

# GUSH

# EMUNIM

## FOR and AGAINST



CHANAN PORAT'S MONOLOGUE: (from "Al Hachom", the newspaper of Hashomer Hatzair-April 27, 1979).

(The following extract was part of a political confrontation between Chanan Porat from "Gush Emunim" and Meir Pa'il of "Shelli" on the subject of "Settlement and Peace", that took place on March 5, 1979, before the signing of the Peace Treaty with Egypt.)

The question is: what is the ideal picture of the world that a man paints for himself? That is my starting point. What picture of the world do I paint? How do I want to see the people of Israel in the Land of Israel?

From this starting point, and from this picture of the world, emerges the question of how I see the settlements in Judaea and Samaria and how I see the peace, and how the two are intertwined. Then I say things that may sound messianic.

I can also build my answer on pragmatic issues that I believe in: how I see security; what I believe is the value of the Arab's word; what I believe is the basis for peace; what value I attach to paper and documents; what is the real situation in the area; what is the meaning of geo-politics; what is strategic depth; what do the settlements contribute psychologically and objectively. I do believe in all this, but this to me is not the core, even though this is the truth.

The main thing for me is that we have returned home, to Eretz Yisrael. This people, the people of Israel, for whom this land is the only home in the world. It has no other home.

This is not merely a home built with wood and stones, but inside it is paved with the love of the daughters of Jerusalem. This house is the house of our life, and without it, our life is not worth living.

The longings and the dreams and the great cry of the past two thousand years, the great belief, is coming towards fulfilment. The fulfilment of redemption. That is the central issue, the fuel for all the activity surrounding the modern return to Zion. I don't even like the word "Zionism", but prefer "return to Zion".



We are accomplishing the return to Zion, and for us Eretz Yisrael is a living thing. Judaea and Samaria are a living thing for us, in the same way as the Galilee, the Negev and the Coastal Plain. Like a hand or a foot. Like the heart and like the brain. Love of the land has on the one hand a literal meaning, and on the other, a deep spiritual meaning. It forms the centre of life, of course, when viewed generally. But it is certainly a crossroad of life.

We have to realize our love. We are not platonic. We do not think that love has to remain theoretical and cut off from daily life, and we are certainly not masochists who want to express their love over a great distance, whereby the longings will grow through lack of consummation, and in this way we will turn our desire for consummation into sterility, as we will not want to achieve it, and if we do achieve it, we will be impotent.

We want to consummate our love for Eretz Yisrael, our recognition of settling the land, by laying the foundations which are the pulse of life.

Aliyah is for me the ingathering of the exiles; the ingathering of the exiles is for me the beginning of redemption, even though it is very physical, very real. For me this is a tremendous message.

Settlement is for me the link with this land, with its fields, its stones. We must not neglect any part of it, and for me, not to settle in Judaea and Samaria is an insult to our people and an insult to our land.

When Jews settle in Judaea and Samaria it is a true expression of their great love for this land which is a living home. It is to turn on a light, so that the house may be lit up, that the house may contain life. I can hear the cry of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, when the king of the Khuzari asks him: "If you pray 'may my eyes behold the return to Zion' then why do you not go there?" There are many possible answers to this question, but Yehuda Halevi has only one: "I am ashamed, King of Khuzari. I have no answer for you."

I do not wish to be ashamed. I want to try to build the land of Israel. We will rise up and build. As much as I can. Stone by stone. Ten stones. A full life. A million Jews. As much as I can in dedication to this land. This is essentially a simple feeling, and I feel it directly, growing, springing from the Jewish soul.

I find in this the common factor, despite all the differences and nuances, with Yosef Chaim Brenner who so envisaged the land of Israel in one of his stories, when walking from Rehovot to Zarnucka, that he grabbed some earth in his hands and cried: "Will you or won't you be ours?" And the pioneer of the second aliyah, and the founders of Petach Tikva, the Ramban, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi and Rabbi Akiva - to me it's all the same. A very simple feeling.

Editor's note:

Yosef Chaim Brenner: (1881-1921) Part of the second aliyah, Brenner arrived in Palestine in 1909, and lived there until his murder in the Arab riots of 1921. Brenner was a leading writer, and one of the central figures in the growing labour movement. Brenner, upon his arrival in Palestine, became one of the most fervent negators of Jewish life in the Diaspora, which he had experienced in his native Russia, and in London. Here Chanan Porat's use of Brenner is an attempt to legitimize his view by appealing to the symbols and leaders of the Labour movement.

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## GUSH EMUNIM- THE DANGER TO DEMOCRACY OF AMBIVALENCE

by Asher Maniv (Kibbutz Ma'ayan Zvi). From 'Davar', January 7, 1981.

I will say something unoriginal. I see in "Gush Emunim" a great danger to Israeli democracy. Why do I repeat this? Because not everyone who says it draws the logical conclusions and because not everyone understands that the negation of "Gush Emunim" is not at all like opposition, for example, to Begin or Hurvitz.

