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Liberating the Temple Mount

Apocalyptic Tendencies among Jewish Temple Activists*

Introduction

Every now and then instances of violence are played out at the Temple Mount area in Jerusalem, also known as the *Haram-esh-sharif*. Some of the cases are referred to as results of the so-called 'Jerusalem syndrome', incidents when individuals' manifestations of pre-existing psychopathology culminate in violent actions. Israeli psychiatrists and others have treated such incidents as examples of when peoples' expectations of a heavenly Jerusalem collide with the very earthly reality in the city (Kalian and Witztum 1998: 316–30; Leppäkari 2006a: 153–80). For some people, such encounters may create anxiety that may threaten the victim's very sanity. In such situations, an apocalyptic mission may become the only way for them to cope with the situation at hand. But the Temple Mount does not only attract lone-acting individuals, it also attracts organized groups who refer to the very spot as an important identity marker.

When presenting this paper on the 17th of August in 2005, I could not disregard the current political situation in Israel known as the Disengagement or Gaza pullout. And I could not resist recalling and comparing the events of that day with those of the Yamit pullout in 1982, the evacuation of the last settlement in Sinai in the wake of Israel's peace accord with Egypt. Certainly, those who experienced and recall the Yamit demonstrations experienced a sense of *déjà vu*, but those of us who do not recall those events through memory flashbacks have to turn to studies and analyses. As I had visited Jerusalem the very same month, the orange ribbons declaring 'disengagement; disaster to Jews' were still fresh in my mind. Due to limitations of space, I will not go in to the political details of the withdrawal from Yamit, the Eastern part of the Sinai Peninsula, as a consequence of the

peace accords with Egypt, or into the details of the current Gaza pullout. The rationale of the 2005 Gaza withdrawal is, however, briefly presented on the Official Website of the Israeli Defence Forces as 'an assumption made by the political ranks that the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians has come to a stand still. To reignite the peace process, Israel must make a unilateral move' and, that the goal of the Disengagement Plan is to 'improve Israel's security, political, economical and demographic status … reduce the current friction between Jewish residents and the Palestinian population'.[1] In a Religioscope-interview with Gideon Aran, a Gush Emunim settler movement specialist at Hebrew University, the parallels between the two incidents are drawn. Aran points out that the political events of 1982 undoubtedly affected the 'Jewish Underground'. The messianic redemption of the settler movement is closely tied to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and therefore what happens in some remote areas of the Land of Israel is tied to the potential centre, which is the Temple Mount. In Aran's words, 'political events such as the ones mentioned above have a great influence on various levels and areas of Jewish radical religiosity with political, sometimes ultra political, sometimes even with violent implications' (Flükiger 2005).

In this article, I draw on my field research material and interviews with Jewish Third Temple activists in Jerusalem collected on and off between 1998 and 2004. Here Yehuda Etzion's, Gershon Salomon's and Yoel Lerner's theology and activities are studied in light of *apocalyptic representations*,[2] and how these are expressed in relation to religious longing for the Third Temple in the light of the Gaza withdrawal. I want, however, to emphasize that not all those who are engaged in endtime scenarios act upon their visions. In Jerusalem, there have been, and still are, several religious-political groups that more or less ritually perambulate the Temple Mount area.

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1   General Info and Statistics. Settlements in the Gaza Strip. http://www1.idf.il/dover/site/mainpage.asp (accessed 14 August 2005).

2   'Apocalyptic' here refers to future-oriented visions of forthcoming catastrophes that in one way or another involve humanity and life on earth. This idea of a disastrous end has an opposite pole, the longed-for paradise on earth. The term 'apocalyptic representations' here refers to views about Jerusalem as a complex endtime place and a vision of urgent and immanent future perfection. Such apocalyptic representations become integrated into individuals' lives on both the social and personal levels. In apocalyptic settings, Jerusalem as the symbolic endtime city is given meaning and value by simultaneously referring to a physical place and a dream (Leppäkari 2002: 21, 207–8).

As a complex *symbol*, Jerusalem 'disseminates' multiple representations that are created in people's minds, our physical environment and cultural heritage.[3] Jerusalem, described in an apocalyptic discourse as 'the city at the end of world', plays a central role in the religious imagination and as a physical place of reference when apocalyptic representations are explained. Among the various groups and individuals that actively make preparations for the imminent end of the world, Jerusalem has become a significant place, both symbolically and physically. As the actual place where the endtime drama is expected to be acted out, 'Jerusalem' can in fact motivate and legitimise individuals and groups to act out religious convictions by becoming perceived as the actual stage of apocalyptic threat. Jerusalem thus becomes *the place* of an endtime drama which allows various individuals and groups to enter the stage and act out pre-existing mental images or roles of a redemptive character, such as 'divine messengers', messianic figures and biblical prophets.

