

# Religious Politics and Parties in Israel

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It should not be surprising that religion and religious issues play a role of importance in the affairs of a Jewish state and its ideological and nationalist creative impulse, Zionism. "The House of Israel is not like all the nations," has been an article of belief over the centuries, and the religious factor was the key manifestation, of course, of Jewish identity and consciousness. Observant or orthodox Jews were among the first organized groups to come to Palestine in the late nineteenth century, and their numbers continued to swell the immigrant totals during the British Mandate period, although secular and socialist groups came in greater numbers later.

Concerning the matter of basic terms, the definition of what constitutes "observant" or "orthodox" is a difficult matter by any standards. Various parts of the Jewish population are observant concerning different things. Over 90 per cent of the population of Jerusalem, for instance, observes Yom Kippur with a comparable figure in most other parts of the country. Details of dietary provisions, sabbath activities, and other matters related to religion are followed in varying degrees and combinations. Frequent estimates have been that approximately one-fourth of the Israeli Jewish population can properly be classed as observant in over-all religious matters. The combined vote of the religious parties has never approached this figure, and came to less than 16 per cent of the country-wide vote in the 1961 Knesset elections.

The recognition of the importance of these things, however, did not necessarily foreordain that Jewish political parties based

first and foremost on religious grounds would come into existence, or having come into existence, perpetuate themselves. Religious minded or observant Jews in Palestine and Israel may be and in many circumstances have been involved in political parties of a basically secular nature. These parties, furthermore, have been willing enough to emphasize that their doors are open to all segments of the population—orthodox, secular, and the shades in between. These appeals have had considerable success over the years, with Mapai, the Israel Labor Party of David Ben Gurion, particularly concentrating significant efforts in this respect. Nevertheless, religious parties have been present throughout the modern history of Israel, and running well back to the early period of international Zionism.

While their combined electoral strength over the years indicates clearly that they are not justified in claiming to speak for all of observant or orthodox Jewry in Palestine-Israel, their appeal in such circles is a real one. Elected Knesset (parliamentary) representation for the religious parties has been strikingly consistent, occupying a narrow range from 15 to 18 seats out of the 120 through five national elections. In some communities the vote for the religious parties occupies a high percentage of the total, both in Knesset elections and for municipal contests.\* The influence of the religious parties is not to be judged alone, however, on their ballot-box standing, and goes beyond their own ranks in a number of significant respects, as will be pointed out.

A discussion of religious parties in Israel needs to involve itself with some considerations concerning the nature and implications of religious parties in democratic societies in general, and of Israel in particular.<sup>1</sup> The influence of economic and social class lines upon the composition of political parties is generally recognized. Such socio-economic forces seem to reflect themselves in

\* Among the larger metropolitan areas the vote for religious parties is highest in Jerusalem, coming to about one-fourth of the total. In the orthodox stronghold of Bnei Brak to the east of Tel Aviv the religious parties consistently poll around 50 per cent. On the other hand, these parties receive little or no votes at all in agricultural settlements operated or affiliated with secular left-wing parties.

a more clear-cut manner in a multi-party system than is the case in a two party system such as that of the United States where there is a pronounced blurring of positions between the two serious contenders for power.

Religious parties, however, by their very nature are primarily concerned with religious issues, and will draw their adherents from as many sections of the population as are to be found among actively interested members of the particular faith, regardless of socio-economic considerations as such. While religious parties may even be heavily involved in a variety of secular issues in the course of election activities and in the public offices, these issues are presumed to be subordinate to the main impulse that inspires such parties, the furtherance of a religious system of beliefs and practices.

For a variety of reasons religious parties tend to be center parties in the spectrum of democratic politics, particularly those within a European tradition. The reasons for this are that, in contrast to secular groups, religious parties have less ideological commitment on noncultural issues than is the case for left- or right-wing parties in a multi-party system. They tend to be the only significant groups capable of making an appeal to voters on opposite sides of economic and social issues that cut across a given community. Occupying middle ground in effect puts religious parties in a strong position for inclusion in coalition governments.<sup>2</sup> When compromises are reached on nonreligious or noncultural issues, members and adherents of religious parties are likely to take less umbrage over such decisions than is the case for other groups where higher priorities are given on such things as controversial economic issues and the like. All of this means that the religious parties need to have fewer apprehensions for taking a center position as far as their followers are concerned, and they probably "pay" a smaller price for the various compromises or arrangements they make as a part of joining or staying in a governing coalition.

