

The Psychology of a Homeland

and the Aberrations Caused by Not Having One

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Modern social and political problems all exist because of preexisting psychological complexes operating in the minds of individuals. Address the psychology of the individual and one can successfully address social and political issues. Yet, the psychodynamics of every individual is not an island unto itself. Every individual psyche exists in a greater ocean of consciousness and is influenced by many things. One must be able to recognize the greater whole before one can address the individual parts. In this respect, we are required to understand the spiritual/psychic component of the mind as an integral part of both individual and collective psychology. We must also realize that all these components of the mind are also connected to other elements, one important one is one's homeland and culture.



For millennia peoples around the world have fought and died to protect and defend what for them is their homeland. In order to understand the psychological/spiritual significance of real estate we must delve into aspects of reality known to many ancient indigenous peoples but almost unknown and ignored by those who lack any spiritual/psychic development.

The Sage RaMBaM (Maimonides) wrote in his Mishneh Torah Law Code (Y.T.3:9) that planets themselves are actually living organisms that are conscious of themselves, the angelic order that operates physical matter and of G-d Himself. Yes, Planet Earth is a sentient conscious personality not too unlike us. Although it is a life form radically different from our own, it is still nonetheless a conscious, sentient independent life form. Ultimately the Earth is alive, thinks and feels.

This fundamental knowledge has been the source of millennia of idol worship of those who worship the Earth and request from her directly her bounty. This type of worship was well known in Biblical days (and prohibited by Torah). This was the underlying concepts of planting the Ashera trees, which represented the power of growth in "Mother" Earth.

The Earth has always been metaphorically referred to as our "mother," even as G-d has been referred to as our Heavenly "Father." Indeed, even in the story of the creation of Adam some have seen reference to this concept. When the Torah says, "let Us create Man," the Us in question has been interpreted by some as G-d speaking to the Earth. G-d would form Man from the dust of the Earth and then breathe into Him the Living Soul from Heaven. The Human species is thus a composite entity

comprised of two distinct parts, physical and spiritual. Yet, unless the two work together in harmony, neither can exist independently.

The human species is thus integrally bound to the Earth from which comes forth our flesh, and to where our flesh shall return. Therefore all the time that we sojourn on Earth we are integrally bound to the land. We each share a spark of the soul of the Earth. This spark is our life-force. In Hebrew, we call it Nefesh. Torah states that it resides within our blood.

There is an interesting point made by the psychologist Carl Jung that is of relevance here. His entire body of psychological/psychiatric work is built upon the premise that all humanity at our deepest psychological level are all somehow connected. Essentially we are all parts of a greater whole. He refers to this as the Collective Unconscious, or in his later writings as the Objective Psyche.

Students of Torah should not be so quick to dismiss Jung in this respect, for hundreds of years before him, the great Kabbalists of Tzfat, the Ari'zal and Rav Hayim Vital wrote in similar vein. They taught that all human souls were included in the greater "super-soul" of Adam. Adam was thus not just an individual; he was an entire race of entities (not all of whom fell with him in Eden).

Throughout his writings Jung quotes often from the teachings of the Kabbalah. Indeed, one of Jung's top students was the Israeli Erich Neumann, who served as president of the Israel Association of Analytical Psychologists. Jung's connection to Jewish sources and his embrace of such teachings is clear throughout much of his work. How much of it influenced his discoveries into the depths of the reality of the human experience, we may never know.

Another point that Jung mentions is that the Collective Unconscious of humanity, shared by all is nonetheless divided into subsections. He refers to these as the racial subdivisions within the collective unconscious. Again, we see this same teaching in our Torah. After Noah's Flood G-d ordained the division of nations, wherein which groups of individuals developed their own unique identities. In order to facilitate this development, Heaven ordained that each nation of individuals be assigned a certain geographic area to call their own. This area would help mold their identities and define them as a people. Essentially their allocated homeland would mold their identities and define their uniqueness as a specific part of the greater whole of humanity.

