Excerpt From:

REFORM ZIONISM

AN EDUCATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

MICHAEL LIVNI (LANGER)

Section 4 - Aspects of Zionist Jewish Education

Movement, Youth Movement, Zionist Youth Movement — A Clarification[1]

What is a movement?

The word "movement" comes from the word "move." The basic concept is to cause movement from a given social situation to a different social situation. In order for this to be achieved, people must be motivated and the system set in motion in order for this desired "movement" to occur.

Movement and politics

Aristotle defined politics as the science of human affairs. It therefore follows that a movement — which by definition seeks to influence events, and to shape society, or part of society, according to its attitudes and/or visions — will always be political. A political party is a formal political organization that proposes a platform of proposals agreed by its members concerning the desirable character of society and the means to be employed in order to move society and the state toward the realization of these proposals.

Movement and organization

The usual frameworks used to address and promote social issues of all types are **organizational**. They are based on the assumption that what exists is more or less desirable. Each type of framework — school, community center, municipality, army, state, trade union or commercial company — seeks to ensure its own existence and advancement through integration with other existing frameworks. Each body of this kind develops appropriate organizational mechanisms to ensure its correct functioning (bureaucracy). Bureaucracy ensures that the system is staffed by people who will run it according to the needs of each organizational slot.

A **movement** emerges only when people experience a **sense** of spiritual, psychological and/or material deprivation within existing organizational

---

1. From: *Shdemot*, Issue 100, January 1987 (Kislev 5747), (translated from the Hebrew).

frameworks and within a given reality. Only if groups of people within this given reality manage to adopt a vision of a different reality, and to develop a **plan of action** to which they are personally committed, does a movement develop.

A movement does not force its activists into organizational slots. It attempts to utilize those who seek to become involved according to their abilities and personality in order to promote the movement's objectives.

However, any movement that operates over an extended period of time will also encounter the need for a measure of institutionalization, in order to create the organizational system necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the movement. Accordingly, the characteristic of a movement is not the **absence** of an organizational system, but **tension between the organizational aspect and the movement aspect**. In a purely organizational system, such tension is not legitimate.

Faith and ideology

A person who belongs to a movement is one who believes. For our purposes, it does not matter whether this faith is the product of a prolonged educational process or the result of a sudden personal revelation. Neither does it matter whether this faith reflects a rational and intellectual process or religious inspiration. The faith must lead to a world outlook that goes beyond the normative world view of the immediate environment. In order to create a movement, this world view must lead to an ideology.

Individual feelings of deprivation due to the absence of appropriate conditions to live according to a particular faith must be developed into a common position with others. The cry of the lone individual will remain just that (a voice crying in the wilderness) unless a group of people is motivated to take up the "cause."

Ideology is a plan of action designed to realize a faith and a world outlook in the present and in the future.

There can be no movement without faith, an outlook and ideology that lead to an action program.

Finite faith and infinite faith

The Christian theologian Paul Tillich distinguished between true or infinite faith and false or finite faith.[1] Any faith based on an objective that may be realized in the historical present (national or individual) in a final and concrete manner is of

1. Paul Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith*, New York, Harper, 1957.

necessity a false faith. The vision of the Nazi Reich, which was supposed to last one thousand years, is an example of a false faith that produced a disastrous national movement. A true and infinite faith always exists as part of a vision of the end of days. It is true that a movement based on such a vision may undergo a process of institutionalization. The institution rather than the vision may subsequently become the reason for its existence. However, if the institutions exists in accordance with open democratic principles, it will always be possible to rekindle the vision. Even in cases when the institution suppresses the movement foundations, these may still have a chance to break through.

Types of movements

A movement may be confined to addressing a topical issue (e.g., Parents Against Silence[1]), or it may concentrate on a particular sector (e.g., the women's rights movement). Equally, a movement may be of a general nature, with a **general** world view relating to the entire social structure of a people and/or of the world. Thus, for example, the goal of the Zionist movement is to change the face of the Jewish people. The Socialist movement aims to change the shape of human society as a whole.

Socialist Zionism was a combination of the national type movement and the universal type of movement.

A Zionist youth movement

The Zionist movement emerged among the Jewish people as a reaction to the deprivation — material and spiritual or psychological — faced by many Jews due to the enormous changes resulting from the impact of modernity. In particular, against the backdrop of the disintegration of traditional society among all peoples, including the Jews, the Zionist movement called for far-reaching change in the "ecology" of the people. Both the physical location and the spiritual and psychological character of the people were to be transformed.

