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CURRENT JEWISH SPIRITUALITIES IN ISRAEL: A NEW AGE¹

INTRODUCTION—CURRENT SPIRITUALITIES IN ISRAEL

Recently, new spiritualities have been emerging in Israel, which combine Judaism and New Age spirituality. Surprisingly, these interesting phenomena are being overlooked by academic and public discourse regarding Jewish spiritual innovations. Consequently, current developments and processes, which are strongly influenced by New Age spirituality, are being misunderstood.

New Age Spiritualities

New Age spiritualities have become widespread recently, and they have gained legitimacy in Israeli society and worldwide. The New Age can arguably be defined as a Western, global, liberal spirituality that strives to offer an alternative to mainstream culture in all areas of life. Notwithstanding the variety of outlooks on New Age spirituality, its very general characteristics, which are accepted in the academic discourse,² will serve us well in our discussion. The following are three such characteristics: First, scholars regard New Age spirituality as a Self Religion – celebrating, empowering, even deifying the individual, with a focus on one's inner life, on intimate relationships, belonging, potential inner resources and self realization, personal experiences of the sacred, bodily pleasures and pains, investigation of feelings and inclinations, matters of livelihood and lifestyle, identity issues, and so on.

Second, New Age spirituality is considered, both emically and etically “spiritual,” as opposed to “religious.”³ Religion, namely organized religion, is considered negative because of its political implications, its power to enforce rules and social codes, its subjugation of individuals, its hierarchical structure, its claim to exclusive truth, which encourages competition with, or hostility towards, other religions, its traditionalist conservatism, its dogmatism, its strict and nonreflective

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regulation of practices, which change from means to ends, and so on. Whereas the Western, established religions are particularistic, New Age spirituality is universalistic in light of the perennial philosophy, namely the belief that all religions (and cultures) have an ancient kernel of truth to be drawn out and exposed (which sometimes leads to syncretism). New Age, however, as a counter culture, opposes not only religious institutions but also secular Western establishments such as the medical, industrial, academic, military, and scientific establishments.

Third, the New Age espouses, theologically, an immanent concept of divinity, which is expressed either in self-deification or in other forms, such as the veneration of nature, or even the re-enchantment of everyday life. Immanence and other New Age values mentioned above are sought by New Agers in mystical, indigenous, Pagan, Far Eastern and deviant traditions, and are then re-invented.⁴

Religious⁵ Identities in Israel

Understanding the Jewish-Israeli religious map of identities and the different categories within the spiritual-religious arena requires a few introductory remarks. Similar to the aforementioned rough generalizations regarding New Age spirituality, the following remarks will also be very elementary.⁶

The Israeli range of religious identities is commonly described (both in the academic and public discourse) by the dichotomy between “secular” (*hilonim*) and “religious” (*dati'im*) people, which is sometimes even portrayed as a sociological split. This distinction is supported by marked demarcations of the social spheres of the two sectors—in their different ways of dressing, their educational institutions, their daily practices, and so on. Thus, in spite of the great variety of religious options, including hybrid ones, and in spite of the perviousness of those spheres, this dichotomous distinction prevails, notwithstanding its ubiquitous criticism. A common amendment to this dichotomy is an axis where those two are the extremities, but this model cannot account for Israeli hybrids of religiosity and secularity.⁷

Since surveys have found that only about twenty percent of Israelis are said to be religious (Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox), most of the Israeli public is considered nonreligious. Other research addressing nonreligious sectors has offered several labels other than secular, in order to more accurately section them, such as partly observant of *halakha* (Jewish law) or “traditional” (*masorti*), since the extent of observance of *halakha* is a major indication as to the classification of religious identity (more than religious beliefs).

The general atmosphere in Israel is of secular Judaism. The State endows the office of the Chief Rabbinate (*ha'rabanut ha'rashit*) with many important and representative authorities, whereas the popular concept of Judaism in Israel involves expert knowledge, those experts being the Orthodox rabbis. The Ultra-Orthodox sector is perceived in Israeli public discourse as the most authentic in preserving the Jewish tradition.⁸

Whereas most of the Jews in the Diaspora identify with liberal Jewish trends, such options are rare in Israel. Consequently, a paradox is created, where a “non religious” society regards “religious” (Ultra-) Orthodox rabbis as the persons most fit to express opinions on Jewish issues and to perform Jewish services and rituals (such as conducting ceremonies for the Sabbath, weddings, and so on), which *halakhically* may also be performed by laymen.

The Junction of Judaism and the New Age in Israel

In Israel, most New Age phenomena are of a global⁹ nature, with no clear local fingerprint.¹⁰ Sociologically, the majority of the scene is “secular” (or “nonreligious”), and indifferent to Judaism. However, there has been a gradual growth in attempts to combine Judaism and New Age spirituality. These *glocal*¹¹ phenomena could be called “Jew Age”¹² and have become prevalent and of consequences both to secular and religious developments in Israel, but they have neither been documented nor has their importance been appreciated.

