

Introduction

Professor Aviezer Ravitzky begins his article “Thought and Leadership in the Teachings of Maimonides,”¹ by citing the words of the French writer Julien Benda, who coined the term “treason of the intellectuals” (*La Trahison des clercs*) in 1927.² Ravitzky was aware of the elitist and introverted context of this saying, meaning, Julien Benda preached to the intellectuals to concentrate on concepts and ideas and not to turn to the social and political realm; the philosopher, scholar, and intellectual should offer an objective and distanced analysis, which does not touch personal, group, or national interests.

Yet, following Jewish and classic Western sources and Western literature from 1950 to the end of the twentieth century, Ravitzky stressed precisely the opposite meaning: the duty of the intellectual is to become involved in the social experience. His treason will be specifically in his withdrawing from the public. As Ravitzky put it:

The intellectual is called to serve as a “watchdog” for society, an alert and active subject. He must halt and restrain certain trends and encourage and spur other tendencies. The educated person must not abandon the

* Translated by Fern Seckbach

1 Aviezer Ravitzky, “Thought and Leadership in the Teachings of Maimonides”, in: *Iyyunim Maimuniyyim*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2006, pp. 11–39 [Hebrew].

2 Julien Benda, *La trahison des clercs*, Paris: B. Grasset, 1927.

active playing field and isolate himself and his colleagues
in the area of pure study, beyond time and place.³

Prof. Aviezer Ravitzky is one of the most prominent persons to bring this vision to fruition, even though tracing his activity reveals hesitations and internal doubts, which will be clarified in this book. Ravitzky is the classic example of an intellectual who considers himself an obliged leader and whose leadership spans broad fields of culture, research, and thought. His activity is expressed both in the realm of political-public performance as well as in the sphere of academic research and teaching. His world moves in constant tension between these two spheres. Topics of religion and state, Judaism and democracy, public culture and academic research in medieval and modern Jewish philosophy—all are roiling his world, pulling him in different directions and cross-pollinating each other out of the very contrast inherent in them. Prof. Ravitzky cannot separate the worlds, and thanks to this mixture, he became one of the greatest scholars of Jewish Thought and one of the most outstanding of contemporary public intellectuals of our times.

This collection was edited by his colleagues and his students and contains a selection of writings by his friends over the years who accompanied him as teachers, colleagues, and students. We—the editors and the writers—sought to enrich the bookshelf with an anthology that will be considered by Ravitzky as meaningful and productive. The attempt to link philosophy with politics is—as far as Ravitzky is concerned—the refined work of the philosopher, who understands the purpose of philosophical activity is not only in

3 Ravitzky (n. 1 *above*), pp. 11–12.

recognizing the beauty of the search for truth and the attempt to know it, but also—if not principally—in fashioning political philosophy. Beyond that, moving to the field of leadership and education, presenting oneself as a prophet for society, and pursuing a more enlightened, more humane, rational, and sensitive politics are, for him, lofty purposes.

The volume at hand traces the varied expressions of religion and politics in Jewish Thought, and the articles it contains focus on figures who combined academic and political philosophy with public activity. All of them are embedded in Ravitzky's writings. The articles are presented to the readers in chronological order by discipline. Two main sections divide them into a grouping of the ancient and the medieval periods and the other, modern times, with their main thrust being study of religious and political issues in halakhic, historical, reflective, kabbalistic, and philosophical contexts.

The anthology opens with two introductions: the first, written by **Zvi Yekutiel**, executive director of the Zalman Shazar Center and close friend of Ravitzky. In both of these guises, Yekutiel describes the honoree of this volume. The second introduction was penned by the children of Ruth and Aviezer Ravitzky: **Tamar Biton**, **Renana Pilzer Ravitzky**, **Shlomit Ravitzky Tur-Paz**, and **Roie Ravitzky**. The four of them—with facility and grace—present to the readers their highly significant insights on the nature of their father's endeavor, ideas that developed from having grown up in his presence.