In the context of the history of the Zionist movement, the youth movement has been a voluntary educational and movement framework. The means (or, more precisely, the **path**) for realizing this vision is **self-realization**.[2]

The classic Zionist youth movement developed during and after the First World War, and was a general movement in terms of its national and universal-

1. An Israeli movement of soldiers' parents protesting the children's involvement in the military occupation of the occupied territories.
2. For a detailed analysis of the term "self-realization" (*Hagshama Atzmit*) see *Self-Fulfillment and Self-Realization — Two Terms, Two Outlooks*, Section 4:2.

istic content and goals. The movement's values and plan of action were drawn from its **socialist Zionist interpretation** of the travails facing contemporary Jewish society. The way to realize these values, self-realization, meant educating youth toward the vision of the movement in social frameworks that would continue to exist as an adult society. Thus as the generations passed and the Jews moved to the Land of Israel, a new adult society would emerge characterized by these corrected and alternative values. The social framework of the "former" youth movement would continue to maintain the new way of life as an adult society, thus creating *ipso facto* a new society. In other words, the way to educate toward a different society and vision is to educate through social frameworks which have a natural continuation in adult society. When the youth become adults, they then actually embody and become the reformed and corrected adult society in concrete terms.

The alternative path in education: Knowledge, experience and identification

Every society maintains a system of formal and informal education that transmits its basic values, norms and world views to the next generation. This process begins in the family, and continues at kindergarten, elementary and high school. In Israel, the army also forms an important link in this chain, the last link of which is higher education. At all stages, this process is subject to influence from the environment and from the mass media. All these elements promote socialization and culturalization to existing society; in other words, they help shape an individual capable of functioning properly within existing society.

It is obvious that this process is about much more than just imparting knowledge. The meaning and purpose of knowledge are absorbed by young people on the basis the **experience** through which knowledge is acquired, and according to the extent of their identification with the individual person responsible for providing education.

This is complex. It would be absurd to argue that is impossible to learn mathematics except by means of a positive experience including identification with the teacher. Equally, however, it is very rare in education for the elements (knowledge — experience — identification) to be completely divorced from each other.

Youth movements engage primarily in the establishment of alternative experiential paths. These paths provide an opportunity for young people to identify with their leaders, who embody (by means of self-realization) a world outlook that differs from the status quo. The following diagram illustrates this point, and

relates specifically to the existing **organizational** state of the Israeli youth movements. It illustrates the alternative path branching out from existing society into a movement educational path leading to a different society.

Element/Institution	Figure (Role Model)
Family	Parents
Kindergarten	Kindergarten teachers
Elementary school	Teachers

Toward existing society		Toward an alternative society	
Institution/Element	Figure (Role Model)	Movement/Stage	Figure (Role Model)
Children's and youth organizations	Counselors	Youth movement: Junior sections (5th-8th grades)	High School age junior leaders
High school	Educators, teachers	Youth movement: Senior sections (High School)	Young adults from the "other society" Leaders post high school (pre-army)
Army	NCOs/officers	Nachal[1] settlement group (*Garin*)	NCOs and officers in Nachal, adult members of the alternative society
Higher education	The academic world Professionals	The alternative society	Internal leadership

Self-realization begins in the adolescent age groups

In many respects the junior (children's) age groups resemble the traditional process of socialization and culturalization into existing society. In symbolic terms, the transition from a "children's organization" into a movement takes place at the end of the eight grade (at the oath-taking ceremony) and the ninth grade (junior leaders' movement activists' course). This point represents the beginning of self-realization.

---

1. *Nachal*: An army framework which enables youth to maintain partial links during their military service with a view to encouraging their continued (joint) projects (e.g., settlement) after their service.

At this stage, the youth begin to be led by older youth leaders. Most importantly, they themselves begin to engage in self-realization — i.e., the new junior leaders take on responsibility for society by counseling the junior (children's) sections and by taking on responsibility for the organizational framework (scout troop, movement branch), thus enabling the alternative educational process to take place. It is not necessary for all members of the youth movement to complete the entire process. It is desirable for a nucleus of members who have been through the junior sections to absorb new members during the highschool period.

As mentioned above, a movement is born out of material and/or spiritual want. There can be no doubt that in modern-day Israel this distress is largely of a spiritual nature. With the exception of certain Orthodox Zionist circles, young Israelis lack examples of society that could serve as examples for those on the path to self-realization.

This situation increases the importance of providing role models **along the path to self-realization**. Such role models (e.g., post-army young adults) ensure the existence of the movement, while also engaging in reflection on questions relating to the path the movement should take.

Interaction between the movement and existing society: Dangers

The interrelationship between the movement and existing society can be seen as a dynamic field fraught with dangers in two directions. If the movement ideology is insufficiently distinctive and cannot be embodied in the personality of its leaders, the movement will be drawn toward existing society. While it will continue to maintain the name and the trappings of a **movement**, it will actually have become an organization. This situation is typically accompanied by a struggle for organizational existence, but an absence of inner ideological tension.

