**Israel's Challenges Facing American Jewry**

A number of reflections on the relationship between Israel and American Jewry:

1. **Background** – The Jewish people can be divided into four main groups: Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and Secular. While in the State of Israel the secular and Orthodox constitute the vast majority, in the United States the situation is completely different. The Reform and Conservative communities are much more dominant, accounting for more than 50 percent of American Jewry. Moreover, they are dominant communities, not only demographically but also politically and socio-economically. If we had to place all four streams on one scale, from the most theoretically closest to the farthest, then the Orthodox were at the closest to the Halakha, followed by the Conservative, then the Reform and eventually the secular. Paradoxically, Orthodox Judaism is willing to accept secularism more easily than its "relatives" on the "scale of faith." This stems from the fact that the seculars are not perceived by the Orthodox as a stream that threatens Halakha, unlike the Reform and Conservative movements.
2. **The tension between “broad and poor to rich and narrow”** – It is possible to analyze the dispute between the various streams as follows: Reform and Conservative movements strongly make religion accessible to modern Jews of the twenty and twenty-first centuries. This causes less Jews to flee from religion, thereby preserving a broader basis for the Jewish people. On the other hand, there are those who claim that these two streams are eroding religion and the Halakha, thereby weakening it. That is to say, a broad basis of believers while eroding Jewish law ("broad and poor"). On the other hand, the Orthodox approach prefers to maintain Halakha even at the cost of reducing the base of believers ("rich and narrow"). What is the right approach? It depends who you ask. It can be said that both approaches are logically based, and the explanations provided by the Orthodox on the one hand and the Reform and Conservative movements on the other hand are both reasonable. Precisely because of this, the dispute between the various streams is so difficult, and a solution is not in sight.
3. **The great danger – A religious conflict that may develop into a political conflict** – The rift between the Orthodox stream and the Reform and Conservative streams is reminiscent of the rupture experienced by the Christian world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the emergence of the Protestant stream and its dissociation from the Catholic Church in Rome. However, if we wish to deepen our understanding of the rift in the Christian world through "national security" glasses, not only theological ones, we will soon notice that the religious dispute has become a political dispute that has ignited long and difficult wars in Europe. It is enough to mention the Thirty Years War (a kind of preface to the World Wars, in its magnitude and the catastrophe that devastated the continent and its population) and the 80 years' war that ended with Holland's independence from Spain. And back to our topic. The religious dispute in Judaism is beginning to take on the traits of a religious conflict. Perhaps this conflict is one of the major catalysts for the emerging political dispute between American Jewry and the State of Israel, even if the connection between the theological and political in this case has not yet been made public.
4. **American Jewry is a central element in the special relationship between the United States and Israel** – The special relationship between the United States and Israel is undoubtedly one of the most important in our "backbone" as a country. A link that allows us to stand confident and upright, in a world in which we are an absolute and threatened minority. There is no doubt that American Jewry (small in relation to the population of the American nation, but very dominant in relation to its size and in general), has a major contribution to the formation and later preservation of those special relations between the countries over the years. The loss of the unequivocal support of American Jewry towards Israel is likely to cause a fatal blow to the special relations between the two countries, and therefore to endanger the State of Israel. It seems that this threat is more dangerous to the State of Israel and to the people of Israel, than the Iranian nuclear threat, Islamic terrorism, or tension with the Chinese over trade disputes between the United States and China.
5. **"** **A wake-up call "** – The situation described in the last two sections obliges the Israeli establishment (especially Knesset Israel, the government of Israel and the High Court of Justice) to stop and "avoid" the issue of the religious dispute between the streams, and to begin to address this issue as a national security issue of the utmost importance..

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