The section of studies opens with the article by **Avinoam Rosenak**, "Thought and Leadership in the Writings of Aviezer Ravitzky." This contribution traces the nature of Ravitzky's hesitations about academic study and social leadership. Rosenak seeks to demonstrate that Ravitzky's uncertainties are built-in not only in the objects of research he chose to investigate but can also be discerned in the educational and

cultural philosophy that he developed, which explains the complexity that characterizes the philosophical foundations of his work. In light of these educational and philosophical principles, Rosenak clarifies Ravitzky's political activity and delineates his unique pathway in contrast to the cultural alternatives he encountered.

The followings two articles deal with the nature of the human propensity embodied in the concepts of forgiveness and absolution. In the first article "On the Threshold of Forgiveness: On Law and Narrative in the Talmud," **Moshe Halbertal** asks what forgiveness is and how one structures the encounter between the one causing injury and the injured party, which becomes possible only as a result of preliminary forgiveness. Halbertal analyzes forgiveness in the Talmud and focuses on the relation between law and narrative as expressed in the talmudic *sugya* (deliberation). In the second article, entitled "A Few Comments on Forgiveness in Jewish Tradition," **Daniel Statman** expresses critical musings about the common idea that Judaism has, as it were, an approach of "conditional absolution." The obligation to absolve is conditional in that the party causing damage will rue the bad deed he has performed and will ask for forgiveness from the injured party, but it is also conditional upon the severity of the iniquity. Ascribing these two meanings to Jewish Thought turns the Jewish stance into one contrasting with the Christian approach, according to which, so it is argued, the obligation to absolve is unconditional. Statman sharpens the definition of the philosophical nature of the concept *mercy* and challenges the dichotomous contrast, as it were, between the Jewish approach and the Christian one.

The article by **Menachem Lorberbaum**, "A Filigree of Language and Narrative: Translating Maimonides' *Guide*," follows two main intellectual heroes in the studies by Ravitzky: Maimonides, in his book *The Guide for the Perplexed*, and his translator and disciple,

R. Samuel Ibn Tibbon. Lorberbaum examines how *The Guide for the Perplexed* opens and closes through its translations. At the heart of his article is a critical look at the translation policy of Michael Schwartz in his translation of *The Guide for the Perplexed* against the background of previous translations made since R. Samuel Ibn Tibbon. The discussion reveals how Maimonidean writing establishes hierarchies of knowledge, thereby determining the basic socio-political distinction in his thought between the elite and the masses.

The article by **Gitit Holzman**, “State, Religion, and Spirituality in the Thought of Rabbi Moshe Narboni”—in the spirit of the tension in Ravitzky’s writings—traces the internal doubts of Narboni (a disciple of Maimonides) as to the proper way in which an intellectual can integrate the academic with social activity. Narboni indicates the reflection of this issue in pagan, Muslim, and Jewish thought; according to him, what they have in common on this issue is more than what separates them. Holzman shows that unlike Maimonides, Narboni did not praise social and public involvement and thought that such involvement is thrust upon the philosopher against his will.

Zev Harvey deals with the figure of R. Isaac Abrabanel, whom Leo Strauss and Aviezer Ravitzky called “a definitely anti-political thinker.” In his article “Anarchism, Egalitarianism, and Communism in Isaac Abarbanel,” Harvey unfurls the teachings of Abrabanel, who opposed the state in principle while at the same time was a decidedly political thinker, since he invested a great deal of thought into an analysis of the fundamentals of the state and in the description of its ills and also seriously considered the biblical idea of the Kingdom of God. The article clarifies the bases of his religious-political approach, which was anarchistic, egalitarian, and communist.