Mother Earth therefore gave to each of her children their own unique identities and psychological foundations all based upon their relationship with their homelands. The people of a land essentially were possessed by the spirit of that land. It fed them as their life force energy. It became a part of their souls. The indigenous relationship of a body of people with a specific piece of real estate defines for the individuals their psychological identities. These identities cannot be severed, not by time, or by removal from one's natural indigenous homeland. This is a simple psychological fact. The Nefesh soul within each of us thus emanates from our indigenous homelands.

Deep within the unconscious of every human being there lies a connection to their ancient homeland and the culture and the way of life that developed and thrived there. Regardless of how detached one may become from one's roots, nonetheless those roots are psychological and they run deep, to the core of one's essence. They can never be shattered or broken completely. Deep within the unconscious of every living human being remains a connection to that which his unconscious mind will always recognize as home.

A nation's connection to their homeland has always been defined by many different factors. The people of a place dress in a certain fashion, usually as an expression of the natural environment. In cold regions people wear heavy clothing and in warm regions they wear light clothing. The choice of diet is similarly defined by the types of foods available in that region. Thus in cold regions people eat heavy foods in order to keep warm and in warmer regions people eat light to keep themselves cool. Language also becomes a unique bond with a general language being broken down into countless local dialects all with specific phraseologies and accentual differences. All these unique applications of dress, diet and speech are complimented with common experiences. Therefore, a bond of commonality rises among a people, the expression of which is unique to their land and its environment.

This type of national/cultural identity can maintain itself literally for millennia barring the intrusion of any outside invading differences. Communities become insular and psychologically isolated. All outside influences are viewed as foreign and dangerous. Some communities will act with violence towards anything from the outside. Some only express their animosity in the form of arrogance and a willful disregard for anything different.

In a melting-pot society where all cultural differences are expected to dissolve and disappear, such attachments to ones origins is often viewed as anti-social and greeted with hostility, the same hostility that one from one culture views others from another. Essentially, the melting pot mentality is a psychological aberration in that it takes people out of their familiar background and thrusts them into a psychological state of complete unfamiliarity.

It is no wonder then that when exposed to a multicultural melting pot society peoples from cultures all around the world often feel lost and abandoned. This more often than not leads to expressions of self destructive behavior. One who is lost unto themselves can never find oneself in a context that is not one's own. One cannot be something that one is not. Jung describes this as one trying to feign a legacy not their own.

Such adoptions of foreign cultures never sit right within an individual's unconscious. Therefore such cross cultural adoptions cause great inner turmoil and psychological strife. This usually materializes in a sense of zealotry and fanaticism on behalf of an individual with regards to the newly adopted customs and culture. In essence, one is zealous in an attempt to prove to oneself one's sincerity of adoption of that which was originally foreign and distant.

This is clearly evident with the identities of secular Jews, especially those living in Israel. With an almost religious like zeal they adopt the secular morays of foreign cultures and embrace them so tight that they become more secular than their western secular counterparts. In many ways Israeli secularism has become a ridiculous artificial copy of western secularism. For many westerners, Israeli secularism seems to be an overdone attempt at imitation. In this case, imitation is not the highest form of flattery. Because of their loss of Jewish self identity and their psychic disconnection from the homeland of Israel, certain sectors of the secular Israeli society have become extremely psychologically imbalanced. This is unfortunately clearly evident in the manner in which politics is conducted. At one time in early Israeli history, there used to be a love for the land and a passion to rebuild it. This was called Zionism. Essentially, for the most part, this love and passion for the land is dead, all but rooted out of the hearts of those who want to, as Jung said, "feign a legacy not their own."

Psychological zeal is a natural phenomenon. It works in both ways, taking one away from one's own legacy and restoring one to it. Psychological zeal is not reserved to the exclusive domain of the secular. One sees this even in the Torah community with regards to Ba'alei Teshuva (people who adopt religion later in life). New members of the religious community usually become its most zealous adherence. This is usually due to a deep psychological need to remove oneself from one's past and an equal need to reinforce ones new found identity. Most expressions of this type of religiosity are not truly spiritually motivated, but are rather a psychological expression of the pursuit of balance and search for a new identity. In many religious circles, Ba'alei Teshuva zealotry is usually smiled at, tolerated and recognized for what it is. We see this similar type of psychological expression of cultural adoption with young adolescents who wish to embrace all the cultural adherences as a sign of their emerging psychological sense of identity. Be they secular or religious, converts are a psychologically interesting bunch of people.