Temple Activists in Retrospect

In his book *The End of Days* (2000), the Israeli reporter Gershom Gorenberg accounts for several incidents involving the Temple Mount area. In the 1940s, the Lehi (an acronym for Fighters for the Freedom of Israel, also known as the Stern Gang) published its eighteen principles of Jewish national renaissance in a newspaper '*The Underground*'. In the eighteenth principle, there is a reference to: 'Building the Third temple, as symbol of the era of the Third Kingdom', and later they added an emendation, 'Building the Third temple as symbol of the era of total redemption' (Gorenberg 2000: 92). Violent outbreaks in Palestine in the 1940s were common, when Jews, defying the Labour government's pro-Arab policy, engaged in acts of terror. The Jewish underground army, the Haganah, had helped the British to catch Irgun terrorists, but in the mid-40s, it joined forces with Irgun and the Freedom Fighters in acts of anti-British sabotage which culminated in 1946 in the bombing of the British military headquarters at Jerusalem's

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3 Briefly, a symbol is something that points beyond what is immediately perceived by a specific sign. It unites collectively constructed and maintained meanings drawing also on individual emotional interpretations. When referring to the meanings ascribed to the symbol and the associations that it in turn evokes, I will designate them as 'representations'. (Cf. Illman and Leppäkari 2004: 276, 279–82; Sperber 1977: 86, 113.)

King David Hotel, killing ninety-two British, Arabs and Jews. These acts of sabotage and terror were political in that they were aimed at persuading the British to give up their mandate over Palestine (Indinopulos 1999: 229–30).

Years later, Major General Uzi Narkiss recalls in his memoirs the events during annexation of Jerusalem in 1967, and how Shlomo Goren, the army's chief rabbi at time, ran uphill with a Torah scroll under his right arm, a ram's horn in his other hand, his beard thrust forward. Soaked with sweat, the 50-year-old chaplain refused a ride, insisting he would reach the Mount on foot. From the top of the walls, Jordanian soldiers continued to fire, and Rabbi Goren roared out a song, as he was a passionate believer in the sanctity of the land and the state. He was a man carried away that day, Gorenberg writes, and arrived at the Mount moments after Narikss, bowed towards where the Holiest of Holies had stood (which is to say the Dome), and shouted biblical verses. According to Gorenberg, there was an incident on the Mount later that day that was omitted from Narkiss' memoirs. Thirty years later, Narkiss told the story to an Israeli reporter, Nadav Shragai, on condition that he would publish it only after Narkiss' death. The rabbi had walked up to the general, and said 'Now's the time to put one hundred kilos of explosives in the Dome of the Rock, and that's it, once and for all we'll be done with it.' Narkiss answered, 'Rabbi, stop.' Goren said, 'Uzi, you will go down in history for this.' Narkiss answered, 'I've already put my name in Jerusalem's history.' But Rabbi Goren kept going, 'You don't grasp the immense meaning of this. This is an opportunity that can be exploited now, this minute. Tomorrow it will be impossible.' Narkiss responded, 'Rabbi, if you don't stop now, I'm taking you from here to jail.' According to Narkiss, Goren turned and left without another word. Some minutes later, the messianic rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook was brought to the Mount, but also Kook – to Goren's disappointment – would join a rabbinic ruling against setting foot on the Temple Mount. (Gorenberg 2000: 92, 99–104.)

Since the growth and establishment of Jewish radicalism in Israel, various attempts have been made by the Third Temple sympathizers to destroy or diminish the Muslim presence in Jerusalem. Temple activists, like Yehuda Etzion and Yoel Lerner, have been arrested and jailed for personally taking redemption into their own hands. Gershon Salomon, has not been convicted but he is added to this description so as to illustrate the dynamics of the personalities engaged in the Temple Mount issue.

Within Israel's Radical Right, the political scientist Ehud Sprinzak has distinguished a group of 'cultural radicals' consisting mostly of individ-

uals who rarely act as a homogeneous group, but who share the conviction that only a spiritual revolution among the people can save Israel as a nation (Sprinzak 1991: 251). What binds the cultural radicals together is the hope of bringing about this cultural revolution. Among the cultural radicals we find Yehuda Etzion with his theology of active redemption and Yoel Lerner, a former Kahane activist, who believes the redemption of mankind depends upon the actions of Jews preparing the conditions necessary for messianic salvation. Although the cultural radicals may not have a large following or organized political power, Sprinzak conludes that they do play an important role in the collective consciousness of the Israeli radical right (Sprinzak 1991: 7). It can be added that they also play an important role in some Christian groups' religious consciousness.