Shalom Rosenberg traces in his article, “Nature, Reason, Torah,” the natural bases of Divine law in light of the rich intellectual

breadth provided by Jewish literature, the general philosophical and theological literature in the Middle Ages and in the modern period. Rosenberg examines insights into the terms “natural morality”, “natural law”, and the “law of nature”. His article illuminates and clarifies political issues concerning the term nature and its connection to morality, and he surveys different approaches, from among the naturalistic approaches on one side and intuitive ones on the other. Rosenberg concludes his article with musings about the here and now of the desired political structure deriving from this discussion, thereby preparing the platform for future discussion.

The struggle over the nature of prophecy—with all the ramifications of this discussion—is treated in the article by **Dov Schwarz**, “Remarks on the Late-13th Century Debate on Prophecy and Esotericism.” Schwarz delves into the dispute that broke out between a highly influential leader (Rabbi Solomon ben Aderet, Rashba) and a philosophical *darshan* (homiletic writer Rabbi Levi ben Abraham). He argues that one of the main foci of the dispute was the question of esoteric interpretation. R. Levi ben Abraham wove a radical concept of prophecy, but he downplayed it through various exegetical techniques; the Rashba sensed that and directed his arguments indirectly against this understanding. From this Schwarz determines that the disputes between the conservatives and the rationalists included a distinctly esoteric, exegetical dimension.

The struggle between reason and tradition is given expression in the article by **Aviram Ravitzky**, “Saadya’s Theology and Maimonides’ Philosophy: The Characteristics of Medieval Jewish Thought.” Ravitzky analyzes the main methodological difference between the thought of Rabbi Saadiah Gaon and that of Maimonides. It turns out that R. Saadiah followed a hybrid mode according to which reason is a component of the religious apparatus. Maimonides,

in contrast, maintained that reason is free in its investigations and is not subordinate to religion. Aviram Ravitzky makes clear that this distinction is a platform for a re-characterization of the main works of medieval Jewish philosophy—R. Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*, R. Abraham Ibn Daud's *Ha-Emunah ha-Ramah*, R. Levi ben Gershom's *Milhamot ha-Shem*, and Hasdai Crescas' *Or ha-Shem*.

What is the status of the masses in the theory of state? Do they have value on their own or are they only a tool for the existence of the state? These questions are clarified in the article by **Esther Eisenmann**, "Social and Political Principles in Gersonides' Thought." Eisenman demonstrates that the system of rule in the teachings of Gersonides deviates from the centralized ruling apparatus in Maimonides' thought, in which the welfare of the philosophers is the welfare of the state. Gersonides considers the state as an entity in which the masses are not only a tool in the hands of the philosophers but are themselves also an important factor, one worthwhile for the government to take into consideration. Eisenmann's article informs us that this concept led Gersonides to advise a ruler to adopt modes of behavior advisable for him, in the spirit of pre-Machiavellian doctrine.

An objection to the messianic dimension of the Crusades is the focus of the article by **Joseph Dan**, "Messianic Movements in the Period of the Crusades." In this paper Dan reexamines the data and Jacob Mann's conclusions on this subject, which were accepted as the cornerstone in research into the history of Jewish messianism in the Middle Ages. Mann indicated eight "messianic movements" that functioned during the time of the First Crusade. Joseph Dan meticulously examines each of these phenomena and ultimately reaches the conclusion that in fact these were not movements, most of them were not messianic, and only one of them belongs to the period of the Crusades. He, therefore, proposes to totally reject the concept

that the time of the Crusades is characterized by messianic ferment in the Jewish world.

The politics of concealment and the esoteric doctrine receives expression in the article by **Moshe Idel**, “On the Secrets of the Torah in Abraham Abulafia.” Idel traces a variety of meanings of the term “secrets of the Torah” in the teachings of the thirteenth-century kabbalist Abraham Abulafia. He indicates the conceptual background from which Abulafia drew his insights on this issue and his unique method. Idel stresses Abulafia’s approach, which is distinct from the popular one, from an understanding that the masses will erroneously consider “secrets of the Torah” as statements that contradict religion and are therefore deserving of being hidden from the masses.