Ultimately psychic connection and identity is molded by one's relationship to one's geographical homeland and the culture that develops there. Yet, in cases when people are disconnected from their homeland, by either choice or compulsion, they lose an essential psychic element necessary for the development of their personalities. This is why we say one loses their soul. They are essentially detached from their Nefesh, their source of life-force. Therefore, when one leaves ones homeland and lives in another land with another culture, one of two things happen. Either one assimilates entirely and disconnects from ones original psychic roots or one endeavors to hold on to such roots by a reinforced embrace of one's original cultural morays. Again we see both of these phenomena with secular and Haredi Israelis.

When one loses connection with one's homeland one essentially loses connection with oneself. As I said above this psychological state of disorientation often leads to self abuse and self destructive behavior. However, those who cling to their cultural morays even when the original connection to those morays has been severed will usually reinforce their cultural identification with what was old in their attempt to remain connected. Needless to say such a connection is a hollow one, one not founded upon being in one's own land, and living the lifestyle indigenous to that land. This causes an aberration of Nefesh.

When in another land, the environment is different from one's homeland. The diet and everything else is different. Naturally this would lead one to adapt to one's new surroundings and thus the creation and adoption of a new identity. Indeed, this is how national identities evolve, as one comes from one place and settles in another. Such adaptations have been proven successful throughout history. Rabbis and Jewish Law have always followed these natural rules. This is why Jewish Law differed from community to community as individual Rabbis ordained laws specifically for their communities in those times and places. Never did a Rabbi come forth with laws claiming them to be incumbent upon everyone.

Sometimes when individuals move from place to place, they totally absorb their new identities at the cost of the old. At other times, some are able to integrate the two, the old and the new and somehow create a harmonizing balance of the two. This then creates a new racial subdivision with the collective unconscious as described by Jung. This is not necessarily a bad thing.

Examples of such positive cultural merges are found all over the world. We even find this today with regards to the misplaced Haredi Jewish community of Eastern Europe. During the times prior to the

Holocaust when numerous Ashkenazi Jews fled Europe and came to the United States and Israel, their communities came under the natural influences of the cultures in both lands. These Jews maintained their Jewish identities and allegiance to Torah, yet at the same time adapted to their new surrounding with considerable success. However, after the Holocaust when the beloved old world of Eastern European Jewry was no more, the original connection to their homeland was psychically severed. Psychologically this was a devastating blow. European Jewry was in Europe for such a long time that much of their Nefesh life force came from there. This connection however lost at the physical level is still maintained at the psychic level.

Psychologically speaking, the now homeless members of that lost world sought to rebuild it. The two new homes of choice were of course where communities already existed; these being mostly the United States and Israel. Yet, needless to say, these communities already housed vibrant Orthodox Jewish communities which had established their identities in their own right. Now, along comes the new wave of influence from the old world.

Over a period of decades now, we have seen the western Orthodox Jewish world become more and more Europeanized (Haredi). The chic trend is to become more and more like the old homelands of Eastern Europe. Numerous Orthodox Jewish individuals who had never had any contact whatsoever with Eastern Europe jump on the bandwagon of cultural assimilation to fit into the new and growing racial subdivision in the collective unconscious of the Jewish nation. Thus we have witnessed Sephardim and others from Western Europe and the United States adopting the cultural norms of a lost Eastern European homeland; which as Jung has pointed out is a psychological aberration; a feigning of a legacy not one's own. In this respect, psychologically speaking the Haredim acted in the same way as did the Israeli secular. Each chose their own form of foreign identification. In my opinion, it is this psychological disassociation that is the heart of the Israeli Secular/Haredi prejudice towards one another.