The cultural radicals' ideology and praxis have not been theoretically constructed as a coherent system of thought and action, and should, therefore, not be considered the product of a single authoritative school. As Sprinzak suggests, it is mostly the result of a reactionary mood that was created by the Camp David crisis, the struggle in Yamit, and escalating violence and terrorism. And yet, the *intifadas* and the assassination of Yizak Rabin, and now, perhaps, the Gaza withdrawal, have confirmed the cultural radicals in their religious convictions. The suggested common nominators for this group are, according to Sprinzak, 'their impatience with Gush Emunim's excessive fidelity to the Israeli government, their disenchantment with the style of Rabbi Kahane, and their rejection of conventional politics' (Sprinzak 1991: 252). Additionally, within the cultural radicals, it is possible to distinguish three groups that interact and overlap: the veterans of the Jewish Underground, members of Tzfia, and former associates of Rabbi Meir Kahane (Sprinzak 1991: 252).

Sprinzak traces the origins of the 'undergrounds' to the theological crisis over the 1978 Camp David Accords and the messianic convictions that sprang from within Gush Emunim (Sprinzak 1999: 11). The tension of the Six Day War in 1967 can be said to have reached maturation, and the 'extreme right' in Israel has since had a strong impact on Israel's political culture and institutions (Sprinzak 1999: 147), not to mention its religious milieu.

Contemporary Apocalyptic Tendencies

During recent years there has been an increasing focus of interest on the Temple Mount. We find a growing number of conferences held by *Shocharey*

HaMikdash (The Temple Lovers) and others, 'Temple sympathisers', who consider the destruction of the mosques on the Temple Mount a religious goal that all humans should realise. The activities of these Temple sympathisers have been somewhat loosely regarded as those of only minimally influential movements, with only a few dozen activists who may step forward as lone-actors. The problem for both the Temple Lovers and other Temple sympathisers is that the 'Status Quo Agreement' on the Temple Mount allows Muslims to pray at the Mount. Recently in 2005, however, the Disengagement or Gaza pullout actualized another aspect tied to Jerusalem's role as a holy city. Here the role of religion in the current political situation in Israel is highlighted by the example of the Temple sympathisers. And central, for the rising tension in Jerusalem, is the religious importance attached to the Temple Mount.

Over the last year, Israeli security officials have repeatedly warned of the possibility of a 'doomsday-scenario' being played out in the city. According to a *Jerusalem Post* interview with Avi Dichter, former head of the Shin Bet security service, the threat of an attack by Jewish 'extremists' on the Temple Mount is together with the possibility of an assassination attempt on the life of Prime Minister, the main concern among security officials (Lefkovits 2005a). In connection with the Gaza pullout, a new security system is to be installed at the Temple Mount in an effort to prevent any possible attacks by Temple activists. To avoid such dramatic incidents, the Jerusalem police would install new security systems on the Mount. Some 700 officers, including regular police, paramilitary boarder troops and undercover forces are assigned on a regular basis to the Old City (Lefkovits 2005b, Weiss 2005). For example, in May 2005, nine Jewish activists were reported to have been taken into custody and questioned by the Jerusalem police for planning to fire a missile at the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, in effort to torpedo the planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (Lefkovits 2005a). The three key suspects in the case were all described in the media as 'far-right activists'. Charges against them were never filed, since no evidence of their plans for an attack was found (Weiss 2005).

In Jerusalem, there have been, and still are, several religious-political groups who consider the Temple Mount a key element in redemptive purposes.[4] Jewish endtime activists in Jerusalem repeatedly refer to the re-

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4   The case of the Movement for the Establishment of The Temple represents a unique blend of organized ultra-Orthodox and Messianic theology, combined with a millenarian activist position. This movement was initiated by a former TMF member, Yosef Elboim. (Inbari 2003: 279–323.)

lationship between Jerusalem as a physical city and Jerusalem as a place in religious millenarian dreams. I have argued before, that it is the participants' conviction of the truthfulness of apocalyptic representations that urges them to act according to what is viewed as the basis of redemption (Leppäkari 2006b). It is necessary to understand this condition, when we are trying to grasp the underlying motives for war, conflicts and threatening images. The focus of interest here is the strong dualistic tension which often follows from the conclusions drawn by individuals and groups emphasizing apocalyptic-millenarian reasoning. From my perspective, this approach can hopefully serve as a useful tool in attempts to decode underlying, religious, meaning-giving strategies in order to uncover the intense controversies of terror. Let me introduce Yehuda Etzion, Yoel Lerner, and Gershon Salomon, and let us briefly consider their millenarian visions of Jerusalem.

Jewish Temple Activists

Among the cultural radicals we find *Yehuda Etzion* the leader of the Redemption movement with his theology of active redemption. Etzion has been involved in many violent actions, most notoriously as the mastermind behind the Temple Mount plot in the 1980s. This group led by Etzion resumed preparations for its assault on the Dome of the Rock. In addition to the plot to destroy the Dome of the Rock, other 'underground' attacks took place. An attack on Arab mayors in 1980, an assault on Hebron's Muslim College in 1983, and the attempt to blow up five Arab buses full of passengers, can all be treated as examples of rising terrorism within the radical camp on the Jewish side of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Sprinzak 1999: 11). The events of the Dome of the Rock plot may be summarized on the basis of Ehud Sprinzak's account as follows.