I would argue that, surprisingly, there is a common oversight in the academic (and public) discourse of many spiritual phenomena in Israel that are both Jewish and New Age in nature. When referring to current innovations in “Jewish Spirituality,” the discussions are on “religious” (or “traditional”) phenomena, and their renewed forms.¹³ In order to better understand contemporary Jewish (or Jewish-Israeli) identity, it is important to integrate comprehension of the global New Age movement and its characteristics. Such analysis would serve to clarify the irrelevance of the distinctions between “secular” and “religious” and provide greater understanding of the various spiritual phenomena emerging, which are “spiritual.”¹⁴

Several Israeli and Jewish researchers¹⁵ have expressed concern regarding the effects of New Age to (Israeli) Judaism. Some have described it as potentially anti-Semitic, while others have said it could promote Jewish racism. Some have said that the new Jewish spirituality is indicative of regression in the process of enlightenment and reverts back to retrograde piety along with loss of modern achievements. Some have expressed fear that the particular Jewish identity is collapsing, vacating its place for cosmopolitanism

or extreme Americanization. Some have emphasized the theological dissonance of New Age spirituality and Judaism. In my opinion, these concerns stem from an erroneous perception¹⁶ or an inaccurate account of the New Age, sometimes of Judaism as well.

ISRAELI JEW AGE PHENOMENA

In my fieldwork, I have encountered various Jew Age phenomena.¹⁷ In what follows, I shall survey the main manifestations in that field by clustering them into five groups.¹⁸ (This classification is not a typology but a convenient way to demonstrate the doctrines, practices, and groups in this field.) Some groups are bigger than others,¹⁹ some more familiar, and many phenomena may be classified within several groups. The presentation of this multiplicity of New Jewish spiritualities in Israel will serve my main thesis, which is that an important facet of the emerging Jewish identity is, for some reasons (discussed in the last section of the article), being overlooked by the public and the academia.

Before I present these Jew Age phenomena, I would mention two groups of phenomena not presented here, which are part of Jew Age or intertwined with it. While Jew Age is mostly of global New Age origin, these other two groups are derived mainly from local Jewish sources. Whereas Jew Age encompasses both “secular” and “religious” Israelis, these two groups are more exclusively demarcated. These groups influence, and are influenced by, Jew Age, but the academic discourse is relatively more familiar with them (because of their local and distinct character), and they are, therefore, not part of the field I wish to introduce in this article. I would, nevertheless, mention them briefly. The first is the Israeli Jewish Secular Renewal²⁰ in Israel, which, until recently, was mainly comprised of pluralistic study of Jewish scriptures in study halls (*batei midrash*) and gradually came to include more ritual and community practice (such as weddings and prayer meetings). The second is a “religious” group (sometimes even Ultra-Orthodox), which includes neo-kabbalistic and Neo-Hassidic phenomena,²¹ such as the assorted successors of the kabbalist Rabbi Ashlag (1884–1954),²² and the Neo-Breslau Hassids.²³ A few leaders of these “religious” groups are targeting a “secular” audience, which produces a hybrid outcome and draws them nearer to Jew Age.²⁴ These movements are led by Orthodox persons, unlike their clientele, and as they target a broader, “nonreligious,” audience, the vocabulary of their teachings departs from the conventional “religious” one and becomes spiritual. In wishing to interest a “secular” audience, they will

use psychological terms, stress self-empowerment, present parallels to Far Eastern doctrines, and so on. Likewise, they downplay the importance of Jewish law and refrain from religious terms. Consequently, these groups both influence, and are influenced by, the “nonreligious,” spiritual, Israeli New Age discourse.

As aforesaid, the next five groups to be presented will reflect the various Jew Age phenomena that have eluded public and academic view:

From psychotherapy to body/soul practices

Psychology, psychotherapy, spiritual counseling and coaching. Psychological Jew Age doctrines present spiritual knowledge of the human spirit/mind (sometimes intertwined with cosmology). While some doctrines rely mainly on kabbalistic methods, such as numerology, others are Jewish versions of modern, Western—specifically New Age—doctrines,²⁵ such as combinations of the Enneagram system and Orthodox Judaism²⁶ or a Jungian interpretation of kabbalistic traditions.²⁷ Some counselors use the English, New Age term, *Coaching Yehudi*²⁸ (lit., Jewish coaching) for a combination of Human Potential methods²⁹ with some Jewish teachings, such as past-life therapy techniques. Another phenomenon is the growing network of organizations for Jewish spiritual chaplaincy, as in global New Age spirituality. Chaplaincy is meant to help individuals in distress or at turning points in life (e.g., when moribund), along with their families. An interesting ordination track, the Mazorim Program, is located at the Hebrew Union College, a Reform Jewish institution that also ordains rabbis, the persons who traditionally administered such services.

Some Jew Age psychological doctrines are new systems of Jewish, Israeli spiritual teachers. Thus, for example, “Conscious Thinking Teachings” is also known as the Yemima Doctrine, after its founder, Yemima Avital (1929–99), a “religious” woman who was attributed with the ability to read thoughts and see the invisible. She taught both secular and religious individuals (according to what she deemed suitable for their souls) and groups, and, before her death, she ordained a few teachers.³⁰ In other cases, Western Occult methods are used, which may also be found in Jewish forms, such as aura reading. In any case, most counselors develop their own unique, eclectic methods.

A good example of eclecticism and the New Age style of Jewish counseling is Netan‘ela Magar³¹, who defines herself as “an eternal student of spiritual development according to kabbalistic perception

and the wisdom of Israel.” She offers various methods of counseling, including “Tree of Life, universal and Jewish numerology, and additional New Age tools.” She also studies the “healing power of letters” and has integrated it into her unique therapy method, the Light of the One (*Or Ha’echad*), which is about “consciousness of the Creator’s energy” and is based on “ancient knowledge combined with the knowledge of the New Age.” The method constitutes “focused energetic work to cleanse psycho-energetic imprints, combined with processes of awareness for changing patterns. All this is combined with sacred geometries, frequencies of the holy letters, and other tools adapted to the new energy of our time that help to assimilate the transformation and accelerate the healing of body, soul and spirit.” According to Magar, the “spiritual psychotherapy” she offers combines Western psychology, Eastern philosophy and Kabbalah.