Yehuda Liebes concludes the section of the ancient and the medieval periods with his article, “Long Live the King: The Strong Weakness of a Monarch.” Liebes clarifies that “kingdom” is likely to better represent the will of the people than democracy does. The king draws from the people his status and even his very identity as king, and creates an awareness of the Kingdom of God. Liebes derives these insights from biblical, midrashic, halakhic, kabbalistic, and liturgical language and shows that this is so for the image of King David and the Messiah king, and even for the aspect of kingship in divinity.

The section of the modern period opens with the paper by **Rachel Elijor**, “On Sabbatianism and Hasidism in Podolia in the 18th Century and on the Exclusion of the Sabbateans from the Jewish Community.” The article examines the decisions by the leadership of the Ashkenazic rabbinate in Europe in the 1750s on the proper attitude toward the believers in Sabbatai Zevi in Poland-Lithuania. Elijor elucidates the circumstances in which the leaders of the **Va’ad Arba Aratzot** (inspired by R. Jacob Emden) decided to do everything possible to remove the Sabbateans from the Jewish people by pressing them to

convert to Christianity (after they had failed in an attempt to execute them). Elior shows the connection between this issue and the Emden-Eybeschütz controversy, and she maintains that the only person who forcefully protested against the decision by the rabbinic leadership was the Baal Shem Tov. At the end of the discussion, Elior clarifies the results of this decision.

An investigation into the issue of power and politics is found in the article by **Jonathan Garb**, “The Political Model in Modern Kabbalah: A Study of Ramhal and His Intellectual Surroundings.” The article deals with the perception of politics in the writings of Ramhal and a colleague from his circle, R. Moshe David Vali. Garb demonstrates that these writings forged a close connection between the concept of politics and that of power. As he argues, one may locate in quite a number of texts the “military model” of power, whose development is linked to social and political developments in the eighteenth century. In light of these findings—which enrich the number of forms of Jewish modernization—Garb reinforces the trend in current research that sees the political discourse of the early modern period as an expression of religious foment (and not only secularization or response to secularization).

In his article “On Democracy and the State of Israel as a Democratic Country,” **Moshe Hellinger** makes us party to a discussion in the Haredi world, with which Ravitzky dealt extensively. Hellinger traces the activity of Rabbi Schach, who was the outstanding leader of the world of the Lithuanian yeshivot—that are identified with the Haredi “Torah world”—and the political leader (on various levels) of Agudat Israel, Degel Hatora, and the Shas movement. Hellinger cites Rabbi Schach’s sweeping criticism of Western liberal democracy and of the image of the State of Israel as a country of democratic law. This article indicates the different levels of the anti-democratic attack on

the formal plane as well as against the ideas of individual freedom and civil equality. Their alternative—as far as Rabbi Schach is concerned—is commitment to the Torah and the commandments.

Another Haredi leader given expression in Ravitzky's writings was Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman. **Menachem Kellner** devotes a detailed look at this figure in his article "Rabbi Elhanan Wasserman on Maimonides and Maimonides on Reb Elhanan." Wasserman wrote about the essence of faith and based himself on Maimonides. Kellner argues that Maimonides would have reservations about Rabbi Wasserman's interpretation, for in contrast to Maimonides—who adopted an educational approach toward those who disagreed with him—Rabbi Wasserman stood for seclusion, and his disciples today take a stand of political opposition.

The article by **Eliezer Schweid**, "'A Fighting Army', 'A Laboring Army', 'A People's Army,'" is an attempt to crystallize political thought from the Bible and through it to clarify modern Jewish history. Schweid presents the political-Torah model of the Pentateuch (especially Exodus and Numbers, as well as Joshua). Schweid has no need for recourse to the concept *dat* in the sense of religion because it—according to Schweid's argument—is alien to the political thought of the Written Torah and the Oral Law. For him, the concept "*torah*" provides the needs for the proposed political model. Schweid describes the supreme purpose of the community, whose embodiment in the moral and spiritual way of life of family, school, *bet midrash*, and synagogue as well as the crucial need of bequeathing tradition, its realization and its relying upon the joint interpretation of the sources. He demonstrates that the community model had decisive influence on the political thought that fashioned the image of the Jewish community in the Diaspora as well as the organization of the pioneering Hebrew *yishuv* prior to the establishment of the state.