Menachem Livni, an expert in explosives had studied the layout of the Temple Mount and the construction of the Dome of the Rock in minute detail for a period of two years. After stealing a huge quantity of explosives from a military camp in the Golan Heights, they worked out a detailed plan of attack. Twenty-eight precision bombs were manufactured, with the intention of destroying the Dome without causing any damage to its surroundings. This group hoped to approach the place unnoticed, but they were ready to kill if necessary, and for this purpose they bought special Uzi silencers and gas canisters. In total, more than twenty people were involved in the operation. Their intention was to prevent the final evacuation

of Jewish settlements in Sinai which was to take place no later than 1982. The group (called the 'The Underground' by the media), however, suffered major setbacks. Most importantly, none of those involved in the plot was an authoritative rabbi, and the question of rabbinical authorization had already been discussed in 1980. Most of those involved, were not willing to proceed without a rabbi's blessing. Menachem Livni, for example, was one who had insisted on rabbinic approval. When the final deadline arrived in 1982, the only two who were ready to proceed were the originators of the idea, Etzion and Ben-Shoshan; the grand plan was postponed. (Sprinzak 1991: 97–8 and 1999: 146–7.)

There are several social, economic, political and other factors that need to be taken into consideration when comparing the evacuation of Yamit in 1982 with the withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. According to Aran, there was actually no 'real crisis' within the settler community in 1982; people adjusted relatively peacefully to the new reality. There was no surge in violence, no evidence that they abandoned their firmly-held ideology or deserted their cause. 'True believers neither quit, nor did they become more enthusiastic or more extreme. These are the two optional reactions that betray desperation.' (Flükiger 2005.) According to Aran, Jewish orthodoxy proved on this occasion that it was flexible and able to cope with the new situation. Regarding Etzion's plot to blow up the Dome of the Rock, Aran maintains that it is more important to bear in mind the fact that planning is one thing, its realisation is another matter. The decision to abort the attack was taken by the plotters themselves. To conclude, in 1982 there was no precedent for *zealotry* among Jewish radicals, but after the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, the Israeli public was prepared and partly even expected zealot bloodshed during the Gaza withdrawal in 2005.[5]

According to the tradition of Jewish zealotry, the 'doctrine of zealotry' is a reminder of the first zealot, Pinchas Ben-Eleazar, who acted in awe of God when killing a man. The famous activists at the time of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. are also seen as part of this tradition. These followers of Shimon bar Kokhba not only acted against Romans, but also turned against Jews who wanted to compromise and make peace with the Romans. Determining who is a zealot is difficult. Different people interpret the doctrine in different ways. (Cf. Gorenberg 2000: 41–2.) The Israeli

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5   In this context, I use 'zealotry' to refer to passionate, severe, but unauthorized acts
     in which individuals become zealous for 'the sake of God', and 'zealot' to refer to
     an individual who commits such acts.

scholar Menachem Friedman has addressed this issue and accounts for the social dynamics of zealotry by using a model of three concentric circles. The first circle, small groups who, e.g., attend demonstrations and participate in violence; the second, there are those who are 'passive' because they do not take part in riots, but fully support the means of action; and finally, the third, the leaders or rabbis who occasionally find themselves faced with a problem: giving their blessing to a planned violent act, or choosing to invoke the doctrine retroactively. (Friedman 1991: 89–91 as cited in Sprinzak 1999: 103). The problem with the doctrine is, according to Sprinzak, that 'it provides legitimacy to act without rabbinical permission in a voluntary society that totally depends on the authority of these very rabbis' (Sprinzak 1999: 102). Thus the doctrine of zealotry provides legitimacy for violence against the secular, denial of political peace talks and ultimately, it can legitimate murder 'for the sake of God'.

When he was young, Etzion was inspired by the writings of the ultra-nationalist, Shabtai Ben Dov, who developed a grand theory of active redemption. Ben Dov's thoughts together with those of the poet Uri Zwi Greenberg, brought to life ideas about the re-establishment of the biblical Kingdom of Israel and the rebuilding of the Third Temple. Etzion speaks, in prophetic terms of a futuristic vision, which consists of a Jewish Temple, the Sanhedrin, and the Palace of the Messiah. He envisions a political system governed by the Torah law, something resembling a Jewish theocracy with a messianic leader. Not only is the Jewish State centred on the Temple governed by the messianic leader, but also by the Council of the Sanhedrin (the council of the seventy wise men) which gains its power and divine guidance from its connection to that particular place on the Mount. This is when and where the 'levels existence and destiny meet', when it is all, according to Etzion, set in motion. In his millenarian vision of the futuristic kingdom on earth, all Israelis will inherit the land and care for it in a way that has already been prophesied in the Bible.[6]

Yoel Lerner, a former Kahane activist who believes that the redemption of mankind depends upon the actions of Jews preparing for the conditions necessary for messianic salvation. Lerner was born and educated in America. A graduate of MIT in mathematics, he emigrated to Israel in 1960, and studied Hebrew and linguistics at Hebrew University. Lerner found out about the Jewish Defense League (JDL) in 1972, and joined Meir Kahane's organization (Sprinzak 1991: 275). He had been attracted by

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6   Author's interview with Etzion 06.06.1999.

