From the very inception of the movement in 1902, the thinkers of religious Zionism were inspired by a revolutionary spirit. This feeling was evidently well founded. For, we must emphasize, while the revolutionary motivation of secular Zionism is well known and has been documented and researched, religious Zionism has not fared so well. This is despite the fact that the religious Zionist community was a partner in the Zionist revolution as a whole, and the degree and complexity of that community’s revolutionary drive are even more impressive given the conservative, traditionalist background against which religious Zionism continued to exist. With this in mind, in this paper I wish to set out the fundamentals of religious-Zionist revolutionism.

In light of the messianic and political idea in Judaism, the very appearance of a religious Zionist ideology was revolutionary: here, for the first time, human initiative took direct and surprisingly forceful action, explicitly rebelling against the passivity of the exiled Jewish people and refusing to await redemption by divine means. Another aspect of the revolutionary element was the desire to create a new religious type, a “redeemed person” who would respond to the demands posed by the need to construct a modern political entity and would reshape his or her religious faith in accordance with those demands. The entry into organized politics signaled by the founding

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of the Mizrachi movement was a major landmark in the emergent revolutionism and its institutionalization.

**Definition and Status**

In regard to group self-definition, the religious Zionist rejected the exclusivity of the community cell as an expression of a religious (or rather, religiously observant) minority, sometimes well-organized but lacking national and sovereign features, subordinate to a non-Jewish majority ruled by foreign social and religious leaders; the religious Zionist aimed to replace this status with a national one, in which "nation" meant a politically and religiously independent entity with its own land, language, and other national characteristics. In other words, religious Zionism spurned the existing status and sought another: "We have resolved to create a new creation."4

One consequence of the desire to change status from community cell to nation was negation of *Galut*—the conception of the existence of the Jewish people in exile, uprooted from its homeland. Religious Zionism defined itself as "a movement built on the foundations of pure recognition of the concepts of Judaism and our historical spiritual values, free of any *Galut* influence."5 One of its foremost spiritual mentors likened *Galut* to "the burial place of our national body."6 For the religious-Zionist thinker, *Galut* was an anomalous episode, tantamount to denial of the nation's real identity, while the return to the national homeland and language was a "return to ourselves, to the

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4 Yeshayahu Aviad (Wolfsberg), *Iyunim ba-Yahadut* (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 117. Aviad, a leader of religious Zionism in Germany, was speaking of the state as against *Galut* (see below).
6 Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook, Rabbi A.I. Kook's son and the spiritual mentor of Gush Emunim, in H.A. Schwartz, ed., *Ha-Torah ha-Go'elel* (Jerusalem, 1983), p. 80. Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits, an important religious-Zionist philosopher who officiated as rabbi in Sidney and Boston, pointed out that *Galut* is considered an abnormal condition even though the Jewish people have lived longer in exile than in the land of Israel; see his *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York, 1973), p. 120.