist Organization, *The Journal of Reform Zionism*, put out by *Arza* (Reform Judaism's political faction in the WZO), is the most impressive. The magazine's first two issues reflect a refreshing candor not found in other Zionist periodicals. They convey a genuine effort to begin re-evaluating Reform Judaism in light of the sovereign Jewish nation-state in Eretz Yisrael, and set a worthy precedent for critical self-assessment by other groups and their journals.

While it may be true that the positions taken by the several writers in the *Journal* do not reflect a majority of Reform rabbis, and certainly not of the laity, the mere fact that a group of distinguished leaders sees fit to question the current state of Reform Judaism primarily within the Zionist context, augurs well for a change in direction of a vital Diaspora constituency. Non-Reform Jews have many fundamental differences with Reform Judaism, and with the policies of *Arza* within the framework of the WZO, but on the intellectual plane of Zionism, they may have much to learn from some of the viewpoints expressed in *Arza's* magazine. Most non-Reform Jews have no real notion of the ferment within Reform ranks, and *AVAR ve'ATID* has seen fit to present several aspects of this self-evaluation.

## PROFESSORS MEYER AND ELLENSON SET THE TONE

The papers by Michael Meyer, Professor of Jewish History at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati, and David Ellenson, Professor of Jewish Religious Thought at the Los Angeles campus, are landmarks in the development of Reform thinking about Judaism and Zionism. Meyer bemoans the fact that while the Reform denomination in Israel has only some 5,000 members (.125 percent of the Jewish population), and that the world movement must invest massively in its growth, "the real test is our ability to turn passive Israeli sympathizers into active adherents.... Yet, if our kind of Zionism is eventually to succeed, we require classification of its principles and goals.... We require an ideology.... embedded in Reform Judaism — [i.e.] the Jewish legitimacy of various interpretations of Judaism, the linkage of social ethics with religious practice, and the humane use of political and military power." Arza differs from the mainstream of Reform Judaism, he claims, in its "greater emphasis upon the Jewish people than the Jewish person, that is, on the ethnic survival of the Jews rather than on the spiritual needs of the individual...."

Meyer goes on to shock his colleagues: "I am firmly persuaded that a Zionism that gives up the idea of exile (*galut*) remains superficial.... Without a full sense of *galut*, Zionism cannot get beyond philanthropy, beyond doing things for other Jews.... Nothing so angered the early Reformers as the Zionist claim that America, too, was exile. And by the usual measures, it was not — and is not." Beyond persecution, which is not the American pattern, what then is *galut*, he asks?

America is *galut* because in at least one sense it is not our country.... [It] is not a country whose atmosphere is pervaded by Judaism, where the day of rest is Shabbat, where the national religious holidays are also our holidays. As for the separation of church and state, there is a sense in which the U.S. is a Christian country, a place where our Jewish souls dwell as exiles.... In its beneficent atmosphere, our numbers are destined to diminish.... It is gradually swallowing us up as Jews.... [It] fatally seduces us to cast our Jewishness into the blender of post-denominational society.... [and] amalgamate our Jewishness with other identities...

It is the sense of *galut* that makes us hope so fervently for *ge'ulah* (redemption). Indeed, it is that hope which makes *galut* bearable.... Is this redemption particular or is it universal? Is it of the Jews or of all humanity? There was a time in our movement when we would have said that the redemption of the Jews is merely part of the redemption of humanity.... Today, I think we can speak without

apology about our own particular redemption, which consists of building the earthly Zion. We can justly call individual acts of aliyah redemptive acts. For the Jewish people, the establishment of the State of Israel has been a collective act of redemption. But aliyah does not bring the *oleh* to complete redemption. Nor is the Jewish state its embodiment....The messianism which is the engine that drives us from *galut* to *ge'ulah* has not reached its goal. In the face of the fundamentalist fanaticism of some of our coreligionists in Israel, it is our task to stress that the Messiah has not yet come, even as we say to secularists that the idea of redemption has not lost its meaning....Our response to the messianic imperative is not apocalyptic fervor but the steady performance of divine commandments....Some mitzvot fall into the Zionist sphere....When we formulate a new platform for *Arza*, we shall need to enumerate Zionist duties as mitzvot...