While Jew Age spiritual counseling focuses on behavioral and cognitive aspects—relationships, lifestyle patterns, achievements and failures in life, and so on—it also frequently deals with bodily issues, befitting the holistic character of New Age healing. Methods more focused on the body will be described in the next section.

Body/soul-oriented practices. The holistic approach of the New Age strives to relate to the body and soul as one. Therefore, the common understanding and treatment of physical symptoms are closely connected to the spiritual/mental/emotional state they reflect. The positive New Age emphasis on the body—its nurturance, its health, its secrets—is also expressed in the preoccupation with physical practices that have spiritual meaning. For New Agers, physical health symbolizes spiritual virtue, and healing symbolizes redemption. In this spirit, New Age healing practices, such as meditation, martial arts and Shiatsu, are aimed at healing, physical-spiritual experiences and a healthy and “proper” lifestyle.

These New Age body-soul practices are “converted” to Judaism, in an attempt to identify them as being of Jewish origin or to offer a Jewish version of them. The syncretistic outcome includes many “Jewish” methods. Jew Age yoga includes many brands, such as Alef-Bet Yoga, Ophanim and Torah Yoga.³² An ancient, Jewish martial art called *Abir*,³³ is described as having been “revealed” in 2001 after being concealed for thousands of years. It is claimed that the lore was known to Abraham, Moses, David and their warriors. *Abir* is comprised of “warfare tactics and a balance between physical power, inner power and spiritual strength” and includes a therapeutic method for body and soul. Another example is Jewish meditation,³⁴ as publicized in Rabbi Arie Kaplan’s books,³⁵ which present a profusion of Jewish meditation methods. In Israel, Jewish meditation

manifests in many forms: Jewish Vipasana, Neo-Breslov methods, and so forth.³⁶

Other Jew Age body/soul phenomena (involving relatively many religious practitioners) include healing methods.³⁷ Several Israeli healers offer different kinds of Jewish Reiki, sometimes claiming that the true origin of Reiki is in Jewish symbols and letters.³⁸ Deborah Carolina-Hazan, who defines herself as “a kabbalist, healer, and channeler of the Creator,” established *Beit Osher*³⁹ (lit., House of Bliss) and trains therapists in the Jewish Healing method she developed called the Light of Life. (She also teaches “to channel with the Creator.”) Dudi Adler, who teaches various New Age methods (such as Reiki, seeing auras and guided imagery), developed and teaches Healing Ha’echad⁴⁰ (the Healing of the One method), which he defines as “a pleasant and powerful Jewish healing.”

“Achlama,”⁴¹ a college of holistic health care, “according to the wisdom of the Kabbalah,” was founded by Rabbi Elijah Azrad, who experienced a revelation in California and developed several spiritual and therapeutic healing methods: kabbalistic Shiatsu, kabbalistic Tai Chi, *shofar* healing, Jewish introspection, and so on. “Elima, the College for Alternative Medicine in the Jewish Spirit,”⁴² was founded by Rabbi Yuval Hakohen-Asherov and combines the teaching of East Asian therapeutic methods and Jewish thought. It is located in the village of Or Haganuz (a community that espouses the teachings of Rabbi Ashlag). Another example is Lousky College, “the Open Holistic College,”⁴³ where they teach an educational therapeutic method that Dani Lousky developed, which is based on the ancient, kabbalistic *Sefer Yetzirah* (lit., Book of Formation), a method that offers “integrated medicine via the 32 intelligences combined with arts.” The courses at the college include many typical New Age doctrines (e.g., acupuncture, energetic healing, psychodrama) combined with *Sefer Yetzirah* according to the Lousky method.

Nature veneration and feminism

This group of Jew Age phenomena includes Shamanism, Neopaganism, Magic, Feminist Spirituality, and more. This is a diverse group in which each phenomenon emphasizes different elements sharing a common logic, the focus on two entities reflected in each other, femininity and nature.⁴⁴ Two “secular” new social movements—the Green and feminist one—have a mutual spiritual wing (eco-feminism being their meeting point) that can be considered New Age.⁴⁵ Jew Age Green phenomena in Israel are very young⁴⁶ and are found in organizations, such as *Teva Ivri* (Hebrew Nature),⁴⁷ and even yielded the unification of two liberal, political parties (in 2009)—*Meimad* (lit.,

Dimension), which focuses on liberal Judaism, and *Hatenua'ah Hayerukah* (lit., the Green Movement), which focuses on green issues.⁴⁸ A few Jew Age ecological communities have emerged in Israel, e.g., *Meholelim* in Beit Oren and the community in Rotem.⁴⁹

A central issue for the group of nature veneration and feminism is goddesses, such as Earth itself to be deified. In the Jewish context, *Shekhinah*⁵⁰ and *Lilith*⁵¹ are particularly predominant. Alongside these divinities, adoration is also lavished on femininity itself and any related physical or spiritual characteristics. Although the positive attitude towards the female body and its sexuality is central, it is expanded to include the human body in general—its wisdom, pleasure, and health—as well as the sanctity of sexuality.⁵² Thus, *Hagan* (lit., the Garden) offers Jewish Tantra-like teachings and workshops combining David Deida's sacred sexuality teachings with Kabbalah.⁵³