Hannah Kasher's article, "Between Destruction and Construction: A Criticism of Yeshayahu Leibowitz's Teachings," surveys the contribution of Yeshayahu Leibowitz and focuses on his clear, sharp challenge of the consensus on various current issues (such as relations between religion and state and the Israeli wars and their results). Kasher's claim is that over time it became clear (to Leibowitz and others) that the "principle of excluded middle" does not always apply. Kasher shows how Leibowitz proposed, without explicitly declaring so, other, updated conclusions to different questions among the many and even tried to fill in the cracks that became apparent in the heart of his system.

Michael Rosenak expresses in his article "Religious Responses: Testimony and Theology," the nature of the religious and spiritual experience of the Six-Day War and the theological responses that grew out of it. The article contains exchanges with Ravitzky's writings on these topics and adds to them an analytical, emotional level. Rosenack points out the uniqueness of the historical event as seen by different observers and the historical-theological developments that resulted from it. He proposes a new array of a range of historical-theological stances.

The relations between Jews and Arabs stand at the center of the Zionist discourse, and they have ethical, religious, and political repercussions. **Anita Shapira** sheds light on this issue in her article, "Yosef Haim Brenner and Rabbi Binyamin: Two Approaches to the 'Arab Question'." Shapira stresses the uniqueness of this conflict, since Jewish historical experience did not know of a clashing system of relations between two nations but always the relationship between a non-Jewish majority and a Jewish minority. Yosef Haim Brenner and R. Binyamin exemplify, in her opinion, two directions of thought and ethical and political analysis on this issue. Thus, despite the difference between them, both Brenner and R. Binyamin express

themselves through Jewish tradition. Shapira shows that their attitude to the issue under discussion was not determined because of their religious or anti-religious outlook but as the continuation of their worldview and their perception of reality.

The article by **Yosef Salmon**, “Eliyahu Akiva Rabinowich: Spokesman of Russian Jewish Orthodoxy,” inquires into one of the most articulate and consistent spokesmen of Orthodox Jewry in his time. Rabinowich was a member of the Zionist Organization and was also one of leaders of the fight against Zionism within traditional society; the editor of Orthodox periodicals in Russia, *Ha-Peles* and *Ha-Modi’a*; and a political activist of Orthodoxy in Russia-Poland. Salmon reviews his ideological positions and his political initiatives and shows how the joining of religion and politics receives—in light of the figure of Rabinowich—a concrete historical expression against the background of the Tsarist Russian Empire.

Arye Carmon, sketches in his article “The Secular Manifesto” (based on a document written with the assistance of Haim Rechnitzer) the outlines of Ravitzky’s decisive contribution in the Israel Democracy Institute toward constructing the complicated links between the two sides of the equation: a Jewish state and a democratic state. The manifesto has three main purposes: to help with the definitions of the fundamentals and content of secular and cultural identity in general and Jewish secularity in Israel in particular; to formulate with the Israeli public the values and norms that pour meaning and significance into the ways of life in the Zionist state, in light of the complexity that characterizes it in relations between religion and state and in relations between its Jewish and Arab citizens; to initiate the implementation of these values and norms within the Israeli educational frameworks.