Even as we do not yet live in the days of the Messiah, we do not yet live in an age when Israel can be our *merkaz ruhani*, the spiritual center of our existence....To say that Israel is our spiritual center would imply a degree of spiritual centrality that Israel has not yet achieved. Hence I suggest a different Hebrew term to describe the present reality, one which likewise suggests centrality. As Zionists, let us say that Israel is our *moked*, the "focal point" of our interest and concern. Indeed, we may see it as our task, through the performance of Zionist mitzvot, to help transform the focus, the *moked*, into the center, the *merkaz*.

Professor David Ellenson states unequivocally that "classical Reform understandings of religion may need to be reconsidered, as Reform Jews seek to comprehend the meaning of Zionism in Israel in a post-Holocaust world. Our affirmation of Reform Zionism may require a broader definition of religion than our ancestors would have offered, as well as a strong ideological base more attuned to the events of our century and the reality of a Jewish state." He claims that "Jewish nationalism has been accorded legitimacy by Reform only when it self-consciously acts in the service of some grander, more universal cause that 'transcends nationalism' with its 'dangerously parochial goals'". Nonetheless, asserts Ellenson,

...other parts of that universalistic legacy must be reconsidered. We need not be held in slavish obeisance to the ideals of nineteenth-century universalism. A new ideology, sensitive to but distinct....from the patrimony of the past, must be contemplated, and other theological currents need be explored as we seek to uncover and articulate

a contemporary ideological basis for the Reform movement's approach to Zion.... The confidence we formally had in the goodness of humanity, in the moral progress of civilization, must be tempered by the recognition that the human capacity for evil, as for goodness, is virtually infinite. Reform Judaism can no longer completely identify and assert its compatibility with the tenets of Western or any other civilization.... (The nationalism of our people can no longer be seen as distinct from our religion.... Religion and peoplehood are inseparable and intertwined.) .... Our ideological basis.... must move us beyond our Reform ancestors' universalism.... The monism of universalism must be rejected. Our Zionism must be built upon the dialectical foundations of universalism and particularism, and the interplay between them.

### RESPONSES OF COLLEAGUES

**W. Gunther Plaut** of Toronto, Canada, a former president of the CCAR, and the editor and principal author of *The Torah — A Modern Commentary*, shares Michael Meyer's pessimism regarding the future of Diaspora Jewry. While protesting the image of Reform Judaism's "blocking the parade of assimilation", but recognizing that Reform includes "a temporary catch basin for people already on the way to full assimilation", Plaut asserts:

But we are not the cause of their defection. On the contrary, we stop the bleeding. Perhaps we don't do it as effectively as we might, but the incontrovertible fact is that many Jews have remained Jews because of us. Without us the process of assimilation would have exacted a far greater toll, for with freedom comes the danger of assimilation. Still, Professor Meyer's statement should caution our movement with regard to the kind of inclusiveness that makes Reform so broad that Judaism is diluted beyond recognition. [Nonetheless], while it is likely that we Diaspora Jews should be much diminished in numbers, we shall also have a core of individuals who have a high intensity level of Jewish commitment. They will be part of the *sh'erit yisrael* [the saving remnant] which Isaiah prophesied 2800 years ago.

Plaut advocates a pilgrimage to Israel by Reform Jews "at least once in one's lifetime" as fulfilling a genuine mitzvah, and urges the founding of more Reform day-schools. He sees the current Reform approach in Israel as futile: "Congregations built on the North American model are not working in Israel. They have limited appeal and will never touch the masses.... Instead

we should pour money into a truly missionary movement that is open in its attempt to win over Israelis to a different form of living and believing.”

Rabbi **Herbert Bronstein** of Glencoe (Illinois) and editor of *The Passover Haggadah* published by the CCAR, emphasized the need to project the “particularist Jewish *religious expression*”, that is, Saadia Gaon’s definition of Jewish identity — “We are a people by virtue of Torah” — that has been conspicuously absent among contemporary Jews.

And among Reform Jews in particular, there has been an even further vitiation of the substance of Jewish identity. Through their sacrifice of the sense of mitzvah — “obligation”, “ought” — on the altar of personal autonomy and self-fulfillment, Reform Jews have lost both solid substance and, as Dr. Meyer puts it, the “borders” that have in the past provided strength, commitment and continuity to Jewish identity.

By contrast, in Meyer’s ideology, “both Reform (by which we might imply autonomy, choice, progressivism) and Zionism (which we might interpret as the ethnic national component) are subsumed under the encompassing mandates and imperatives of Judaism, with Torah and mitzvot as the core.... The ultimate enterprise is not *tziyonut*, ‘Zionism’, but rather ‘*tzion*’, Zion as a religious ideal, as the goal of every redemptive mitzvah.”