However, the other direction also entails dangers, namely that the level of tension with the norms of existing society will be so great as to prevent any possibility of communication. If communication is cut off, the movement becomes a cult. A cult no longer seeks to exert an active influence on changing existing society, but rather strives to **"save"** individual members of that society, cut them off from it and draw them into its ranks.

Brainwashing is a cult tactic, and is possible only in a framework that is cut off from existing society (regardless of whether this isolation is taken on voluntarily by the individual or imposed on him/her).

In times of socio-economic crisis, existing society may move toward the plan of action proposed by a movement that seems to offer a response to the profound distress faced by society as a whole. This was the case with the Jewish people and the Zionist movement in the wake of the events before and after the Holocaust. The partial realization of political Zionism led to the consolidation of the Zionist movement in the form of the political establishment of the State of Israel. The dream became reality! The question which then arises is, where will the forces be found to renew the movement tension? The answer to this question would seem to me to lie in the special nature of the Jewish people.

Judaism and Movement

The very beginning of the Jewish heritage was rooted in the injunction to "Go forth" from an existing society to a different society. In responding to God's call to leave his land of birth, Abraham was the first person to take on himself a mission in the name and for the sake of something infinite.

As the national leader, Moses caused the People of Israel to leave Egypt on the basis of their physical hardships, but he educated the people to become aware of the spiritual distress that had accompanied enslavement. Through its perception of unity, monotheism posed a challenge of peace and perfection as a vision for the Jewish people and for all humanity. This ensured that the course of Jewish history would be accompanied by an unceasing tension between reality and vision — i.e., between existing society and an alternative, more perfect society. The mission of the Jewish prophets was an example and an inspiration to those who challenge any reality that falls short of the absolute dominion of justice.

The belief that by living a way of life according to the Divine constitution as transmitted to Moses the Jews promote world-mending (*Tikkun Olam*) under God was the key factor explaining the spiritual strength of the Jews throughout the generations.

The social tension that strives and struggles to achieve change in the name of something better and more just is one of the great contributions the Jewish people have made to humanity. No other traditional society had legitimized foci of social tension. Socrates drank the cup of poison due to his belief that he had no right to oppose the existing regime.

In his essay **Priest and Prophet**,[1] Achad Ha'am analyzed the tension between the priest, as the representative of the organizational establishment of existing society, and the prophet, who strives to achieve an alternative society founded on

1. Achad Ha'am, *Priest and Prophet* (1893), in Leon Simon (ed.), *Selected Essays of Achad Ha'am*, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962, Reprint, p. 125.

MOVEMENT, YOUTH MOVEMENT, ZIONIST YOUTH MOVEMENT — A CLARIFICATION

absolute justice. According to Achad Ha'am, the destiny of the Jewish people as a nation is to strive to realize the prophetic vision, and to this end the people require a national home. In our terms, Achad Ha'am saw the Jewish people as a "movement" entity within the global reality of existing society. The unending mission to mend the world in the direction of absolute justice as reflecting the Jewish desire for monotheistic perfection is one of the main foundations of Zionism in general, and cultural Zionism in particular.

The axes of movement tension may be summarized as follows:

Existing society	Alternative society
The family of nations	Israel
Priesthood	Prophecy
Organization/Establishment	Movement

It would seem that the Zionist movement is currently largely synonymous with the establishment of the State of Israel.

There is also a danger that the state may come to be seen as the goal in its own right, rather than as a means for realizing the ongoing mission of *Tikkun Olam*. Does the partial realization of political Zionism imply that there is no longer any need for a Zionist movement or for Zionist youth movements? Has the feeling of need which generates a movement passed?

There is clearly spiritual need and ideological confusion among those who do not identify with a Messianic Orthodox Zionist approach and/or with Jewish nationalism as a total message. The socialist movement as the sole, or even the main, element in a philosophy of the pan-human mend has proved a disappointment.

For the founders of Israeli society, who had a solid grounding in Jewish culture, Socialist Zionism provided a universalist path for national regeneration. The following generation was totally preoccupied with the physical struggle for existence. The reality of the Holocaust and the struggle for Statehood left no room for soul-searching. However, some of those in the third generation of Israeli society seek to understand who they really are. Many repress and reject the confrontation with their distress and confusion. They escape into the immediate present by limiting themselves to concern for their family and the pursuit of economic security and material wealth. Many Israelis leave the country in order to seek fulfillment free of Zionist commitment.

We are not only seeking to address that minority that is willing to struggle

with the feeling of spiritual need. We also attempt, by means of education in a democratic and voluntary youth movement, **to develop an awareness of the spiritual vacuum by means of interpreting knowledge through the prism of alternative experience and identification. This then constitutes an alternative path to that of existing Israeli society.**