Within the context of the above discussion, with an emphasis upon the willingness to participate in coalition governments and compromise on a variety of issues as long as religious considerations are safeguarded, Israeli religious parties have been char-

acterized as center parties by Professor Amitai Etzioni in his essay on Jewish religious parties.<sup>3</sup> This classification, however, deserves closer scrutiny, and points up some of the problems that may be encountered concerning the affixing of descriptive labels for parties in an attempt to place them in their proper slots from left to right. A center position by these standards is an adequate classification for the National Religious Party (or the two component groups that came together for its creation in 1956). These groups have been regular participants in coalition Cabinets. Another party of orthodox religious workers, Poalei Agudat Israel, was a regular participant in the government in the early years of statehood, as has again been the case since the summer of 1960. The most orthodox party, Agudat Israel, however, has not been a part of such coalition governments since 1952, and it is rather difficult to see how it could be classified as "center" by any reasonable definition of the term, entirely apart from its position on religious issues, which are its overriding preoccupation.

Another commentator on the over-all Israeli governmental and political system has classified all of the religious parties as of the "right," along with the Herut Movement, with its background in the World Zionist Revisionist Movement of Vladimir Jabotinsky and the former underground resistance movement, the Irgun Zvai Leumi.<sup>4</sup> This designation, however, is simply not valid for Poalei Agudat, and the dominant labor wing of the National Religious Party, Hapoel Hamizrachi. As Hapoel Hamizrachi clearly occupies a position of preponderance among the religious groups politically active in Israel, its left-of-center position on most economic and social issues (as is also the case for the small Poalei Agudat) would seem to more correctly stamp Israeli religious politics as having a cumulative position and impact to the moderate left of center.

Before continuing with materials dealing with the over-all position and impact of the religious parties it is desirable to look in more detail at the actual groups involved. While they have many points in common, and while they did present themselves to the electorate with a common slate known as the United Religious Front in the first Knesset elections in 1949, it is impor-

tant to remember that there are three separate and distinct parties.

### THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY

The National Religious Party came into existence in 1956 with the formal merger of the Zionist Religious parties Mizrachi (Spiritual Center) and the much stronger labor wing, Hapoel Hamzrachi (Spiritual Center Workers' Party). The organizational founding of Mizrachi dates back to Eastern Europe when conflicts within the World Zionist Movement caused a group of traditionalists to organize as a separate faction. They emphasized the Jewish tradition "with its uniformity of religious practice and its elastic community organization, its historic and eschatological myth of Exile and Redemption, and its well-established channels of communication to all of Jewry throughout the ages and in all parts of the globe, the Hebrew language and the system of traditional Jewish education."<sup>5</sup>

Mizrachi was founded in 1902 in the Russian city of Vilna, with a world organization constructed within the framework of the World Zionist Movement on the basis of national and local branches, and a World Center that came to be established in Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Organization of Mizrachi as a Palestinian political party took place in 1918. That party came to be composed mainly of shopkeepers, artisans, and small businessmen of orthodox persuasion who followed a rather conservative political program. With the coming of statehood (and as has been the case with other Israeli religious parties), Mizrachi consistently fought to maintain or strengthen Sabbath laws, has opposed pig raising and the sale of pork, and has insisted on the importance of a system of religious courts holding jurisdiction in matters of personal status such as marriage, divorce, guardianships, and the like. It has favored state aid for religious schools, and has also opposed the adoption of a written constitution for the country, if such a constitution were to provide for the separation of religious institutions and state. Its position, along with that of the other religious parties on the latter issue, is opposed by secular forces in the country, and from this disagreement has come the fact that Israel does not yet have a final written con-

stitution but instead operates under a detailed "Transition Law" passed in 1949.