In a revised paper, first presented in September 1994, **Eugene B. Borowitz**, Professor of Education and Jewish Religious Thought at HUC-JIR in New York, asserts that

Peoplehood seems to me a subsidiary, not a primary force. When however we believe God is involved with our people....and we know we serve God as members of that particular group, then our ethnicity takes on a special dignity and power!....The intensity of one’s Reform Zionism is directly correlated to the importance one religiously attaches to the people of Israel....Because our folk is still called to serve God, it must survive and, in our world, national sovereignty has become critical to doing so. That makes us Zionists, religious Zionists. And now political sovereignty has, for the first time in two millennia, given us the opportunity to effectuate God’s demand for social righteousness in our own, self-determined, collective life.

Borowitz continues: “Although...I do not view the State of Israel as central to my Jewish existence — and I don’t know many Diaspora Jews for whom it is — I believe that we must make the State of Israel a vital part of Reform Jewish consciousness. I do not think it is such at present for

our rabbis (and certainly not for most lay people)... The people of Israel survived in Covenant faithfulness for two millennia without a state and, may God spare us such a challenge, we could, with God's help, do so again."

Rabbi **Stanley Lewis** of Atlanta (Georgia), the convener of the first meetings of Reform Judaism's Zionist think-tank, opined that "Zionism today is more a series of bureaucratic structures than it is an ideological movement. Thus, the ideal of Zionism has become of lesser concern to most Jews than the role of the Zionist apparatus...."

**Rabbi David Lilienthal** of Amsterdam, Holland:

I am under the distinct impression that Reform Jews and Reform rabbis... care more about the immediate satisfaction of the demands of... individuals... than about the needs of the Jewish community and the long-term effects of their actions.... It seems as if parts of U.S. Reform Judaism have given up the effort to fight the growth of intermarriage, and instead have chosen to further blur or totally eradicate the lines of separation of Jews and non-Jews by following a course of action that may ultimately lead to communal suicide. The State of Israel is, or could be, one of our prime expressions of the Jewish particularism that is so needed to counterbalance this extreme American Reform Jewish universalism.

Rabbi **Ammiel Hirsch**, Executive Director of *Arza*, in his introduction to the first issue of the *Journal*, a paper delivered before the CCAR Zionist Think-Tank of 56 participants in November 1994, perceptively said: "... in developing a religious philosophy on Zionism, it quickly became evident that the very foundations of Reform Judaism itself have to be re-evaluated."

Rabbi **Ira Youdavin**, Executive Director of *Arza* from 1977 to 1984, and now senior rabbi at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York City: "For me the real work of the Reform Zionist Think-Tank is not in defending a Reform Judaism for the 1990s, but inspiring the entire Reform movement to redefine a Reform Judaism for the 21st century."

**Rabbi Dov Marmor** of Toronto:

The endeavor to formulate Reform Zionism today is very much a reflection of the struggle of Reform Judaism to move from modernity to post-modernism, from the age of the Enlightenment in the aftermath of the French Revolution to the age of Jewish sovereignty in the aftermath of the Holocaust.... In their belief in human reason and human perfectibility, many Jews [of the Enlightenment] saw the dawn of a new era that would revolutionize Judaism, and at

the same time consummate its noble ideals of *tikkun ha-olam*.... Reform Judaism [was shaped] in universalistic terms, in a spirit of great optimism.... [Today,] we are in search of a new paradigm... founded on the need to fuse universalism and particularism.... Even in the decades following the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, Reform Judaism continued to function largely as if neither ever had happened.... The new post-modern paradigm seeks to fuse the partial truths of Jewish universalism and Jewish nationalism into something new and different....

Marmor continued:

The first plank of such a platform should be to celebrate the new paradigm by adding the nationalist dimension to the universal stance of Reform... [and the second one is to meet] the threat of secularization of Jewish life in Israel....[which] constitutes a great danger for the survival of contemporary Jewry.... We may be in a position to stem the tide of this most insidious form of assimilation. But we will be heard and respected only when we have put our own house in order. Unless we set particularist boundaries for Reform Judaism, its demands for greater openness in the Jewish world will be heard as calls to legitimize assimilation.