Whether we speak of the Israeli secular or the Haredim, proponents of change always tend to impose their sense of norms and culture upon others with the argument that it is the right and proper thing to do. The Israeli secular did this to the Sephardim entering the State of Israel in its early years and now the Haredim are doing it in return. Not knowing any different, many accept the logic, never really think it out. Instead, one is drawn emotionally by a wave, which if thought about does not really make much sense. Yet, people are more accustomed to feel, go with the flow and accommodate, much more than stopping, thinking and making independent conclusions that might bring them into conflict with those around them. This last course was the path of Avraham Avinu. Alas, we do not have many Avraham types amongst us today.

For the Haredim, without the original contact to the Eastern European homeland the bond that kept the people connected to it was irrevocably lost. In place of that bond, those who yearn for its return instead place greater and greater emphasis on the culture that came forth from those lands. Unfortunately, as these cultures are applied now in different lands with different cultures the natural process of assimilation occurs. Eventually, as I said above, an amalgamation of cultures occur creating a new sub-divisional expression. However, those most threatened by such a loss of all that which they have known fight against any and all changes actual and perceived. This explains why, for example, the Haredi culture fights to reclaim an Eastern European identity of two hundred years ago, prior to the time of expulsion and loss. In essence they are trying to recreate what psychologically is for them a golden age. Of course, such a golden age is a figment of the imagination and essentially what is

being created is a system built upon imagination and not upon any reality, either one lost or one remembered.

Needless to say, such a building is founded on very shaky psychological ground. Therefore, it is no wonder that we see many “cracks” in Haredi society, all these being indicative of a singular phenomenon. As much as the community wants to isolate itself and reinforce its idea of a world long ago lost, such a reality contradicts the very nature of psychological and natural reality. As such, it is destined to failure.

All that rigidities and isolation can do is to build external walls, but there are no walls that can protect the psyche. The inner core of personality is subject to the cultures, the environment and the energy of the new land and country in which one resides. This cannot be avoided. Those who fail to make the necessary compromises will eventually fall into states of psychological aberration, which will materialize as all types of social and other behavioral problems.

Compare this if you will to a mighty storm. When the great winds blow mighty thick trees bend in the wind and thus survive. Strong brick walls do not yield and are thus broken down and shattered. Trees are alive; walls are dead. When the living human psyche acts alive then it too bends and adapts, in this case expressing and living Torah as is fit for the United States or for Israel. When, however, fundamentalism rears its dangerous head and those who embrace it seek every extreme to revive a long ago lost ideal (be it religious or secular) without compromise or bending, then like the dead brick wall, they will be destined to fall, once the winds blows hard enough to topple them.

This example is applicable to both the Israeli secular and the Haredi communities. All the extremes in the older leaders are pushing away larger numbers of the youth, who having been raised in the new lands have naturally absorbed their cultures. In response, the older generation becomes more and more entrenched and by doing so becomes more and more unstable. Even when this psychological state is passed on to members of the younger generation, this only causes them to become further alienated from the realities of the societies around them.

They are especially alienated from the Nefesh life force of the land that gives them both birth and purpose. As such they are like ships at sea with broken sails, lost and unable to find their way home. The secular claim that this is what they want and how morally right it is. After all, this is what their secular counterparts in America and elsewhere say. Therefore, if the Americans define what is right, the secular Israeli has to embrace it with even more gusto than the American. On the other hand, the Haredi will claim that what they are doing in resurrecting old and gone Eastern Europe is nothing less than the Will of G-d. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. But truth is not a factor in the decision making process of the peoples so possessed by the archetypes of others. Those who are possessed by an archetype of imagination cannot see beyond their own self imposed limitations. The psychological imbalance in this is dangerous for themselves and possibly for many others who may have to deal with them.

Now that I have identified the psychological problem, and have addressed many of its symptoms; let me also identify its solution. As complicated as the problem may be, its solution is as simple as the problem is complicated. The solution is simply the erasure of the sub-divisional and the re-embrace of the original common denominator of the national collective unconscious. We must no longer feign legacies not our own. As Shakespeare once wrote, “to thine own self [one must] be true.” In this

case, with regards to the Haredim, they can very well return to Torah and live a fully observant Torah life without all the unnecessary and psychologically unhealthy cultural accoutrements that are left over from the lost homelands of Eastern Europe.

