

ABSTRACT

BETWEEN RELIGIOUS ZIONISM AND CHABAD:
RABBI GINSBURG'S RESPONSE TO THE DISENGAGEMENT

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The disengagement from Gush Katif and northern Samaria (2005) was a crucial event for Religious Zionism that challenged each of its rabbinical groups to redefine itself. This paper addresses the philosophy of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg, which was made popular in the Religious Zionist world by his students – a philosophy that stood out for its intensity even prior to the disengagement, and became even more potent afterward. The paper presents Rabbi Ginsburg's opposition to the disengagement in terms of his attitude toward theodicy, his historiosophic perspective, his directives on coping with the disengagement in practice, his decision regarding soldiers refusing orders, and his conclusions regarding the relationship with the State of Israel following the disengagement. All of these elements shed light on the sources of his philosophy, and how it differs from both the traditional approach of Chabad, on the one hand, and from Religious Zionist thought, on the other. Although Rabbi Ginsburg's underlying foundation is the Chabad movement, he has permitted himself, in his philosophy on redemption, to view this period as the 'period of the Messiah' and to identify the State of Israel as a stage in the redemption.

Another significant element that shaped the philosophy of Rabbi Ginsburg's followers is the Religious Zionist outlook with which he often engages. Rabbi Ginsburg stands between Chabad and Religious Zionism. He criticizes Religious Zionism for focusing on practical action and neglecting the spiritual side, but also criticizes Chabad for neglecting the role of the natural world in the process of redemption and closing itself off in a world of pure spirit.

I maintain that the philosophy of Rabbi Ginsburg constitutes a unique blend of messianic ideas of these two movements.