To Marmor, Judaism should be understood as a triangle depicting faith, people, and land.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, recently appointed Executive Vice-President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and founding Executive Director of *Arza*, while admitting that "serious thinking about Zionism in Reform circles is very new", sees a greater affinity to Jewish nationalism and to lending "credibility to Jewish ritual...." He acknowledges that American Reform is

hardly inclined to theological or ideological introspection of any sort... [and what] serious Jewish thinking as occurs is hardly ever Zionist.... A major obstacle in developing Reform Zionist thought is the continuing inability of Reform Jews to come to grips with the reality of power.... Still, Zionists know that it is far better to be involved in a debate on how power is to be used in a sovereign Jewish state than it is to cope with being powerless in a dangerous world.... It is a contradiction in terms to talk about Reform Zionists who are squeamish of power.

Yoffie rejects any messianic elements in Zionism: "In historical terms, messianism has consistently been a highly destructive element, almost always

impossible to control." He furthermore casts doubts on Reform's affiliation with the World Zionist Organization: "I am afraid that if we continue in the WZO, we will be corrupted by it.... We must be open to the possibility [of severing] ourselves from the Zionist bureaucracy, or at least distanc[ing] ourselves from its workings."

## RETHINKING PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM AND JEWISH NATIONALISM

The most comprehensive viewpoint on Reform Judaism and Zionism is expressed by Rabbi Richard Hirsch, Executive Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, whose headquarters are in Jerusalem. In his several articles on the subject, published in different periodicals, he accuses many Reform Jews, including rabbis, of a conscious non-Zionist stance. He pointedly places the dimension of Jewish peoplehood on the same par as "belief," and the Land of Israel as "the setting for keeping the Covenant". For him, the return to the Jewish homeland "was inextricable from the messianic vision". The aim of creating there

a just society that would serve as a role model for all other societies.... *tikkun ha-olam*, is to be initiated by the people of Israel in the Land of Israel. *At'halta de-geulah* — the beginning of messianic redemption — is to start... in perpetuating the Jewish society in the land assigned to the Jews by God.... Modern Zionism was not initiated in order to grant equal opportunity for Jews as *individuals* but to assure equal rights to the Jews as a *people*.

To Hirsch, Zionism is not a danger, as expressed by other Reform rabbis who criticize Zionist chauvinism as an expression of messianism, but a "hope"; "without hope there is no Judaism.... Our tradition portrays two Jerusalems — terrestrial and celestial. With the advent of the messianic era, heavenly Jerusalem will descend and be established on earth."

Hirsch grapples with the subject of Jewish nationalism:

Jewish nationalism is radically different from all other nationalisms. All other nationalisms start with the struggle of a national grouping already living on ancestral soil and preserving an ancient heritage and language, to break the shackles of an occupying power. Starting with Abraham, Jewish nationalism called on Jews to leave the lands of their birth and move to the land of destiny.... Israel is the only state ever created by and from a Diaspora. No other state issues a call to those who left the national soil to return.... [In] every other state... the well-being of the state is the goal. No so the Jewish



state. The well-being of the Jewish people is the goal.... — the establishment [of Israel] is only the means to a goal and not the goal itself. The state was created not only for those who live in it, but also for the purpose of keeping alive the entire Jewish people and its heritage.

Rabbi Hirsch is critical of Reform Judaism's relationship with Zionism:

For how many of our Reform Jews is Zionism a motivating force in their lives, impacting on life commitments and behavior? To be sure, we can count a handful, but...that handful is not growing and in proportion to the increasing numbers of those identifying with Reform Judaism, is diminishing rapidly....Movements are grounded in positive convictions that move peoples' lives and shape their values and deeds. Otherwise, so called movements dissipate into organizations. If we wish to mobilize a movement worthy of the name *Reform Zionism*, then that movement must have a specific ideology....Our purpose should be not only to define Reform Zionism but to redefine Reform Judaism. Indeed, I contend that without redefining and reforming Reform Judaism, we cannot define Reform Zionism....Although the Reform movement in our days has moved quite far from the stance of classical Reform, we are still tied to its vocabulary and theological conceptualizations.