Because of the basic conservatism and even fundamental disinterest of Mizrahi concerning economic and social issues not directly tied in with religious matters, some dissatisfaction developed on the part of orthodox working-class Jews in the world organization. In 1922 in Vienna, Hapoel Hamizrachi was formed under the slogan of "Torah and Labor," including within itself world youth and women's groups.<sup>7</sup> The Palestinian Party came into existence the same year. Emphasizing the same religious aims as the parent Mizrahi organization, it has sought to combine these with a non-Marxist socialism which concerns itself with trade union affairs and a complex of agricultural settlements. Hapoel Hamizrachi soon far outdid Mizrahi in the scope of its activities in a variety of fields, including religious education work. Since the merger of the two groups in 1956 to form the National Religious Party, Hapoel Hamizrachi has been the dominant force, with Mizrahi people tending to find a place of their own in the organizational and factional life of the larger group, which has continued to maintain its own institutions. It is important to note, however, that there are some indications from time to time that the merger has not completely "jelled," and that the permanence of the merger arrangements should not be taken for granted entirely.<sup>8</sup>

The National Religious Party (and within it Hapoel Hamizrachi) is by far the strongest and most important of the religious parties in Israel. It has almost invariably been a coalition partner of Mapai, which is the only major party in the political system. The National Religious Party has a genuine concern for economic and social issues, and its approach to religious issues is somewhat more moderate than the more orthodox parties. It has been suggested that in situations when religious tradition is open to both a strict and lenient interpretation, the National Religious Party is usually on the more lenient side, with the common denominator in such situations being that the Party has taken a more national line.<sup>9</sup> It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the National Religious Party does not fight, and fight tenaciously, for religious concessions in the secular market place

of government. The National Religious Party and its precursor parties consistently have shown a high order of talent in extracting concessions from Mapai and other coalition partners concerning demands for governmental help in enforcing ideas on religious observation and obligations. A recent example is legislation passed in the spring of 1962 drastically limiting pig breeding in the country on which Mapai gave its support, apparently as a price of the National Religious Party's participation in the coalition Cabinet formed after the 1961 parliamentary elections.

#### AGUDAT ISRAEL (ASSOCIATION OF ISRAEL)

The most orthodox of the country's religious parties is Agudat Israel. This movement had its origins in 1912 in German occupied Poland when some Mizrahi people, who had become disaffected with affairs in the World Zionist Organization, left that entity and were joined by certain orthodox elements which had consistently opposed Zionism as placing religion under a secular threat.<sup>10</sup> Regarding Zionism as an effort by man to attempt to force God's hand concerning the redemption of the Holy Land, Agudat Israel was committed to the promotion of Jewish interests entirely along religious grounds. Indeed, before the coming of statehood, Agudat Israel's position could certainly be defined either as Anti-Zionist, or at best non-Zionist.

Despite its position that Zionism was an enemy of truly religious Jewry through its refusal to recognize the primacy of Jewish law as interpreted by the orthodox rabbinate, Agudat Israel ultimately found itself traveling down some of the pathways that the Zionists were pursuing. Palestinian settlement represented a legitimate goal as a preliminary to the coming of the Messianic age. Cooperation with other Jewish groups and agencies in Palestine, however, was first on a minimal basis, even after the organization and recognition of an official Jewish community in the 1920's. Agudat people could not avoid being at least somewhat of a part of the historical building process that was taking place. More important, in terms of Agudat's ultimate greater involvement with Zionist groups and activities was the increasingly desperate plight of the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe under the Nazis, and also the unexpectedly rapid (to

Agudat people) Zionist settlement work in Palestine. By the time of the creation of the state in 1948, Agudat Israel had come to the conclusion that some kind of an accommodation should be reached with Zionist forces before events outstripped them completely. Agudat Israel became a coalition partner in the initial Provisional Government of the new state, and in the first regular coalition cabinets that followed.

Agudat Israel's program has been a comparable one in general respects to the other religious parties on matters of religious observance, although its position is consistently more unyielding and dogmatic. Its opposition to the conscription of women into military and even nonmilitary national service went beyond that of Hapoel Hamizrachi, and it takes a wrathful stand against mixed swimming in community pools or beaches. In 1962 it pushed an unsuccessful censure motion in the Knesset (parliament) concerning the Israel airline El Al originating overseas flights on the Sabbath, a position which was not followed by the National Religious Party.

Agudat Israel has helped keep its cultural independence through its own school system, a point which has aided it in its more recent bitter competition with its former labor wing, Poalei Agudat Israel.