Kahane's calling for young Jewish leaders who could start a fundamental reform in Israel. Lerner, who supported such ideas, participated in the JDL's early violent opposition to several Christian missionary groups in Israel. Today, Lerner is devoted to research into ancient Semitic languages in general. This is easy to understand when one looks around in this cheerful, bearded man's library. In his office, there are pictures on the wall of several Jewish extremist martyrs, his friends Meir Kahane and Baruch Goldstein. His passion is Jewish Law, the *Mishpat Ivri*. Lerner thinks that the Jewish people in contemporary Israel should adopt this juridical praxis and he has set out to develop a framework of a constitution for a Jewish state that would be based on Torah law.[7]

As one of the pictures on his wall shows an image of the Bet Mikdash, a tallit, and the flag of Israel, Lerner is asked whether he is an 'orthodox Jew' or maybe a 'Zionist'. His answer can be regarded as theological positioning:

> If, by 'Zionist' you mean – do I adhere to traditional Zionist philosophy as promulgated by Hertzl and Nordau and all the others down the line to Ben Gurion, the answer is a very qualified sometimes. If you mean by 'Zionist' – do I believe that the place of the Jewish people is in *Eretz Israel* and do I believe that we are in … the stage of divine process of the ingathering of the Exiles, which happened to use the Zionist movement as an implement in the physical world, the answer is yes. … The first stage is the ingathering of the Exiles. Everything else, the change in the heart and the refilling comes later.
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> In the accepted definition of the term, I think yes. I would probably be at the frontline of those orthodox Jews fighting against the *Haredi* philosophy, for example. … The aspect of *Haredi* philosophy that I reject is their very strong tendency not to worry about the spiritual situation of the rest of the Jewish people.[8]

Lerner has a long record of arrests. Many of his activities within the Kach Party were illegal. His relations with Kach cooled in 1974, but he still initiated operations on his own from within the Kach Party (Sprinzak 1991: 276). In 1974, for example, he was arrested for attacking several institutions associated with Christian missionary activities. Again in 1978, he

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7   Author's interview with Lerner 29.09.2003; cf. Juergensmeyer 2001: 44–8.
8   Author's interview with Lerner 29.09.2003.

was arrested for having established a subversive organisation named Gal (*Geula Le-Israel*, Redemption for Israel). This 'fantasy organisation for teen-agers', as Sprinzak calls it, had produced arms in order to transform Israel into a Halakhic state and envisioned a cultural and political revolution that would transform Israel (Sprinzak 1991: 276). In 1982, he was arrested again, this time for trying to place a bomb at the al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount together with his students. He was imprisoned for two years and when he was released from prison in 1984, the climate in Israel had become more favourable to ultra-nationalism, according to Sprinzak (Sprinzak 1991: 277).

Gershon Salomon is the leader of the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement. Though Salomon's group has not been directly in-volved in acts of violence, they still wish to terrify the Muslim population in Jerusalem. The Temple Mount Faithful (TMF) want the Temple Mount to become the moral and spiritual centre of Israel, the Jewish people and more widely the entire world. At the top of their agenda stands the wish to rebuild the Jewish Temple. The Temple is seen as a house of prayer for the people of Israel and all nations. The group rejects all political peace talks since they are perceived by the group as a breach of God's covenant. Following this reasoning, Jerusalem is distinguished as a holy city, and it should, therefore, remain the undivided capital of Israel (Leppäkari 2006b).

While the TMF has never clashed with the police, their actions still raise concerns among the Muslim inhabitants of the Old City. Demonstrations ar-ranged by the TMF often create extreme apprehension among the Muslims in Jerusalem. In 1990, for example, their march launched a call for an Arab rally in the defence of the *Haram-esh-Sharif*, to which thousands respond-ed. During the rally, demonstrators threw rocks at Jews praying below at the Western Wall. A surprised police unit opened fire with live ammuni-tion with catastrophic results. (Carmesund 1992: 61.) Every Sukkoth, the TMF lays a four and a half ton cornerstone for the Third Temple. A truck brings the stone close to the Temple Mount and some sympathisers dress up in priestly garments made by the Temple Institute in Jerusalem. This symbolic act of laying a cornerstone for the Third Temple continues every year to spark a sense of immediate threat (Leppäkari 2006b).