The halakhic attitude toward those who do not observe Orthodox Halakhah is voiced in the article by Benjamin Brown, “The Hafetz

Hayim on the Halakhic Status of the Non-Observant.” Braun deals with the attitude of Rabbi Israel Meir Hacoen to secular Jews, to the extreme Maskilim, and to Reform Jews. He shows how in his later works—in his halakhic as well as ethical books—the Hafetz Hayim adopted a clearly conservative line and defined them as “*goyim* [non-Jews] in all they do.” Yet, it turns out that in a number of his later ethical letters and letters of reproof, as well as other attestations, he chose to use terms closer to the forgiving category of *tinokot she-nishbu* (lit. “infants captured by idolaters”). Brown argues that the Hafetz Hayim’s stance was a solidified one. He explains the gap discerned in his writing as the tension between law and ethics or between two levels of the Halakah itself (“Halakhah” and “Halakhah in practice”) and shows that the Hafetz Hayim tended in most of his works to bring halakhic literature and ethical literature close to each other.

The continuation of this discussion occurs in the article by **Arye Edrei**, “The Foundations of Religious-Zionist Halakhah: Rabbi Kook and the Polemic over the Sabbatical Year.” Edrei makes the claim that the argument over *heteir mehira* (a Jew farming land temporarily owned by non-Jews during a sabbatical [*shmita*] year) is not only a halakhic dispute but also a political-ideological argument on a fundamental issue. Namely, the question, according to Edrei, is who is the target audience to whom the halakhic renderings are aimed—the Torah observant public or the entire Jewish people with its many nuances. Edrei’s conclusion is that Rabbi Kook thought that in Eretz Israel all the Jews are the addressees of the *posek* (the deciding rabbi), and therefore the Halakhah must be of the type that can be upheld by all inhabitants and not only the religiously observant among them. Thereby, Rabbi Kook laid the foundation for the religious-Zionist halakhic trend that sought to determine Halakhah for the Jewish society and the Jewish state.

A discussion in the opposite direction—the attitude of religious society to secular law—is conducted by **Yedidia Z. Stern** in his article “Not all of Israel has a Share in the World to Come”?! On the Halakhic Approach to Israeli Law.” Stern confronts the distrustfulness of the religious and Haredi public in Israel toward the Israeli legal system. One of its expressions, according to Stern, is the increasing use of halakhic litigation—whose context is negative—when dealing with “*arkha’ot shel goyim*” (non-Jewish courts). The article examines the attitude of Halakhah to courts from three perspectives: first, a halakhic-analytic aspect, presenting within its framework halakhic possibilities for freeing the courts from the invalidating label “*arkha’ot*”; second, a theological-ideological aspect, which makes the claim that the invalidating halakhic position stems from non-internalization of the halakhic meanings of the shift from Diaspora to sovereignty; third, a cultural-educational aspect, which specifies the high price of the halakhic position that all Jews, both religious and secular, are liable to pay.

The book closes with the article by **Ariel Picard**, “Changes in Religious Zionism’s Approach to the *Shmita* and the State of Israel.” Picard reviews the rabbinic discussion toward the *shmita* year of 5768 [2007–2008] in light of the halakhic project *Otzar Ha-aretz* (one of whose characteristics is a response to the needs of stringent observers of *shmita*). One of the expressions of this halakhic project is the boycotting of agricultural produce grown by Arabs. This aim required special consumer arrangements, differing from what is common in Haredi society, in which, during the *shmita* year, they usually consume produce raised particularly by Arabs within and beyond the Green Line. The internal debate among the Zionist rabbis about this initiative raises—as Picard shows—weighty ideological questions concerning the national struggle and the State of Israel.

In December 2004, as part of a conference on “Education, Community, and Norms” (which was held at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute), Prof. Aviezer Ravitzky was invited to a discussion on the plight of *agunot*. As usual, he answered the invitation, out of his sense of responsibility to bring his research world into close contact with the real world, which is replete with the existential distresses of human and social needs. He sought to anchor his statements in an idea that appears in an article by Rabbi Kook, “A Sage Is Preferable to a Prophet.”⁴ Ravitzky said the following at the conference:

Prophecy expresses the sense of general injustice, the evil in the ideational perimeter—without seeing the entirety of details. Prophecy saw the flow in general, the idol worship in Israel; the corruption and moral punishment; the crushing of the poor, the abuse of the paupers, the murder and the adultery—and the Divine spirit was determined to save and to limit ... but prophecy did not succeed in detailing itself into halakhic particulars; to come to know the fine details from which the sin was composed, and therefore, the prophets did not succeed in guiding the people, until the destruction of the First Temple...