I can think that the delusions of Begin are likely to push Israel to political, international positions that are fraught with danger. I can also be convinced that the lack of economic policy of Hurvitz is a national catastrophe, but in both cases I do not question the legitimacy of their positions which are diametrically opposed to mine.

This is not so when I consider "Gush Emunim". Even if, because of its size and ability, it is less dangerous (something we can never know in advance), we must still see it as an appeal against the common basis, without which political opposition cannot exist.

I am a fervent believer in political pluralism. More than this, I even believe in the despised "party" system which it is fashionable today to oppose. The word "party" derives from "part", and whoever sees himself as a part, is aware of a whole. But whoever claims to be the only representative of the whole, cannot come to terms with the existence of other opinions, and therefore he has no place in a democratic society.

According to democracy, there is no "general, national interest", objective and unique, standing above political differences. This is the content of democratic debate: that every one of the different opinions believes that it is the best expression of the national interest, and thus every one has the full right to express an opinion and to work towards it, on condition (and this is crucially important) that he does not refute the other person's right to expression.

To the best of my knowledge, "Gush Emunim" is the only factor in Israeli politics (excluding Neturai Karta, and perhaps Rakach-Communists) that denies this common basis and which sees itself, or at least its aims, as above the law and above the elected authorities, if this is in opposition to the "eternal laws of the people of Israel." From this point of view, it makes no difference if anyone finds in "Gush Emunim" some more "moderate" positions. We can be pleased about this, but the official position remains as it was expressed in the days of the Labour government by the spiritual leader of "Gush Emunim", Rav Zvi Yehuda Hacohen Kook, who said, "Where the Torah opposes the Government, then the Government is invalid." (And it was no surprise that he ended his statement with the words "The Lord of Hosts is with us.")

I think that we have all learnt the results of a "liberal" approach towards those who negate the foundation of liberalism itself.

Here we must make two additional distinctions, that we infrequently pay attention to. These are the distinction between ends and means, and between idealism and fanaticism.

Obviously, people like myself have a very strong argument with the political aims of "Gush Emunim". I find it hard to understand those in the Labour Movement who do not totally refute them. But that is an argument on another plane; aims are part of the legitimate debate. There are aims, however, that are degradation in themselves - for example, racism. Yet, in most cases, it is not the aims that cause pollution, but the means that are employed in order to achieve them. Nationalism?



Socialism? Who in the Labour Movement can oppose these aims? Yet in the name of these aims some of the most terrible crimes that humanity has known were perpetrated.

Here lies the unrecognized, hence unsafe, border between idealism and fanaticism, where the connection is made between ends and means.

The same terrible theory which says that the end justifies the means is the surest sign of fanaticism. There can be no doubt to the fanatical identity of a belief or political movement, that sees fit to break the law because it represents a "higher law", or which claims to appear in the name of such a lofty ideal, that for its sake one can ignore the democratic process, and can pour insecticide on IDF soldiers, spit in the face of an elected representative, or even "merely" threaten bloodshed - a movement that comes to represent the one and only truth, from which salvation will arise.

For this reason, I cannot help but be shocked wherever good people, well-intentioned (especially in the Labour Movement) speak about "Gush Emunim" in a fatherly tone of voice, as if to children who have made a mistake but "are nevertheless idealists." If there is something more dangerous than fanaticism, it is the forgiving relationship the silent, moderate, tolerant majority awards it, when it cannot distinguish between true idealism and fanaticism.

It is true that they have many characteristics in common: the belief in a sacred aim; the personal identification of the man and the ideal; the devotion to the aim; and the preparation for heavy personal sacrifice. Yet the moment that this idealism crosses the border between a belief in a sacred aim and readiness to use any means to achieve it - from this moment on it discards the mantle of idealism to wear the garb of the fanatic, even if its adherents continue to pride themselves with the trappings of idealists.

What then, can the moderate, tolerant, "liberal" silent majority do? By its very nature, the silent majority will refrain from battling the fanatics, under the guise of "preventing a split in the nation", whereas the fanatics have no such hesitation. They have a sacred aim that justifies any means. The leniency of the majority allows the fanatics to gain strength until they can strike at decency and tolerance themselves.

That is the problem that we face. It is hard to expect tolerant, liberal people to use the same means that the fanatics use against the rest. Democratic fanaticism no doubt sounds a contradiction in terms, but experience proves that a democracy that does not defend itself has a very bleak future.

The least one can demand is a negation of the moral and social legitimacy of a fanatical movement such as "Gush Emunim". Political movements in a democracy need legitimacy in order to succeed. If this will not be granted to them, if we will cease excusing their crimes, if we will cease to search for the "balance" at any price, if all the writers and influential people will say publicly that this is a phenomenon of which we must rid ourselves, then we have a hope. But if we continue with the prevalent ambivalent attitude, then the golem (monster) will rise up not only against its creator, but against all those who have come to terms with its existence.

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