This group arranges rallies and demonstrates very vocally, insisting that its cause, the Third Temple, concerns all citizens. Whether symbolic-ally or not, the TMF was involved in the search for, and identification of red heifers – ritual animals to be sacrificed before the rebuilding of the new Temple can start. The birth of such red heifers is regarded within or-

thodox Jewish communities as a miracle. As reported in the TMF news-letter of spring 1999, several red heifers were born in Israel, and also one on an American ranch belonging to a 'Christian Zionist' (Salomon 1999, Leppäkari 2006b). These heifers where, however, never considered to be authentic enough for this sacrificial purpose.

The movements that Etzion, Lerner and Salomon represent are gener-ally held to be marginal within Israeli society. In public discourse, these leaders are often thought to have very distinctive characteristics, and are described more as curiosities than as representatives of mainstream ortho-doxy. What draws attention to these individuals is that they have a clear messianic conception of present-day life on their apocalyptic-millenarian agenda. Here Zionism is considered as a divine sign indicating a step for-ward in the redemptive process. All three, Etzion, Lerner and Salomon, are preoccupied with the concept of redemption. While Etzion's philosophy of the concept is linked to Jews alone, especially those living in the State of Israel, the perspective in Salomon's interpretation is broader. It is not only the above-mentioned means of action that differentiates these leaders, but also the universal theology that Salomon emphasizes.

Some disagreement in their views of the future Kingdom of God can be distinguished. But it is important here to pay attention to the similari-ties in their visions of the endtimes which involve the following concepts: traditional Jewish messianic leadership, a longing for a Third Temple, a revival of both the ancient temple cult and the Sanhedrin to be placed on the Mount. These Jewish activists all wait for a cultural revolution that will change the rules of nature (Leppäkari 2005: 22–9). According to Etzion, 'the government of Israel fails to do what God wishes to. … The removal of the Muslim mosques would spark a new light in the nation and trigger a major spiritual revolution.'[9] This statement indicates that the role of the Temple Mount is crucial, and as long as the activists are denied access to the Mount, the disputes will remain.

According to Gershon Salomon, 'God promised to Abraham and to his seed that the land and the borders of Israel are eternal, and cannot be di-vided and given to other people and nations.'[10] This is the type of state-ment that can give rise to an increasing sense of threat, when political deci-sions like that of the Gaza withdrawal are taken. Though it rejects all peace talks with the Palestinians, the TMF has never clashed with the police, and

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9   Author's interview with Etzion 06.06.1999.
10   Author's interview with Salomon 14.05.1998.

their demonstrations – while they provoke anxiety – remain within the law restricted as they always have done. The TMF is described in many studies prescribed as having revolutionary characteristics, but every now and then scholars are blinded by the group's apocalyptic character and disregard its emphasis on obeying the law.[11]

When Yoel Lerner maintains, 'the state [of Israel] should be a Jewish state. Especially things that are fundamental to the existence of a state, like [the] legal system', this can be interpreted as pointing towards a sense of increased rabbinic thinking. The pendulum, to use a metaphor, has shifted from active to passive, meaning that the sense of imminence and tension has perhaps, in Lerner's case, been replaced by tradition and long-term change.

To a certain extent, Yehuda Etzion, Yoel Lerner, and Gershon Salomon are inspired by mystical thinking, but it does not occupy a central position in their thought. The awaited Kingdom of God or revolution has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, redemption is thought to take place on a very concrete level, and thus it is a natural part of building the land. On the other hand, the anticipation of the endtime is intertwined with spiritual significance. Hence the motives for change acquire existential relevance. In Etzion's case, this argumentation is presented in terms of 'the laws of existence turning into the laws of destiny'. Gershon Salomon does not speak about different levels of existence, but refers instead to the revolution as 'raising awareness' to both Jews and the rest of the world.

Regarding teamwork between the three men, Lerner states that he collaborates with Etzion only in 'a purely ideological fashion', but at the same time admits that Etzion's theological ideas correlate with those of his own. Considering the relationship between Lerner and Salomon, Lerner complains about Salomon's disregard for the *Halakha,* and is frustrated when it comes to the TMF's public demonstrations. Lerner states briefly: 'we have been avoiding the TMF'. Lerner does not see public relations and propaganda, as well as flag waving, as promoting the cause of allowing Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount. When Salomon is asked about his relation to Etzion and Lerner, he describes their relationship as all playing their part

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11   Cf. Selengut 2003 where apocalyptic groups are defined as antinomian. In his otherwise well written book, Selengut categorises the TMF as a representative of what he refers to as 'Catastrophic Apocalypticism'. From my perspective, the TMF can indeed be described as apocalyptic, but I would hesitate to call it 'catastrophic' because its leader's religious imperatives have never led to clashes with the police.

in the 'Army of God' by separately serving – metaphorically speaking – in different units and serving different purposes. Salomon likens the role of his own group, the TMF, to that of a paratrooper's unit in the 'Army of God' (cf. Leppäkari 2005: 24). Even though the means of action and theological interpretations differ, Etzion, Lerner and Salomon all share a common goal; to liberate the Temple Mount in order for the Third Temple to be built.