The celebration of the cycle of nature is salient in this group. Since the months of the Hebrew calendar are lunar, most of its holidays are celebrated when the moon is full, like Shamanic ceremonies, and, sometimes, the two celebrations are combined. In the Israeli Shaman Orli Niran's⁵⁴ newsletters, the Tip of the Month combines Native American and Jewish calendars. Some women "circles" in Israel tend to meet on the first day of the Hebrew months, in accordance with the Jewish tradition of *rosh hodesh* (lit., the New Moon).⁵⁵

Many emphasize that although nature religion (or Neopaganism) constitutes a relatively minor phenomenon at the moment, it is exhibiting unprecedented growth.⁵⁶ Likewise, I have encountered several attempts in Israel to integrate Neopaganism with Judaism, and whereas these are still very marginal, they seem to be growing. One manifestation of this small field is the celebration of Canaanite (i.e., local) Paganism and attempts at Pagan interpretations of Biblical traditions.⁵⁷ Another manifestation is the integration of Native American Shamanism with Judaism, such as the *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) celebrations in the Shamanic community of the Great Spirit.⁵⁸

Interestingly, one of the most important leaders and pioneers of contemporary Western witchcraft is the Jewish-American witch Starhawk (Miriam Simos).⁵⁹ Although her activities are mostly colored by an overall Neopagan hue, without any mention of her Judaism, and alongside fierce criticism of all traditional, religious establishments, and of Israeli politics, she has, over the years, shown an interest in the adaptation of elements from Jewish tradition to her Pagan way of life. For instance, she celebrates both *Chanukah* as well as the winter solstice.⁶⁰

Yet another manifestation is Jewish Shamanism.⁶¹ Shmuel Shaul,⁶² who defines himself as a Hebrew (or Hebrew-Egyptian) Shaman,

conducts workshops and spiritual journeys both in and outside of Israel. In the Israeli New Age magazine *Hayim Aherim* (lit., A Different Life) he has been writing (for ten years) a column called *Oleh Regel* (lit., Pilgrim), pursuant to his journeys for healing the soil of the land of Israel. In his columns, he has exposed the locations and unique qualities of the chakras throughout the land of Israel, “energetic centers” of the country, similar to the chakras of the human body.

Since, emically, Mother Earth is considered an embodiment of the archetype of the feminine body, many New Agers believe in the Gaia Hypothesis (that planet Earth is a living creature), or they search for holy or mysterious sites (such as sites populated by magical creatures, e.g., fairies). Thus, an alternative sacred geography appears, with new sacred, “energetic” sites and special practices tailored to them. As New Agers, Jew Agers are also attracted to sites identified as “wild,” primitive and uncultured, such as forests, caves, and deserts. Some traditional Jewish sacred sites (such as the tombs of the righteous or the Temple Mount) may be included in this alternative, sacred geography, since new practices are performed there. Alongside these, there is an interest in sacred sites of other religions (such as Christian monasteries and Sufi centers) and in new sacred sites. Archeological sites are also used for Shamanic ceremonies, especially those of ancient Canaanite, Israelite, or Jewish temples, such as the Baniyas reserve, Appolonia, Tel Arad, and the Rimon ruins. Other sites are located by Israeli Shamans. An interesting example, an archeological site that has become attractive to New Agers, is Rujm El-Hiri (also called *Gilgal Refa'im*), which is often compared to Stonehenge.

A number of Israeli villages (e.g., Ma'ale Zevia⁶³) were built according to some spiritual principles, and workshops held there usually include a tour in order to experience the site's special energy. Israelis have also shown an interest in sanctified sites around the world,⁶⁴ as well as in the cyberspace,⁶⁵ as expressed in new practices such as e-sending notes to the Western Wall (instead of physically putting them there), e-praying in holy sites, and the use of virtual talismans.⁶⁶

Channeling

Channeling is the transfer of messages from various supernal beings—God, angels, Shamanic spirits, and so on. It may be seen as a new kind of revelation, a “reincarnation” of phenomena such as prophecy, the Revelation of Elijah, *ibbur* (lit., conception) and *dibbuk* (possession). Notwithstanding the similarities, however, channeling bears unique new characteristics.⁶⁷ Channeling is a creative and fertile way in which Israeli-Jewish content is created and molded in an original,

New Age spirit. This is a very common way in which New Agers express new ideas, experience new practices and give new meanings to different local customs under a seal of approval from a higher authority, similar to other revelation-based religions.

Some non-Jewish/Israeli channelers have transmitted messages for the people of Israel, such as Lee Carroll (channeling Kryon), who said that “as go the Jews, goes the Earth.” In a channeling that took place in Israel (in 2005), he declared the importance of Jerusalem as a spiritual center of the world and the gateway to peace on earth.⁶⁸

Although channeling is present in New Age worldwide, in Israel it sometimes bears Jewish/Israeli characteristics,⁶⁹ which may be apparent in three dimensions: the addressees of the content, the content itself, or the channeled entity. The following are examples of each of these dimensions.

