



With
HaRav
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Can A Jewish State Be Completely Democratic?

By Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok

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How truly democratic can the State of Israel be as long as it is defined as being a “Jewish” state. Can a state defined as being Jewish truly and democratically address the issues of its non-Jewish citizens? Should indeed a state that is defined as being Jewish even have non-Jewish citizens? How democratic can any state be if ideology and/or citizenship are based upon racial or religious identification? The nature of democratic inclusiveness and racial or religious exclusiveness apparently run contradictory to one another. Yet, it is this very contradiction that is at the center of a storm brewing these days throughout the entire Israeli society. This contradiction and clash of concepts also contributes heavily to the unrest between Israel and her hostile Arab Muslim neighbors.

It is easy to wave the flag of democracy and demand that every aspect of the state of Israel be entirely democratic. However, this absolute definition and application of democracy is a sure way to destroy Israel from being a Jewish state. Moreover, if Israel were to stop being a Jewish state then what justification would there be for it to exist in the first place?

The State of Israel was established to serve as a national homeland for the Jewish people. It was not established to serve as a state like all others. It was not established to serve as a “state of all its citizens,” meaning to give equal democratic access to non-Jews living the country to participate in the erasure of the Jewish nature of the state. Yet, if the state accepts non-Jews as citizens and does not extend to them the democratic right to vote and to influence the entire nation through their political agendas, then this is not the definition of democracy, at least as it is defined and practiced in western democratic nations today.

Therefore, we have the dilemma. To have a Jewish state means there must be, by the nature of the state and its government, a curtailment of the parameters of democracy to allow for the continuation of the Jewish character of the state. This would therefore be defined as a limited democracy. To have a completely democratic state means that there must be the political framework in place to undermine and dispose of the Jewish aspect of the Jewish state and to replace it with something else democratically elected upon by the majority vote. Moreover, as said above, if Israel were to cease being a Jewish state and a national Jewish homeland, then it would lose all legitimacy to exist



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as a state in the Middle East surrounded as it is by a hostile Muslim population who hate it and Jews down to their very souls.

The answer to the contradiction is rather simple and easy. I have already suggested it above. Israel needs to define herself as a state of limited democracy. It needs to exist as a Jewish state and as nothing less, for as we know, nothing less, will soon lead to nothing at all.

Israel needs to cease its irrational pursuit of pleasing western powers and mimicking western ideals and morays. Israel is a part of the Middle East. It is not the 51st state of the United States, nor is Israel a nation of Europe. The western model cannot and does not fit the Israeli modality.

Israel, in order to survive must live by its own standards and follow its own course. Every single other nation does this. Every nation on earth places its own national ideals and needs primary when implementing national policy. Israel also must take into account what is best for Israel and Jews first before it decides to placate western and other powers.

Israel today is tearing itself apart because radical secular opinions have become so anti-religious that for them any expressions of Jewish culture is defined as public religious coercion and is viewed by them with intense animosity. This irrational self-hatred of anything Jewish by so-called secular Jews is nothing short of a national cultural suicide.

It is sorry to say but we must redefine the definition of a threat to national security. Threats to the state are not only those with bombs and guns. Significant danger to the public welfare is also present in those who will use words, politics, the media and whatever else is at their disposal to disseminate irrational and radical so-called democratic agendas that contradict the very foundational principles of the State of Israel. The continued tolerance towards the propagation of these alien views can lead not only to the destabilization of the state but also to the endangerment of the lives of all its citizens.

Long ago, the United States and other western nations learned the lesson that democracy must be limited and curtailed in order for a nation to maintain itself secure and stable. As wild and unruly as politics in the United States can be, there are still very secure boundaries that limit the spread of absolute democracy. The US maintains itself by limiting and curtailing certain freedoms of certain individuals, all this as prescribed by law. The State of Israel also needs to learn this lesson. The State of Israel needs to remember its roots and to again warmly embrace its Jewish origins and work with extra vigor to re-establish the Jewishness of the Jewish state.



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The radical secularist in Israeli society should learn well a lesson long ago learned in the US. In the US a statement was developed, "America, love it or leave it." We need to say the same of Israel. "Israel, the Jewish state, love it or leave it."

Israel must continue to survive. As anti-Semitism grows worldwide, one does not need to be a prophet to foresee the dangers facing world Jewry. The need for a national Jewish homeland where all Jews can find refuge in times of danger is a reality now even as much as it was 60 years ago.

The State of Israel must again embrace its Jewish roots and seek with all desperation to heal the social rift between traditional Jews of religion and those who have lost their way and roots of connection to anything Jewish.

Let the US and Europe absorb all those lost Jews who seek to run away from their Jewish origins. We should not be afraid of losing them. For any individual who is not patriotic and wishes to flee his country is actually doing the country and his fellow citizens a great favor by leaving.

We Jews should not fear their loss, for seek as they will to assimilate into their new homes, Jews have for centuries never been completely welcomed anywhere amongst the nations. Eventually those who cry out for democracy and for the destruction of the Jewishness of the State of Israel will come to realize that there is no place like home.

There is no home other than Israel, for Israel is the home of the Jews, all Jews. Israel must thus continue being a national homeland for the Jewish people around the world. Israel must maintain its Jewish identity, even at the expense of the curtailment of rampant out-of-control so-called democracy. Let the radical secularist cry out as they will, but let them cry out from their new homes in America and Europe.

Israel must be a nation for patriots who are proud of their Jewishness and proud of their country. Let us work together to restore Jewish pride in our Jewish state, and if we wish to practice democracy within these guidelines, then so be it. Just let us remember our priorities, democracy is meant to strengthen the state, not destroy it. Let us do that which strengthens and not destroys. Let the destroyers leave and go destroy something else.