As for the secular Israelis, they have a harder task in front of them. They seek to find an Israeli identity without it being based upon Torah. Yet, the entire relationship of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel is predicated upon the Torah. This is a historical and a psychic fact. One cannot have a Jewish identity without Torah and one cannot have a Jewish homeland without Torah. How then can the secular Israeli continue to be Israeli and continue to be secular? The two are contradictory. We see this contradiction causing the self destruction of large segments of the Israeli secular population. This does not mean that the only other option facing the Israeli secular is to become Haredi. We see that this too is an aberration. Both secularism and Haredi'ism are psychological expressions of extremes that feed off each other's feigning legacies not their own. The solution to these extremes is obviously for both to find the "middle ground."

While there is nothing wrong with the cultural accoutrements of certain secular and lost Eastern European lifestyles, they can nevertheless become an impediment to psychological growth if and when attachment to them disables one from adapting into the different environments that one presently lives. For example, we see many Haredim who will wear two and three piece woolen suits even in the middle of the 100 degree hot summers in New York and Jerusalem. This is not only unnatural; it is also unhealthy, physically and psychologically. When asked why they do this, the wearers will simply respond without thinking, this is what the Rebbes of old did. Yes, while the Rebbes of old might have dressed like this two hundred years ago, they did so because, as the wise men they were, they dressed in accordance to the norms and needs of their societies. They did not dress such as an expression of religion but rather of normality.

Now, hundreds of years and thousands of miles removed, normality requires one to follow the old Rebbes wisdom, not their cultural practices. Yet, with the Holocaust and the loss of the old homeland the psychic bond with the Rebbes has been broken. All that remains for these psychological orphans are the external accoutrements and these are embraced as one would a picture of a long dead loved one. This behavior is understandable and even solicits our natural sympathy.

We do not have to mention that as modest as the Haredi community wants to be, in equal counterpart the secular Israeli wants to be overly immodest. As the Haredi refuses to remove his winter weight clothing in the summer, because that is the way to go, so too the secular Israeli woman, following her western counterpart will dress and appear whorish, even wearing miniskirts in the middle of the cold winters, when they should be dressing warmly. Style and fashion have become expressions of psychological aberrations. They have become associated as one's symbol of association with whichever group one wishes to be identified with. Cultural norms of dress based upon the natural environment and the spirit of the land in which one lives has become almost completely forgotten. This too only shows a further disconnection of one's psyche from ones psychic roots.

When the State of Israel began the secular Israeli prided themselves upon their casualty and their agricultural prowess. You never saw an old secular Israeli wearing a western style suit and tie. Yet, as times changed and more and more secular Israelis chose to become more like their western counterparts, two things began to happen simultaneously. First, secular Israelis began to dress like their western counterparts and suits and ties became the norm, especially amongst the politicians.

Second the secular Israeli lost their love and passion for the land. In 1967 they fought to build the land and expand it. In 2007 they fight to destroy the land by shrinking it. Regardless of political considerations, one should look at the psychology of the concept of land for peace in light of the Zionist ideal. One does not need to be either a political scientist or a psychologist to recognize a psychological aberration here.

Psychological growth is the same thing as spiritual growth; the difference is only semantical. The destruction of Eastern European Jewry, like everything else in reality is Will of the Creator. Eastern European Jewry was not destroyed because of some silly notion of their being punished for their sins, but rather because their present stage of psychological development had reached its pinnacle and it was time to move on. For centuries many voices arose instructing the peoples to leave Europe and to return to the original homeland, the Holy Land that united the entire nation of Israel. For the most part this call went unheeded, not out of rebellion but rather because in the hearts and minds of the masses, Eastern Europe had become the de-facto new homeland. People were not inclined to leave the familiar to go towards the unfamiliar. This is a constant psychological dilemma faced by every human being.