Oriella Paz-Morin⁷⁰ channels the entity *Ahava*⁷¹ and relays both general and particular Israeli-Jewish messages. Thus, alongside the channelings about the secret of inner happiness, chakras and sexuality, her site contains a channeling that took place at the foot of the Temple Mount, in which the sounds of the muezzin were heard mixed with calls of Om and *Shema Yisra'el* (the major proclamation of the Jewish faith), while recreating the picture of the age of the Bible. Shaman Dror Trobnic (also named Sitting Bear) conducted a series of channelings, several years ago, from light entities, which echoes kabbalistic traditions of the eight heavens and the divine entities. Ze'ev Aviraz⁷² (lit., Father of the Secret) conducted a series of channelings from the angel Rafael, and thereafter a series from a team of super guides, *Kevutzat Hehamesh* (lit., the Group of Five). A broad cosmological picture is presented in his channelings, including extensive knowledge of the structure of the Tree of the *Sephirot*, the holy names of God (such as the seventy-two-letter name) and their use. Mira Cohen and Daniel Norel publish messages from Isaac Luria, Yonathan ben Uziel, and others, on a website called *Mesarim min Ha'emek* (lit., Messages from the Valley).⁷³ The site explains that the Prophet Elijah was the spiritual teacher also known as Metatron (an archangel in ancient Jewish traditions) and Jesus. The messages on the site are sorted both according to the Gregorian months and the Jewish holidays.

Tikva Avraham,⁷⁴ in channelings from entities of love and light, addresses various issues, including political Israeli issues. She explains, thereby, what the chosen people is, why it is plagued with terrorist attacks, and how love can stop them. The Israeli channelers' repertoire includes many more: Moses, Deborah the Prophetess, Rabbi Akiva, and others. An example of a channeling of a particularly Israeli

nature is from a Tel Aviv channeler, who transmits personal messages by singing excerpts from Israeli songs.

Alternative Sacred Art

It may be argued that the arts are the stream in which religion flows, taking the form of religious artifacts, chants and sacred drama. In the New Age arena, creativity and art are of paramount importance, and they are integrated into the perception of self-realization and the aspiration to nonintellectual experiences.⁷⁵ Likewise, Jew Age art is created in the fields of music, theatre, drawing, jewelry-crafting, and so on—both by professional artists and by lay spiritual practitioners encouraged in creative activity.⁷⁶

An example in the musical field is the Diwan of the Heart ensemble, which performs Jewish, traditional, liturgical poetry according to ethnic adaptations. Many Israeli singers (and celebrities) have taken a spiritual path, many times in the Jew Age style.⁷⁷ In the field of drawing, a good example is Hannah Aliza Omer, as inspired by Dr Yitzhak Hayutman's vision of the future Jerusalem temple, and Rabbi Ohad Ezrachi's Breslov pack of cards.⁷⁸ In the field of jewelry-crafting, a plethora of jewelry has recently emerged, presented as talismans based on Jewish (or syncretistic) traditions. These talismans generally serve as jewelry and may include various, sacred combinations of Hebrew letters, sacred geometric shapes, illustrations from the Seal of Solomon (a Christian kabbalistic book), crystals (that carry Jewish interpretation), kabbalistic combinations of letters with matching extracts of Bach flowers, and so on.⁷⁹

New religious paraphernalia (*tashmishi kedusha*) are another form of sacred art. Jew Agers use Jewish, traditional, religious articles, which are sometimes newly designed.⁸⁰ Moreover, they are devising new religious objects as well.⁸¹ For example, Tarot cards with Jewish themes are used for counseling, diagnosis and therapy—cards based on the stories of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, on the paths in the Tree of Sefirot, on the seventy-two-letter name, and so on.⁸² Another example would be flower extracts from the land of Israel,⁸³ or blessed/"energetic" water, which serve as body/soul remedies.

Alternative commentaries and calendar

Some Jewish traditional practices that have turned Jew Age have already been mentioned:⁸⁴ religious paraphernalia, spiritual chaplains, and more. However, all the aforementioned groups exemplify Jewish, local renderings of global New Age phenomena rather than New Age renderings of traditional Jewish phenomena.⁸⁵ Among the main

elements in Jewish milieu, are scriptural commentaries and the Hebrew calendar with its festivals and rituals, which to a great extent form the face of Judaism. The appearance of Jew Age versions of these two major, Jewish elements may be heralding the emergence of a significant alternative, since they challenge and may even replace the present Jewish habitus.

These phenomena—namely, New Age attempts to reclaim Judaism—seem to be gradually and partially replacing established Jewish practices. Thus, they would appear to parallel similar processes in other Western societies: the gradual but salient reduction of religious institutions in favor of spiritual, holistic alternatives.⁸⁶ This interpretive context clearly places these phenomena as an alternative to the “religious” (Israeli) establishment.

Jew age commentaries. Jew Age commentaries appear in books, newspaper columns, and websites. They present an alternative, spiritual way of relating to Jewish scriptures, traditions, concepts, laws, and holidays. Thus, for example, in the New Age column on the website of an Israeli daily newspaper (*Ma'ariv*),⁸⁷ there is a commentary on the weekly Torah portion that typically includes a suggestion for a weekly spiritual practice related to the portion or an inner understanding of Torah stories as messages about spiritual tests or the evolution of the human spirit. (This approach, derived from both Hassidic and Jungian sources, is prevalent in Jew Age commentaries.)