We have never fully accepted [for example], the consequences of Jewish peoplehood [which in the words of Abraham Geiger, a seminal figure in classical Reform: "The people of Israel no longer lives....It has been transformed into a community of faith"]. In a symposium sponsored by the CCAR in 1976 [one speaker approvingly] defined universalism as "that category of thought which tends to subordinate the distinctiveness of the Jewish people to the greater good of the general society, to minimize the distinctiveness of the Jewish people, to maximize that which it shares with other groups in society, or to put the survival of the Jewish people second to the survival of the general society." In my judgment, this definition is acceptable to the vast majority in the Reform Movement and can be found throughout the writings of our intellectual leadership to this day. For most Reform Jews, universalism connotes concern for non-Jews, and particularism [concern] for Jews....Universalism is deemed to be selfless and altruistic; particularism is portrayed as parochial concern for self and vested interests....The setting most conducive for universalism is the Diaspora; the setting for intense particularism is the State of Israel....Most Reform leaders would still contend that universalism is transcendent and quintessential, and

that particularism is somewhat secondary and of lesser value.... This Reform definition distorts the essence of Judaism. Judaism is first and foremost the faith of a people.... The most formative events of Jewish history were all experienced by the entire people as a collectivity — [the exodus from Egypt, receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, and entering the Land of Israel]. These events together established the triad of Jewish theology — God, Torah, and Israel.... Individual Jews cannot adopt their own standards of morality. Every Jew is responsible for the ethical standards of the entire people. Moral judgments are made by the individual Jew in relation to the well-being of the people. No individual Jew can attain personal salvation without the salvation of the entire Jewish people.... Our problem is that Jewish identity has become Christianized in the sense that Jewishness has become a private, voluntary, confessional-type commitment.

It becomes clear that the principal concern of Rabbi Hirsch is to further reintegrate Jewish peoplehood into the mindset of Reform Judaism:

Reform Judaism has to return to Jewish peoplehood even before we can return to Zionism.... We Reform Jews have to marry ourselves to history, the history which has remade us into a people. When we are married to history, we will see that what our Reform precursors designated as "rituals", "customs", "ceremonies" and "observances" were in many instances symbols of Jewish peoplehood. If Judaism is only a faith predicated on belief and reason, and if our primary task is to adjust ourselves to the general society in which we live, these symbols can be eliminated.... The primal motivation for discarding the *kippah* was to cast off the symbol of Jewish distinctiveness. In retrospect, the elimination of head covering was a historic error. I, [wearing a *kippah*] was among the hundreds of Jews who marched with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama. It was our interest to show the world that Jews were active participants among the thousands of marchers struggling for civil rights.... Is the *kippah* then only a custom, or is it a symbol of Jewish peoplehood? And what about other "observances" such as *kashrut*, Shabbat, Festivals, fast days? Are they only "rituals" or are they symbols of Jewish peoplehood? .... Or the use of Hebrew not only for prayer but as a living language? Matters of *ishut* — issues related to personal status [e.g., marriage, divorce] — ... have a potential impact on the entire Jewish community. For that reason... the Reform rabbinate has to become more sensitive to the demands of Jewish peoplehood. When Reform rabbis convert non-Jews to

Judaism, they do so as agents of the entire Jewish people. Yet most Reform rabbis do not insist that converts fulfill the tradition's prerequisites for conversion — *milah* (circumcision for males) and *t'vilah* (ritual immersion) for both males and females.... This leads to the crucial controversy over patrilineality. The Progressive [Reform] Movement in Israel and around the world, adamantly opposed the patrilineal resolution adopted by the CCAR.... We could not comprehend how our colleagues could sanction a person becoming a Jew without conversion. We could not agree to adapting a standard which represented such a radical departure from the standards of *klal yisrael*.

Ellen Umansky, adjunct Professor of Jewish History at HUC-JIR in New York, does not believe that

American Reform Jews, as a community, are ready to reclaim the language of Jewish nationalism.... For some, the word "nation" or "nationality" is perceived... as calling into question... our loyalty to America. Others simply don't believe that Jews constitute a nation, given contemporary understandings of what nationalism means.... The assertion of Jewish nationalism not only by modern Zionists but in our sacred texts and traditional Jewish prayers, carries with it attachment to the Land of Israel as the Jewish national home. Yet, for me, as a Reform Jew and as a feminist, I am most at home — spiritually as well as physically — in the U.S. Given the current realities of religious and political life in Israel, it is here, and not in Israel, that I can live my religious life more fully. Theological statements that speak of the "ingathering of the exiles" thus have no resonance for me. Neither... does the broader theological concept of *galut*.