In keeping with its pattern of operations in the prestate period, Agudat Israel's interest in the agricultural pioneering and settlement activities that have distinguished most Zionist parties has been practically nonexistent. To the extent that the party has shown any interest at all in economic affairs its position is a conservative one.

Concerning its constituency, probably somewhat over half of its membership comes from the Oriental Jewish communities which have come into the country since statehood, particularly in the early 1950's. Its strength is to be found in Jerusalem particularly, as well as the orthodox stronghold of Bnei Brak to the east of Tel Aviv. Many of its members spend their lives studying in Talmudic schools, have exemption from military service, and gain a living from small stores and shops (often run by their wives) and from contributions from other orthodox people throughout the world.<sup>11</sup>

There is no good reason to assume that Agudat Israel can advance appreciably beyond its present relative political standing in the country. For the short range picture its position seems to be fairly secure, although the longer prospects are probably just the opposite. The concept of "no compromise with secularism", and the solution of every problem according to religious law still hold a powerful appeal to supporters of Agudat Israel.

### POALEI AGUDAT ISRAEL

#### (WORKERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ISRAEL)

Poalei Agudat Israel was founded in Poland in 1922, actually through the initiative of the parent Agudat group, which wanted to counter the rapid growth of antireligious or nonreligious socialist workers' organizations among the Jewish masses, as well as to defend the place of observant Jewish laborers in industry.<sup>12</sup> While the two Agudat groups represented the same basic theological position, a difference of emphasis was present from the beginning. While the senior organization placed its major attention on the relations of God and man, the labor group stressed the interaction between man and man. Believing that the Messiah would come for the deliverance of the Jewish people only if they merited such redemption, Poalei Agudat adopted as a practical policy a program of self-help to merit such divine action. This involved not just immigration to Palestine with settlement in Jerusalem and a few other communities, but pioneering and colonizing work on the land. The first party cell came as early as 1923, although it was on a temporary basis. Important development came in the 1930's, and now includes an impressive collection of housing projects, children's homes, agricultural settlements, financial institutions, and other activities.<sup>13</sup>

Over the years Poalei Agudat has found itself pulled more and more toward the mainstream of Jewish affairs, in contrast to the parent organization. Its settlement work brought it into closer relationship with major Zionist activities. As the Nazi tide mounted in Europe, Poalei Agudat joined other parties in bringing illegal immigrants into Palestine; representatives were later sent to refugee camps in Europe, and Poalei Agudat people

fought in the ranks of the Haganah (the Jewish Defense Force) in the Israeli War of Independence.

The relationship between the two Agudat parties deteriorated over the years, until in the summer of 1960 there was a complete break between the groups when Poalei Agudat joined the Cabinet after secret negotiations, and without the permission of a prestigious Council of Sages which was supposed to have a binding influence over the Agudat parties.<sup>14</sup> The parent party regarded this action as a completely reprehensible move, a form of "spiritual liquidation, treason, stab in the back, rebellion against the Torah," and so forth. During the 1961 parliamentary campaign the in-fighting between the two Agudat parties was most rugged indeed. Poalei Agudat lost one of its three seats in this contest, probably to its rival, which now has double Poalei Agudat's strength in the Knesset.

The future for Poalei Agudat appears to be unpromising, although even the Political Secretary of the rival Agudat Israel has doubted that it would disappear.<sup>15</sup> Ironically, Poalei Agudat's role as a labor party, with important interests in economic and social affairs, places it in a more vulnerable position than Agudat Israel. Poalei Agudat's ranks emphasize laborers, who in their job situations and their own interests are much closer to the mainstream of Israel affairs than the rival organization. There tends to be concentrations of party members and sympathizers in Tel Aviv, Bnei Brak, the party's agricultural settlements, and some in Jerusalem. Poalei Agudat supporters appear to be more subject to the pressures and influences of dynamic social change in Israel than is the case for the erstwhile parent body. This is particularly so concerning the situation in Tel Aviv (the major metropolis of the country), with its constant bustle of activities and highly cosmopolitan ways. It should be pointed out, however, that Poalei Agudat's position in this respect is not entirely unique among Israeli political parties. Ironically, the most dogmatic parties of secular socialism are also facing comparable problems in the challenge of rapid social and economic changes in the face of "traditional" Marxist-Zionist ideologies and programs of earlier decades. Ideological "fundamentalism" of either a religious

or secular nature can have its share of problems in the modern world.