Another example is a series of articles by Orion on the Light Circle website, which connects the portion of the week with plates of the Mayan Cholkin calendar.⁸⁸ Some popular Jew Age interpretations of the Bible reconstruct Erich Von-Däniken's thesis about the involvement of aliens in the history of humanity (during the process of creation, in the enhancement of the human race, in revelations to selected people, and so on.).⁸⁹

Attempts to legitimize Jewish laws and customs in the spirit of New Age also belong to this group, for example indicating the spiritual advantages of donning phylacteries or covering oneself with a prayer shawl (which are *halakhic* practices) as changing the aura or the chi flow.⁹⁰

Jew age calendar. Alternative ceremonies to welcome the Sabbath, with several dozen participants, are often performed in Israeli New Age community centers that have no Jewish emphasis in their day-to-day activities and, in fact, similar activities take place on week nights as well, under a different title, where sing-along and ecstasy are central. One example is the welcoming of the Sabbath at Israeli New Age festivals,⁹¹ where the ceremony may be held around the central

fire of the festival, where a bonfire was lit (and fueled) after the Sabbath began (contrary to Jewish law). Instead of standing before two candles, the participants stand around the bonfire, and folk songs, including Sabbath ones, replace the traditional liturgy of the conventional ritual. Alternative Sabbath events almost always involve violation of Orthodox Jewish law,⁹² since the vast majority of the practitioners are “secular” Israelis. Although, for the participants, this seems emically unproblematic, since, as aforesaid, they are not committed to Jewish law, we should keep in mind that “secular” Israelis usually view *halakha* (Orthodox Jewish law) as compelling with regard to public acts or rituals that are considered Jewish. This new brand of rituals is, therefore, a significant innovation.

Many New Age events are scheduled to coincide with holidays or Sabbaths, since Israelis don't work on those days. These events fill sacred Jewish times with spiritual meaning, but the contents invested in them are not the traditional ones but of general New Age spirituality, often adapted to the holiday. Thus, the major, popular New Age festivals in Israel are held on Jewish holidays, to which they connect some of their slogans and events.

These events offer different spiritual content for familiar ceremonies and holidays. Sabbath eve ceremonies, for example, do not always include prayer books, wine, *challah* bread, and candle lighting. The Sabbath songs may be traditional, renewed, or simply spiritual songs. Participants are invited to sing along, as the purpose is presented as experiential/ecstatic. In lieu of liturgical prayer and Torah readings, New Age Sabbath events may include general New Age doctrines, study or practice. The sociological character of the target audience of these events is clearly different from those who attend synagogue. The former are not a permanent, cohesive, total community but are a community in a more limited sense,⁹³ which allows them to experience a feeling of affinity with a group of “spiritual” people, even if they are not old acquaintances, a community based on the willingness to interact closely with different people at each meeting, and different techniques are used to engender and develop such closeness without long term commitment.

In addition to the alternative celebration of Hebrew calendar events, the number of holidays is extended by integrating festivals from other cultural sources (e.g., Valentine's Day, the New Age International Meditation Day for Peace, equinox festivals) and giving them Jew Age interpretations with a perennial spirit by using latent content from Jewish or “ancient Hebrew” traditions—such as the clarification and “invention”⁹⁴ of the Pagan Biblical traditions underlying Shamanic holidays, or spiritual work on the “senses” as attributed to

the Hebrew months according to Kabbalah—and by finding parallels between Judaism and other religions.

TRENDS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF JEW AGE PHENOMENA IN ISRAEL

The classification of Jew Age phenomena into spiritual groups, as aforesaid, is meant to display the various phenomena rather than describe an actual division present in the field. Furthermore, I obviously could not survey all the various phenomena. The purpose of distinguishing the different groups is the outline that emerges, the large-scale growth of Jewish phenomena that to date has eluded the public and academic discourse on Jewish identity.

Whenever I ask a class of Israeli students to indicate major trends or interesting new manifestations in current Jewish spirituality, they mention new *halakhic* rulings that exclude or offend women, extreme, messianic nationalism, the rise of the “Oriental” Ultra-Orthodox (Jews from Arab countries), Jews in the parliament, north-African Jewish folklore (miraculous healers, tombs of the Moroccan righteous, and so on), but almost never do they mention Jew Age phenomena. Some have heard about it but never thought of it in the context of the ongoing, Jewish spiritual arena. It is perceived as New Age, not as Jewish. Even when I indicate its Jewish nature, they feel it is not really Jewish or that it is not authentic, although they, themselves, feel distant from the manifestations they mention as Jewish. How can this anomaly be explained?

Furthermore, just as in the public discourse, so does the religious establishment fail to see the growth of alternative Jewish spirituality, to oppose it, or to confront it. For instance, although every holiday in Israel is marked by New Age festivals (some of them the size of an average Israeli city), alternatively celebrating the Jewish calendar, the Orthodox State authorities have yet to denounce these New Age attempts to reclaim Jewish holidays. On the one hand, we see how the discourse of innovations in Israeli religious/spiritual identity relates to the Orthodox (or at least “traditional”) arena and, on the other hand, that notwithstanding the expanding recognition of New Age spirituality in Israel, its discourse is isolated from the context of religious, Jewish identity. There is New Age and there is Judaism, and they do not appear to meet, but there are, in fact, many meetings, merges and influences at the forefront of the Israeli Jewish and New Age dialectic. These form a fascinating and growing field that is significant for the understanding of the current transformations in Israeli Jewish religious identity.

The sociological implications of these “spiritual” phenomena in Israeli society are significant, profoundly blending “secular” and “religious,” and bringing about new values and theological understandings. The survey offered above provides a preliminary indication of the new emphases, contents, and ideals of the Jewish spirituality currently emerging outside established institutions. Thus, explanations for terrorist attacks against Israelis are not coming from the standard “secular” or “religious” spokespersons (Middle Eastern scholars, military personnel, politicians or rabbinical authorities) but from “spiritual” ones. New values are being emphasized again and again in the spirit of the New Age, among them an affinity with nature, a positive attitude towards sexuality and an admiration of femininity, an emphasis on the inner world, a deep interest in healing and health, criticism of establishments (religious and other), empowerment of the individual, an interest in other religions (particularly those of the Far East) and syncretism.⁹⁵ Moreover, the great influence of global New Age spirituality, with its universalist values, yields an attempt at integrating the awareness of the unique status of the people of Israel while avoiding a sense of superiority (or inferiority) or competitiveness with regard to other cultures, religions, and nations. It appears that the unique combination of global spirituality, the New Age, and a unique local character, is typical to this *glocal* spirituality.