'Ex-terrorists' and Apocalyptic Positions

There are many myths surrounding the concept of terrorism.[12] But as Andew Silke points out, one of the most widely held myths is that the persons involved in terrorist activities are 'crazed fanatics'. Such one-sided accounts are dangerous, since they allow society to dismiss terrorist actors as 'deranged fanatics'. Much of the psychological research on and analysis of terrorists of the past four decades has shown that the phenomenon is not that simple. Marginalisation, other social factors and biological factors have been offered as explanations for why people become terrorists. One of the most important keys to understanding the mechanisms at play is to understand the psychology of vengeance, the desire for revenge (Silke 2003: 39). It is difficult, according some definitions, to become a terrorist unless one can find a group that is willing to let one join and provide support. Lone-actors are a rarity. Psychologists maintain that a terrorist's psychology is not significantly different from anyone else's. However, studies show that social environment plays a crucial role in whether people become terrorists or not. Many times, violent confrontations with representatives of the authorities provides the impetus that leads individuals to approach and join terrorist groups (Silke 2003: 50–1). Under certain circumstances, such as when they feel mistreated, most people could support or participate in terrorism.

Terrorism is an old and persistent phenomenon. As terrorist violence is described as a symptom of fundamental problems, 'it emerges again and again simply because human nature is what it is, and the circumstances that produce it continue to occur across time and geography' (Silke 2003: 51). When religious symbols and the representations these generate become involved in millenarian endtime anticipation, rhetoric and action, they easily become translated into abhorrent condemnation. Many schol-

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12   For a definition of terrorism, see Jonathan Peste's article in this volume.

ars argue that apocalyptic anticipation of a millenarian promise, need not be translated into violent activity. Catherine Wessinger, for example, has in her study of conflict management in new religious movements, developed a framework for the study of millenarian groups. According to her, various mechanisms are at work when a group becomes violent. Wessinger makes a distinction between 'catastrophic millenarism' and 'progressive millenarism'. 'Catastrophic millenarism' involves a pessimistic view of humanity and society. It possesses a dualistic worldview and the world is seen as battleground between good and evil; while 'progressive millennialism' involves an optimistic view of human nature that became prevalent in the nineteenth century. According to Wessinger, humans engaging in social work that is in harmony with the divine can effect changes that non-catastrophically and progressively create the awaited millennial kingdom. Yet simultaneously, catastrophic and progressive millennialism are not mutually exclusive. Wessinger further identifies three subcategories in relation to the dynamics of violence: fragile millennial groups, assaulted millennial groups, and revolutionary millennial movements (Wessinger 2000: 16, 24, 264–5). Such processes of transformation which turn millenarian anticipations into violent apocalyptic actions have mostly been accounted for in studies relating to new religious movements, but the study made by Motti Inbari of the group known as the *Mishkan Ohalim* (Tenth Encampment) in Israel, which has clashed with local authorities, can be treated as a recent example which accounts for the social mechanisms at work when messianic anticipation turns into outbreaks of violence (Inbari 2001: 74–87). When such incidents occur, it is of the utmost importance that scholars identify and distinguish the multiple mechanisms influencing the outcome. Since questions concerning the issues of how and why people become terrorists seem to dominate the current discussion on terrorist and religious activist behaviour, I would, however, maintain that the questions of how and why people *leave* terrorism are just as important.

According to Jonh Horgan, exceptionally little is known or understood about what happens to influence people when they give up terrorism. The factors behind the choice to give up violence are as multifaceted as those behind the choice to use violence. Therefore a straightforward answer as to why people give up terrorism 'obscures the impressive complexity of the question and the possible assumptions that underpin it' (Horgan 2003: 128). When, at some point, taxonomies for this behaviour are presented, as Hogan points out, it remains important to challenge scholars to include the dynamic processes influencing individual choices and behaviour (Horgan 2003: 128–9).

Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh has treated the experience of 'becoming an ex' as an experience most people in contemporary society are familiar with. In our surroundings, we find people who identify themselves as 'exes'; there are ex-spouses, ex-convicts, ex-alcoholics, ex-doctors, ex-cops, ex-nuns, ex-prostitutes and so forth. Do not we have 'ex-terrorists' too? Role exit processes that involve a voluntary exit from a significant role may, according to Fuchs Ebaugh, be identified through stages of disillusionment, search for alternative roles, points that trigger final decisions, culminating in an identity as an 'ex'. Role exit involves both adjustment and adaptation. As Fuchs Ebaugh expresses it, this concerns not only the individual making the changes, but also the part of significant others associated with the person (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988: 5). The social roles experienced by us (as we become socially identified as representatives of each category) can open up a new discussion on the relationship between religious role identification and action in relation to what is commonly conceived and identified as religiously motivated acts of terror.