### COMPETING FOR THE RELIGIOUS VOTE

An important feature of Israeli party life is a situation of substantially intramural competition among the religious parties, accompanied by pressure from secular parties. In the nature of their campaign activities, the religious parties feel pressure from one another, and from a curious entity called *Neturei Karta* (Guardians of the Town). This latter is a small group of fanatically ultra-orthodox people concentrated in the Meah Shearim quarter of Jerusalem. Zealots to the nth degree, these people have been unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of Israel, insisting that such do-it-yourself activities as creating a nation, joining political parties, and participating in elections are a sacrilege, and that it is for the long expected Messiah to provide for a Jewish political domain. The presence of *Neturei Karta* is keenly felt by *Agudat Israel* which, it will be recalled, was far enough over in its orthodox position as to take an anti-Zionist position at an earlier time. The highly competitive and bitter situation existing between *Agudat Israel* and *Paolei Agudat Israel* has already been noted. In turn, the latter organization claims that its position on religious matters is to be preferred to that of the National Religious Party.

An important part of the situation for the religious parties is that they by no means have anything approaching a monopoly concerning electoral support from orthodox citizens. With the pace of economic and social change in Israel, including the rise of a new generation, the religious parties have faced serious competition from a number of the secular parties at election time. *Mapai*, as the party of major governmental and political powers and with its emphasis on national economic and social issues and benefits, has had considerable success in this respect in all five parliamentary elections to date. A continuing effort is carried on by Ben Gurion and others to make further inroads in this direction. *Herut* with its nationalist and activist approach has had a measure of success in this direction as well, particularly

among the more recent Oriental settlers who have come in from surrounding Arab countries. Taking these factors and developments into consideration, along with the presence of a floating vote among observant Jews, there can be little doubt that the religious parties feel basically on the defensive in regard to their positions.

Concerning this last point, the question may be raised as to how it can be maintained that the religious parties are reacting defensively in the light of their over-all electoral totals where they have even slightly more than held their own in Knesset results, and when they can be so persistently aggressive in regard to the enactment of further legislation concerning Sabbath observance and kindred items. Their aggressiveness in these matters, however, as well as acts of occasional violence by Neturei Karta people probably relates to the very fact that they do feel threatened by social change and developments which they apprehend are moving against them. In regard to pressures from the ultra-orthodox right wing on religious matters, there are any number of cases where the National Religious Party has felt unable to bring any voice of protest against acts which have been scathingly condemned by most of the Israeli press as matters of religious bigotry and oppression.

An important consequence of the over-all situation is a turning inward on the part of the religious parties in election efforts, with each group making a major effort to justify itself. The propensity of these parties in the 1961 campaign to concentrate their efforts on religious matters almost to the complete exclusion of other questions, has conveyed the erroneous impression to many Israelis that these parties have no real interest at all in anything outside religion. It is accurate to say that such is the case concerning Agudat Israel and minority elements within the other two parties. For Hapoel Hamizrachi as well as for Poalei Agudat Israel, however, such a conclusion is not correct. It can be argued that these two parties have done themselves a disservice concerning their public images, inasmuch as they do have significant and sustained interest in economic and social programs. The explanation as to why they slight and sometimes almost completely ignore economic and social issues in their cam-

paigned efforts and so strongly pound the religious theme would seem to relate to a number of things. These things are the floating orthodox vote, the need for each party to prove its legitimate custody of things religious as they pertain to public policy, and the pressures from Mapai and some other secular parties concerning bread and butter questions accompanied by their claim that things religious would be quite safe in their hands.

### THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Considering the intensity of belief and of attempted action of the religious parties on a whole series of issues which range through many fields of public affairs, and which impinge sharply upon the public consciousness, it might be expected that religious and secular lines were very sharply drawn in the Israeli body politic. Indeed, on a number of issues such has been the case with a very considerable amount of feeling welling up in the country. The long-standing "kidnapping" case involving the boy Yossele Schuhmacher, who was spirited out of the country rather than being returned by his grandfather to his less observant parents, is a case at point. Involving as it did ultimately, a denying of due process of law and governmental authority, a great deal of heat was generated, and orthodox forces generally found themselves very much on the defensive until the Israeli security forces finally traced the boy down in Brooklyn, New York, in July of 1962 and returned him to his parents.\* The question of Jewish identity for governmental purposes is still really unresolved in the minds of many, and there are still problems of "mixed" marriage that great numbers of secular people

\* This case is one which reveals the pressures also from the ultra-orthodox forces. The National Religious Party, for instance, was embarrassed all the way through this "case" by the imprecations from the secularists on the one hand for not taking a forthright position condemning the "kidnapping" and concerning efforts to get the boy back, and from the "ultras" for the opposite reasons. After the boy's return, the National Religious Party's Minister of Religious Affairs, Dr. Zerah Wahrhaftig, in a Knesset speech called upon the government not to make any further prosecutions in the case, while giving the back of his hand to the religious extremists at the same time.

find irritating if not intolerable.\* The lack of public transportation on the Sabbath, except in Haifa, is a continuing irritant to many. In 1962, a "League for the Abolition of Religious Coercion" had been launched by militant secularists, which during the summer included in its activities the running of bus transportation on Saturdays to the Hadassah Medical Center to the west of Jerusalem, although the Mapai mayor of the city, Mordecai Ish-Shalom, was reported to have said that as long as he held that position there would be no public transport on the Sabbath.<sup>10</sup> The mayor's explanation for his stand on this minor enough issue, however, helps cast a light on the larger issue of affairs between the secular parties and the minority religious groups, and why most of these keenly felt issues usually seem somehow to be resolved, or at least swept under the table. Mayor Ish-Shalom indicated at a Jerusalem Municipal Council meeting that the status quo agreement forbidding the introduction of public transport on the Sabbath helped to preserve the unity of the city, despite the conflicting positions of the different communities, and that the city could only grow and prosper if this unity were maintained.

In actual practice, there is a great deal of give and take among the political parties, although it must be noted that on religious issues it is by and large the religious parties that do the taking, giving their support or acquiescence in turn on a whole range of secular questions. The willingness of secular parties, particularly Mapai from its position of power to give the religious parties much of what they want, is not merely of a grudging and practical nature (although that too is certainly involved). Although most of the population is by and large secular-minded, and certainly cannot be classed as "observant" in a significant sense, still religious sentiments run deep, no matter how they may be

\* Marriage in Israel is conducted only by the religious authorities of the various faiths. That difficulties might arise over say a marriage between a Jew and a Moslem is not too surprising, although there are those who are unhappy over this type of situation also. When, however, members of a small Jewish community, Bnei Israel, newly returned from centuries in India, have real difficulty in getting married to other Jews, the furor can become very intense.

rationalized. Religious confirmation ceremonies (Bar Mitzvah) for boys at the age of 13, Bible study in the schools (whether for religious reasons or for "historical and artistic values"), some food taboos, and a number of other things all attest to these instincts, some of which are present even among rather strongly anticlerical people.<sup>17</sup> Thousands of years of historical tradition and development are not to be lightly ignored. The upshot is that on any number of issues and situations even the socialist-labor political parties may not really push things as hard as they might in the face of religious party pressure. The previously noted comment of the Mapai mayor of Jerusalem, Ish-Shalom, is a case at point.

An important consequence of the uneven "religiousness" in the population, particularly a large segment in the middle, is that most of the secular parties try to avoid taking a clear-cut anticlerical stand when possible. Even the left-wing labor parties of Mapam and Achdut Haavoda which are anticlerical in their platform positions are considerably less so in actual political activities. Mapai as the majority force in every Cabinet coalition to date has by and large been less severe with breaches of coalition discipline on the part of religious parties than with some of its secular partners. It has been suggested that such differential treatment indicates that Mapai is simply not strong enough to apply the rules of coalition discipline automatically, without taking into consideration the balance of forces within the Knesset and Cabinet in any given situation. In addition, it may be noted that the presence of religious parties in the coalition contributes to Zionist support efforts overseas.<sup>18</sup> It should, however, be pointed out that Ben-Gurion places great importance on bridging the gap that exists between the secular and orthodox forces in the social pattern without having to go through a *Kulturkampf*, and that he has therefore been willing to make a greater effort to involve religious parties in the mainstream of governmental affairs and keep them there.