I would argue that, since these new events are emerging in a space perceived as “secular,” outside established religious institutions, this allows the rabbinate, the public discourse, and even the academic discourse, to ignore this widespread, vibrant phenomenon of an emerging Jewish-Israeli spiritual identity. Moreover, the appeasing New Age style, which abstains from accepted discourse categories, and its grassroots character that defies central organization, all contribute towards a Jew Age outlook, for better or worse, which is something “other,” even strange, not part of Judaism. The situation is very different, in the eyes of Jew Age devotees, who, in growing numbers, see Judaism as evolving and see themselves as part of its transformation, something they consider blessed and essential.

An important way in which the Israeli Jew Age shares some similarity with Diaspora Judaism is the voluntary nature of its religious practice. Consequently, it does not rely on obvious ethnic identity based on origin but seeks to fill the innate identity with significant spiritual content.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the common concern in the Diaspora for loss of Jewish identity (even of ethnic identity), is not its driving force, since Israelis take the preservation of their Jewish identity for granted, and they may even portray it as superfluous while still holding onto it.⁹⁷

Among Israeli New Age practitioners, two different trends can be traced with regard to Jewish tradition—rejection or indifference, on the one hand, or adoption, on the other hand.⁹⁸ The focus in this article was mainly on the latter, on the affirmative trend. Only time will tell which trend becomes stronger. In any event, it appears that a new kind of Jewish identity is emerging. In many ways, these phenomena can be seen as an “invented tradition” and, therefore, many do not consider this as “Judaism” and would dispute its authenticity or legitimacy. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that this has always been the attitude towards innovations in Jewish history that retroactively became accepted Jewish phenomena. Shula Israeli, an Israeli channel of the 16th century kabbalist Isaac Luria, claims likewise, quoting him: “When I was in a body, none but a few listened to me, but see what has become of my teachings. Be optimistic. Believe in the knowledge you receive, and in the power of this faith the knowledge will be spread.”⁹⁹

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NOTES

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1. This article benefited from the advice of many people, of which I can mention here only a few. Especially, I wish to thank Moshe Idel, Boaz Huss, and Yaakov Ariel.

2. To mention only a few main voices in this discourse: Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany, 1998); Steven Sutcliffe, “Studying ‘New Age’: Reconfiguring the Field,” *Culture and Religion*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2003), pp. 3–4; Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism* (Malden, MA, 2008); Daren Kemp, *New Age: A Guide* (Edinburgh, 2004); George D. Chryssides, “Defining the New Age,” in *Handbook of New Age*, (eds.) Daren Kemp and James R. Lewis (Leiden, 2007), pp. 5–24.

3. See, e.g., Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Malden, MA, 2005); Tony Glendinning and Steve Bruce, “New Ways of Believing or Belonging: Is Religion Giving Way to Spirituality?,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (2006), pp. 399–414.

4. James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer, *The Invention of Sacred Tradition* (New York, 2007).

5. In this article, when referring to religious identities in Israel, I refer only to Jewish ones and disregard other minority religions, mainly Muslims.

6. It is important to note that “religious” as in “spiritual, but not religious” is different than the Israeli “religious.” For some elaboration on religious identities and categorizations, see Yehuda Goodman and Yossi Yona (eds.), *The Vortex of Identities: A Critical Discussion of Religiosity and Secularism in Israel* (Jerusalem, 2004) [in Hebrew]; Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinsohn and Elihu Katz, *A Portrait of Israeli Jewry: Beliefs, Observances, and Values among Israeli Jews 2000* (Jerusalem, 2002) [in Hebrew]; Avi Sagi, *The Jewish-Israeli Voyage: questions of culture and identity* (Jerusalem, 2006) [in Hebrew]; Eliezer Ben-Rafael, “The Faces of Religiosity in Israel: Cleavages or Continuum?,” *Israel Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Fall 2008), pp. 89–113; Shlomo Deshen, Charles S. Liebman, Moshe Shokeid (eds.), *Israeli Judaism: The Sociology of Religion in Israel* (New Brunswick, 1995); and Bernard Susser and Charles S. Liebman, *Choosing Survival: Strategies for a Jewish Future* (New York, 1999).

7. For an attempt to portray a “secular religiosity,” see: Adam Klin Oron and Marianna Ruah-Midbar, “Secular by the Letter, Religious by the Spirit: The Attitudes of the Israeli New Age to Jewish Law,” *Israeli Sociology*, Vol.12, No. 1 (2010), pp. 57–81 [in Hebrew].

8. It is important to note that, traditionally, there was no central, clerical authority in Judaism. In addition, Judaism differs from Christianity both organizationally, as there is no religious obligation to belong to a church or community, and theologically, as there is no dogma.

9. See Mikael Rothstein (ed.), *New Age Religion and Globalization* (Aarhus, 2001); Peter Beyer, “Globalization and the Religion of Nature,” in *Nature Religion Today – Paganism in the Modern World*, edited by Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 11–21.

10. The research of Jewish New Age in the Diaspora is also very rare. See: Celia Rothenberg and Anne Vallely (eds.), *New Age Judaism* (Portland, 2008).

