



The Sacred and the Secular

Golda Meir writes in her memoirs – “My Life” – that the most moving part of the Declaration of Independence in Tel Aviv in 1948 was when Rabbi Maimon, the Head of Mizrahi at the time, sitting immediately to the right of David Ben-Gurion, made the *Shehechyanu* blessing.

It was at that moment she understood the true meaning of what the establishment of the State signified.

It was not just another modern national movement of the 19th-century European secular ilk but a distinctly Jewish one. A fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and a link in the chain of Jewish destiny.

Ben-Gurion’s political proclamation and Rabbi Maimon’s religious enunciation echoed almost concurrently from Independence Hall on that momentous day. This duality of voices captures the indispensable role of the Mizrahi Movement in the Zionist endeavor.

What is that role?

In 1897, the Zionist Movement was founded. Barely 50 years later, with G-d’s help, they had remarkably created a sovereign state. The collective physical body of the Jewish people had somehow been resurrected.

But would it also receive a soul? Would its collective fate turn into spiritual destiny? Could the national secular movement – which had

achieved so much for the Jewish nation – also become a spiritual and sacred enterprise?

In the religious world, many were skeptical. They were understandably ambivalent to the Zionist Movement as it appeared to be just another transient secular ‘ism,’ hence they kept it at arm’s length.

However, a group of leading Eastern European rabbis, led by Rabbi Ya’akov Yitzchak Reines, thought otherwise. They answered an emphatic ‘yes’ to the above questions, believing they could and should strive to build bridges – between physical and spiritual, body and soul, national and religious, democratic and Jewish.

And to support their beliefs, in 1902 they formed “Mizrachi” as a distinct yet integrated part of the Zionist Movement, thus blazing a trail of partnership and collaboration still thriving today.

They acted as they did because they felt the only way to impact is from within.

From the outside you cannot influence; from the inside, you can transform.

The Mizrahi leaders then blazed a remarkable trail which we remain ever so devoted to – one of collaboration and partnership for the greater good; a commitment to our joint fate and dedication to shape our collective spiritual destiny.

The very name – Mizrahi (מזרחי) – captures its core mission. It as an acronym for MercaZ RuChanI (מרכז רוחני) – a spiritual center, striving to bring the timeless values of Torah to the heart of the Zionist enterprise.

Torat HaMizrachi is *Torat Chaim* – a Torah of Life – committed to bringing Torah values and vibrancy to all areas of human and Jewish life. Aiming to fuse sacred and secular, soldier and saint, settler and sage, to come together to create a synergistic whole and uplift all areas of Jewish collective and national life.

Our first HaMizrachi publication was published exactly two years ago as a Yom HaAtzmaut edition celebrating 70 years since the establishment of Israel. Its aim as articulated then remains today – to be a platform for relevant, inspiring and unifying ideas and insights in the spirit of *Torat Eretz Yisrael* for communities in Israel and across the Jewish world.

As Israel celebrates her 72nd anniversary at this time of global uncertainty in the challenging Corona era, we wish one and all the very best of health, resilience and success and a very special Yom HaAtzmaut Sameach!

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