Despite the stresses and strains that religious issues produce in Israeli political life and society, including the intramural competition among the religious parties themselves as well as within them sometimes, there are important factors that would

seem to give reasonable promise that a *Kulturkampf* can be avoided.\* In summation these are: the pervasive respect for (and/or) belief in many of the historical traditions and practices of Judaism throughout the population, the exigencies of Cabinet coalition politics in a mature democratic system, and the institutionalism of religion through courts and religious functionaries whose jurisdiction is acquiesced in when not positively endorsed concerning a whole range of important matters of per-

*KNESSET ELECTION RESULTS*  
*For the Religious Parties (120 total seats in the chamber)*

Party	First Knesset	Second Knesset	Third Knesset	Fourth Knesset	Fifth Knesset
	(25.1.1949)	(30.7.1951)	(26.8.1955)	(3.11.1959)	(15.8.1961)
	% votes seats	% votes seats	% votes seats	% votes seats	% votes seats
National Religious Party		8.3 10	9.1 11	9.9 12	9.8 12
Agudat Israel (Association of Israel)	12.2* 16				3.7 4
Poalei Agudat (Workers of the Association of Israel)		3.6† 5	4.7 6	4.7 6	1.9 2

\* In 1949 these three parties submitted a joint list, the United Religious Front.

† In 1951, 1955, and 1959 Agudat Israel and Poalei Agudat Israel submitted a joint list, the Torah Religious Front.

sonal status pertaining to marriage, divorce, guardianship, and the like. Despite frequent enough evidence of strife and difficulties that give pause to any fully confident assertions that a calamitous breakdown between "religious" and "secular" forces will be avoided, there is an underlying consensus and willingness to compromise that is even more important. Religion institutionalized in partisan organization and electoral competition is here to stay for the foreseeable future in Israeli politics, and within the framework of the society and their constituency, religious parties have a useful function to perform.

\* There is, however, increasing evidence of tension between orthodox forces and a small but developing movement of "progressive" (Reform) Judaism.

## NOTES

1. The author is indebted to the author of the following article for many concepts and observations concerning the position and impact of Israeli political parties within the over-all party system: Amitai Etzioni, "Kulturkampf or Coalition: The Case of Israel", *Sociologia Religiosa*, N. 4.
2. These observations are originally from an unpublished manuscript by S. M. Lipset and J. Linz, "Religion and Politics," and are cited by Professor Etzioni, *Ibid.*, p. 7.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
4. Oscar Kraines, *Government and Politics in Israel* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), pp. 77-79.
5. Ben Halpern, *The Idea of the Jewish State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 16.
6. Joanne Stern Yaron, "The Religious Parties and the Education Issue in Israel," unpublished Master's thesis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 11.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
8. See the following article by a senior professor of political science at the Hebrew University: Benjamin Aklin, "The Knesset," *International Social Science Journal*, XIII, (New York: UNESCO, 1961), p. 568.
9. Etzioni, *op cit.* p. 16.
10. Halpern, *op cit.* p. 17.
11. Etzioni, *op cit.* p. 14.
12. Gerda Luft, "Party Profiles: Poalei Agudat Israel, Manual Labour for Divine Goal," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 15, 1955, p. 5.
13. Shimshon Heller, *Poale Agudath (sic) Israel in Israel* (New York: 1960), pp. 1-10.
14. For a discussion of this development within the context of parliamentary affairs, see the author's [Johnston's] chapter "The Multi-Party System of Israel: Some Aspects of Party Politics in the Parliament (Knesset)" in *Studies on Asia 1962* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), see especially pp. 70-71.
15. Interview with Menachem Poruch, Member of the Knesset and Political Secretary of Agudat Israel, September 1, 1961. Poruch opined that although Poalei Agudat might go into or with Mapai, it would keep its identity in such things as its agricultural settlements and other economic and social organizations.
16. *The Jerusalem Post Weekly*, July 13, 1962.
17. Etzioni, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.
18. Many overseas Zionist fund-raising campaigns come through synagogue efforts on holy day appeals (Interview with Israel Friedman, a representative of the National Religious Party in New York, August 9, 1962). The importance of religious organizations in the growth of American Zionism is given noteworthy emphasis in the following significant volume: Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961).