To be an 'ex' is socially unique. As Fuchs Ebaugh writes, '[d]isengagement, disidentifcation, dealing with role residual, and being categorized as an ex-member of a group are a few of the elements that make role exit a unique social process' (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988: 6). In this article, the subject of discussion is religious role identification and action; how religious symbols, representations and interpretations of these may affect a social process directed towards a concrete goal. When it comes to the Temple Mount, activists' symbols do indeed matter. For Temple activists, the future Temple and the role that is prescribed for the 'New Jerusalem' are significant symbols. Here 'Jerusalem imagined' and 'Jerusalem experienced' meet, but what is imagined does not correspond to the actual reality. When the activists identify themselves as 'agents of God', they enter (or take on) roles with major consequences. Not only are these roles 'symbolical', pointing towards something that goes beyond what is immediately perceived (Holm 1997: 18). These roles are also much larger and dynamic since they are part of a long tradition of religious zealotry. When making a transition from 'acting out God's will' to 'interpreting God's will', significant changes have taken place. The process of transformation, from being engaged in violent endtime actions to becoming an 'ex-terrorist' does not necessarily need to be identified as a crisis. Those who tend to hold on to an apocalyptic worldview, tend also to emphasize polarized attitudes and black-and-white values. Within these settings, existential matters, such as questions of life and death, become constantly present and affect the outcome of the way humans perceive life in general. When the transmission

of apocalyptic symbols and representations becomes intense, they can be identified as sources of inspiration and motivate people to act, whether peacefully or violently for a cause (Leppäkari 2006b).

If we follow the reasoning of Wessinger, this would imply that in the above-mentioned cases, we find a fine line between catastrophic and progressive millenarism. Momentarily the distinctive lines seem to fluctuate and shift from one extreme to the other. This is not surprising, since religious life – as life does in general – changes. Religion is adaptive. If defined as a way of coping (Pargament 2000: 334–7), tradition sanctions the models of how to interpret, adapt and give meanings to events, ideas and explanations. Old and new ideas and ways of behaviour can always be decided upon, which leads us to the relevant question: Could individuals with 'ex-terrorist' backgrounds then engage in intiating attacks once again on the Temple Mount in order to hasten their own redemptive plans?

Though the above-mentioned activists are all displeased with the current situation on the Temple Mount, it is here suggested that none of them would personally engage in any attacks against the Muslim presence on the Temple Mount today. Yehuda Etzion and Yoel Lerner are 'ex-terrorists',[13] who were active over twenty years ago. This implies that both have undergone a role transition from being an 'active terrorist' to becoming an 'ex-terrorist'. Nowadays, they are inspirational figures, theologians working on philosophical and judicial matters. And no radicalization processes can be identified as taking place within the Temple Mount Faithful Movement. Yet, it remains the case that these matters should be explained in greater detail, and this is a challenge for multidisciplinary scholarship.

The Temple Mount issue is a serious issue for all three of these men, but rather than running out and waving guns, they inspire new generations and serve as role models for the younger generation to adapt. When it comes to the Gaza pullout, these men do perhaps call upon zealot principles: the land should not be divided, or given away. The Jew who commits such an act against the well-being of the nation and its people is regarded as doomed. Theologically, according to these three men, it is still considered legitimate to act against desecration of the Holy Land, and therefore, these men might inspire actions in order to 'save the Temple Mount'. Yehuda Etzion, Yoel Lerner, and Gershon Salomon display a deep commitment

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13   It should be noted that neither Etzion nor Lerner identify themselves as 'terrorists'. The concept of 'terrorist' is used here as a principle of categorisation when accounting for violent acts motivated by religious endtime beliefs.

and dedication to their cause. And even if they long for a Third Temple and anticipate messianic leadership, it does not automatically imply that the awaited 'spiritual revolution' requires a helping hand from them.

In the End

For Jewish endtime activists, the Temple Mount evokes strong feelings, and the various apocalyptic-millenarian representations that are attached to Jerusalem create the platform where actions are being performed with an eye to eternity. Such apocalyptic positions allow Temple activists to enter the stage and when they feel threatened, even to use violence. But in the situation of religious-political tension in Jerusalem, terror attacks or bombs are not required to create a sense of chaos or conflict. It takes much less than a bomb to cause anxiety in this city.

In this article, I have shown that in Jerusalem power can easily be legitimized and exercised by the use of apocalyptic rhetoric that has its source, in this case, in Jewish tradition. Conflicts easily arise when apocalyptic representations become used as arguments for an immediate and desperate need for change. Sometimes such representations cause a sense of insecurity, since it is hard to know when the rhetoric is applied metaphorically, or symbolically, and when it actually refers to a physical reality, a certain place or a specific group of people. Changes in apocalyptic tendencies need, however, not result in outbreaks of violence. Within this apocalyptic-millenarian frame of reference concord can indeed be achieved, but only if the apocalyptic positions that are here taken and maintained point towards and prioritize a millenarian future achieved through peaceful means.

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