Essentially the Holocaust came and forced the collective Jewish psyche to change. The change brought the survivors of Europe back to the original Holy Land. Here, a new Torah culture would re-emerge built upon the pattern of the oldest of models, that of being an independent nation living in its own land. As the unique Israeli identity emerged, strange ghostly images of the European past reared their ugly heads. The secular remembered the ways of Europe and wanted to create a secular Israel based upon the European model. The religious on the other hand wanted to recreate the ideal of the European religious model. Such conflicting models brought both groups into a heightened conflict. The secular could still turn to their role model of the secular West, this still existed. However the religious did not have a role model upon which to return. Their religious way in Europe was completely wiped out.

Both communities began to rebuild, each in their own image. Each community rebuilt each motivated by what they had lost in the past and the connection to what remained in the present. Being that the Haredim had lost more, their motivation to build was greater. Thus their isolation grew as they embellished more and more to insulate themselves from the growing secular culture. Unfortunately, this also created walls for the Haredim separating them from those who should be their natural allies in Torah. The Haredi attempt to live in the past blocked them from adapting to the growing Torah culture of the land reborn. To this day, as much as the Haredi consider the secular to be a threat, they consider the Religious Zionist, or the true so-called modern Orthodox to be an even greater threat.

Loss is a terrible thing to face. Yet, the nation of Israel has over centuries gained and lost numerous sub-divisions of our racial collective unconscious. These are expressed in the varying opinions of Torah Law adopted and discarded over centuries. Now, that the nation has returned to its natural homeland, the secret of national unity is not the adoption of this or that foreign identity or the collective adoption of one of the sub-divisions of the national collective unconscious be it secular or Haredi. Rather, the secret here is the restoration and remembrance of the collective without its diving sub-divisions. In this all the different cultures in which Jews have lived over centuries begins to fade away and there comes the birth of the new Jewish culture, one nation under G-d, indivisible, with justice and freedom for all. Torah is our banner and our flag.

One cannot have Zionism without Zion. One cannot have a nation of Israel with a people of Israel. One cannot have a people of Israel who are not Israeli. The term Israeli must become a term associated with that unique expression which unites the people with their land and their origins in Torah. These three can never be separated. Thousands of years of history have shown us this. Our collective bond to one another and to our land is psychic. It cannot be broken. Psychological aberrations creep in when we are not balanced inside ourselves. This then disables our natural internal psychic order from manifesting externally. This is why we have problems.

This is why regardless of anyone living in the Holy Land today, we are all still in a state of psychological exile. We are in exile from the spirit of our homeland, we are in exile from G-d consciousness and we are in exile from our own inner psychic selves. We will only become a free people, once we know who we are and what it is that we are fighting for.

Ultimately the spirit of the Land itself guides the people back to their normal and natural national identity. Essentially, the people are the Land for the spirit of the Land is in its people. When the two are divided it is a devastation for both. This bond needs to be firmly reestablished. A new love for the homeland and everything it contains is a psychological necessity for the continuance of the nation.

The Land itself is alive and it responds to its natural children. In the early years of the modern State of Israel we saw how true this was, with the blessings of the blooming deserts. Yet, now as many of the people have again distanced themselves psychologically from the land and instead have turned to embrace lifestyles, cultures and mentalities foreign to the land, the natural bond is again torn asunder and the land no longer produces its natural bountiful produce. The connection of the people to the land is psychic and psychological. It must be maintained for there to be what we call blessing.

We all have a great deal of work ahead of us. We must be who we are and discard that which we are not. This is equally true and applicable for secular and Haredi alike, whether or not they live in Israel or anywhere else. The spirit of our Land is calling us home. It is speaking to our souls. Those who belong in the homeland will hear its call and respond.

Redemption comes first as an inner psychological revelation prior to it becoming an external political reality. Hundreds of years ago, this same exact sentiment was expressed by the Ba'al Shem Tov who taught, that we each need to rectify the spark of Mashiah within our individual souls before Mashiah can come to the nation. Thus, in conclusion, if we truly wish to experience the long hoped for redemption, it will begin inside of each of us individually. And as Pirkei Avot long ago taught, "it is not your job to complete the work, but you are not free to avoid your share." And as Hillel said, "if not now, then when?"

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