Prophecy is the thesis, while the wisdom of the Law is the antithesis. The sages of Halakhah did succeed in detailing everything down to the small particulars; to guide concrete life, the practical commandments in all their intense precision ... and thus the Jewish

4 Rabbi Kook, “*Zironim*,” *Orot*, Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1950, p. 121 [Hebrew].

people [in the Second Temple] were preferable over the First Temple [but]...for what was the Second Temple destroyed? Because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza—baseless hatred.

And, indeed ... over time the endeavor of the Sages became stronger, halakhic details increased, prophecy departed, and the rules began to weaken. Halakhah did, of course, amend what prophecy did not, but everything came to such minor halakhic particulars to the point that there was a danger, according to Rabbi Kook, that the overall prophetic vision would be swallowed up by the details and never be seen outside of them. Rabbi Kook's dream spoke of synthesis. The vision is the return of Moses' soul to the world—Moses who was both a prophet and also the Law of Moses received at Sinai—the combination of the two.⁵

Ravitzky's words do indeed focus on the link between prophecy and Halakhah, between thought about generalities and thought about details, but there are many links to the topic of this volume. This combination—idea and action, theory and practice, vision and details of Halakhah, study and politics—is what lies at the base of the expression “religion and politics in Jewish thought” that adorns the title of our book. This is precisely the dialectic movement that shifts between “by the approval of God”—that a person is directed by it toward the heavens—and between “by the permission of the community”—that a person is obliged to find grace and good sense (not only) in the eyes of God (but also in the eyes) of man (Prov. 3:4).

5 The selection was edited by Avinoam Rosenak from a recording.

This is exactly the obligation of the philosopher to return to the cave; the obligation of the prophet to legislate; the obligation of the intellectual to be a person of educational responsibility toward his community, with all the consequences embodied in this responsibility.

And at the end of that same discussion, Ravitzky concludes with

I try to obey the world of Halakhah and that it should be a true, authentic Halakhah and not a false one, but at the same time to not lose—because of halakhic details—the prophetic sensitivity and the powerful sensitivity to the repression of the poor, to the tear of the oppressed, to murder, to widows and orphans. That, heaven forbid, there should not arise a situation in which you cannot see the forest for the trees.⁶

This is the sensitivity required from the intellectual—to direct; yet, not to just point out the theoretical idea but also to examine the ways to apply it. And in the same breath, not only to become engrossed in the actual application but to always remain a “watchdog,” or better—the legislating prophet standing at the gate, who rescues the establishment from the danger of its being a system lacking vision and lacking prophetic and spiritual external criticism.

We wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to all who took part in the endeavor of publishing this book, working devotedly, faithfully,

6 *Ibid.*

and with professionalism: to Zvi Yekutiel, executive director of the Zalman Shazar Center, and to Arye Carmon, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, who agreed warmly and in the spirit of friendship and true love to promote the production of the book and to bring it to completion.

Our sincere thanks go to Anat Bernstein for the professional editing of the text, which she always did willingly and with infinite patience; and to Nadav Shtechman, typesetter of the manuscript, who carried out the work skillfully and confidently. We extend our appreciation to the entire devoted staff of the publications arm of the Israel Democracy Institute.

We all pray for Avi's increasing strength and recovery, and we all hope that this book will please him. May it be that it will even hasten his recuperation. We wish to believe that this volume can fill in—even in a small way—the lack in Israeli discourse owing to the absence of Prof. Ravitsky's clear, vital voice, for which no book can substitute even though it expresses our yearning for him.

May it be that the volume presented herewith in honor of Prof. Aviezer Ravitzky will intensify the field he holds so dear and encourage research and study, thought and deed, which will make the world a better place.

The Editors

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