Dr. Umansky continues:

My rejection of *galut* — even as a psychological concept — reflects the theological direction in which ... we [should] move.... If we really want to create a theology of peoplehood that is rooted in our experience as American Jews, we need to begin by rejecting classical Reform's identification of Judaism with personal religion.... The Jewish self exists in the Covenant not as a 'single soul in its full individuality' [as expressed by Eugene Borowitz], but as a relational soul in community with others. Rather than begin with the autonomous self who chooses to become a Jewish self, [let us] begin by recognizing that no self is fully autonomous, and that — as Martin Buber wrote long ago — we always exist in relationship

to others and to the world in which we live....To use *galut* as a psychological term....reflects a highly individualistic, existentialist sense of self that...stands in the way of our being able to affirm peoplehood and community as intrinsic components of Jewish self-identity.... To be a Jew is to be a member of a covenanted civilization that affirms the centrality of God, Torah, and Israel, and that views active commitment to Jewish continuity and the flourishing of Jewish life as both personal and communal obligations. It further views as obligatory an active striving for *tikkun ha-nefesh* (the repair of the soul), *tikkun ha'am* (repair of the people) and *tikkun ha-olam* (repair of the world).

Rabbi **Arnold Gluck** of Somerville (New Jersey), who spent five years in Israel, disagreed with Dr. Umansky. "In telling us that she rejects Jewish nationhood, she is telling us that she is not a Zionist....If I have ever experienced a sense of *galut*, it was my feeling of ideological and emotional distance from North American Reform Jewry while I worked for the Reform Movement in Israel." One reason why Reform Jews do not affirm Jewish nationhood "is for fear of feeling Jewishly second class....The primary language of our Jewish world [is] English, not Hebrew."

Rabbi **Peter Knobel** of Evanston (Illinois), sees the Jewish people and the Land of Israel as central to an ideology of Reform Judaism:

The land's centrality derives not only from the historic connection to the origins of Judaism, but to a profounder dimension — that sovereignty offers a unique opportunity and responsibility to carry out the divine mandate to be a *goy kadosh*, a holy nation, *mamlekheth kohanim*, a kingdom of priests, and an *ohr la-goyim*, a light to the nations. This intersection of power and morality is the crucible in which a Jewish future will be forged....Diaspora existence is important to the continual development of Judaism's universalistic stream, but by itself, it is a truncated existence.

Knobel also expresses the hope that Reform Judaism will "devote adequate time and energy to the recreation of *halakhah* values for both the Diaspora and Israel.... The *halakhah* as it now stands was formed in response to living as an isolated community in an alien culture....I am not prepared to cede the word '*halakhah*' to the Orthodox or to the Conservatives....A serious Reform Judaism must recognize that Judaism is both law and lore." Further, our people should "learn to speak Hebrew/English so that when Jews get together, we can take certain Hebrew value-terms for granted. We need to create a distinctive Jewish/English."

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin of Rockville Center (New York) claims that “the month of December provides the strongest argument for aliyah... [but] paradoxically, it is also the strongest argument against aliyah as well because living here during that month also teaches us the valuable insights that come from being still (in some ways) in a strange land. I like the sense of moral engagement with my environment of which home coming might deprive me....”

Salkin continues:

Considering all threats to Jewish continuity posed by the Diaspora, Jewish spirituality [there] is manifestly so much clearer than among most Israelis.... Being a Jew and being an Israeli are two different things.... It is tragic that my children and the children of our dear sabra friends in Carmiel most likely have nothing in common Jewishly.... I want to bring God into the conversation.... Our Reform Zionist thinking must be more than defensive, more than rights-oriented.... In some way Reform Jewish spirituality must be a spirituality of Zionism.... Peter Knobel has been an effective prophet for a new model of Reform Jewish thinking based on halakhic models, one that is radically open to ritual — that school of Reform thought and endeavor which is often referred to as ‘spiritual’. But much of the spirituality that we find in our Reform community is rather fleshless.... Reform Jewish spirituality must be Zionized. Our movement must begin to understand that some spaces are quintessentially and irreducibly holy. Few of the otherwise admirable contemporary works on Jewish spirituality speak of the spirituality of space.... Are we afraid that *kedushat ha-aretz* [the holiness of the land] will reduce us to a primitive, land-locked, narrow Middle Eastern tribe?... Israel is the living refutation of the heresy that our spirituality is only of air, words, and values — values... that run the risk of being pious clichés.... Our Reform religious literature has virtually avoided any notion of aliyah as *religious* rather than only personal fulfillment.... Reform Zionism cannot be merely a project of committees and programs and meetings and negotiations; it must be a prayer of the soul. I suggest therefore that the goal of Reform Judaism should be nothing less than the recapturing of the theological category of *yishuv ha-aretz*. It might be in the form of aliyah, or it might be in the form of a temporary sojourn in the land — *aliyah la-regel*.... □