11. By “glocal” I am referring to the local manifestations of the global New Age movement that have local character. There are also local Israeli manifestations of those global New Age phenomena that have some special place for Israel, Judaism or the Jewish people. For example, the Raël movement is also active in Israel, distributing materials in Hebrew (see he.rael.org), including a car sticker saying (in Hebrew) “I am an IsRaëli.” Several additional examples will be detailed in this article (All the URLs in this article were retrieved on February 18, 2011).

12. Marianna Ruah-Midbar and Adam Klin Oron, “Jew Age: Jewish Praxis in Israeli New Age Discourse,” *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies*, Vol. 5 (2010), pp. 1–33. Available at: www.asanas.org.uk/files/005Ruah-Midbar&Oron.pdf. See especially pp. 1, 24–26.

13. See also: Jonathan Garb, “The Understandable Revival of Mysticism Today: Innovation and Conservatism in the Thought of Joseph Achituv,” in *Jewish Culture in the Eye of the Storm: Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Achituv*, edited by Avi Sagi and Zvi Zohar (Tzurim, 2002), pp. 172–99 [in Hebrew].

14. The category “traditional” also does not fit these phenomena which are influenced from processes of detraditionalization. See: Paul Heelas, Scott Lash and Paul Morris, *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity* (Oxford, 1996).

15. For example, Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Despair and Deliverance: Private Salvation in Contemporary Israel* (Albany, 1992); Miriam Glaser-Taasa, *The Inter-Ministry Report for the Examination of the “Cults” (“New Groups”) in Israel* (Jerusalem, 1987) [in Hebrew]; Margaret Brearley, “Possible Implications of the New Age Movement for the Jewish People,” in *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, (ed.) Jonathan Webber (London, 1994), pp. 255–72; Gadi Taub, “Millions of People by Themselves,” *HaAretz* (May 30, 2003) [Hebrew]; Manfred Gerstenfeld, “Neo-Paganism in the Public Square and Its Relevance to Judaism,” *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3–4 (Fall 1999).

16. See also James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, “Introduction,” in *Perspectives on the New Age*, edited by Lewis, James R. and J. Gordon Melton (Albany, 1992), pp. ix–xii.

17. Most of the survey is based on my fieldwork over the last ten years in Israeli New Age, including interviews with hundreds of practitioners and leaders, participant observations in many dozens of events (festivals, bazaars, courses and workshops, lectures, rituals, private counseling and therapies), extensive reading of hundreds of primary sources (books, articles, journal columns, Internet forums and sites).

18. It is important to note other attempts to classify the vast and complicated field of the New Age, but they are never “neat and clean.” Hanegraaff introduces five trends: channeling, healing and personal growth, New Age science, Neopaganism, and New Age in a restricted and general sense. York introduces three (very similar to Introvigne’s): the social, the occult, and the spiritual. In my doctoral dissertation I survey those and some more: Marianna Ruah-Midbar, *New Age Culture in Israel—A Methodological Introduction and ‘the Conceptual Network’* (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 2006) [Hebrew]: ch. 2, section 2, pp. 102–23.

19. In some cases I expand more on smaller phenomena, since they are less known.

20. That is very different from the American Jewish Renewal that is Neo-Hassidic. See Naama Azulay, *‘Hebrews We are and our Hearts will We Worship’ - The Jewish Renewal Movement in Israeli Secular Society* (PhD diss., Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, 2010) [in Hebrew].

21. For example, Boaz Huss, “The New Age of Kabbalah,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2007), pp. 107–25; Joanna Steinhardt, “American Neo-Hasids in the Land of Israel,” *Nova Religio*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2010), pp. 22–42; and Jonathan Garb, *The Chosen Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah* (New Haven, 2009).

22. See e.g. Boaz Huss, “‘Altruistic Communism’: The Modernist Kabbalah of R. Yehuda Ashlag,” *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, Vol. 16 (2006), pp. 109–30 [in Hebrew]; Jody Myers, *Kabbalah and the Spiritual*

Quest: The Kabbalah Centre in America (Westport, Conn., 2007); and Jonathan Meir, "Exposure and Exposure in Secret: Of R. Ashlag's 'Followers', the Resistance to Them, and the Distribution of Secret Literature," *Kabbalah*, Vol. 16 (2007), pp. 151-258 [Hebrew].

23. See e.g., Zvi Mark, "Ritual, Tikkun and Messianism – On the Renaissance in Breslau Hassidism" (forthcoming) [in Hebrew]; Yoram Bilu and Zvi Mark, "Between Righteous and Messiah – An Outline for a Comparative Analysis of Cabad and Breslau Hassidisms" (forthcoming) [in Hebrew].

24. An extreme case of this group is the Israeli brands of the American Neo-Hassidic Jewish Renewal movement (founded by Rabbi Schachter-Shelomi and Rabbi Carlebach), such as Rabbi Ohad Ezrahi. While these Jew Age leaders are rabbis, their followers are "secular" Israelis. As to the American movement, see, e.g., Shaul Magid, "Pragmatism and Piety: The American Spiritual and Philosophical Roots of Jewish Renewal," in *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations*, edited by Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi and Kocku von Stuckrad (Boston, 2010), pp. 357-88.

25. Nurit Novis-Deutsch, *Soft Conflicts: The Complex Identities of Religious Psychotherapists in Israel* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 2010) [in Hebrew].

26. Miriam Adahan, *Awareness: The Key to Acceptance, Respect, Forgiveness, and Growth* (New York, 2003).

27. For example, Micha Ankori and Ohad Ezrahi, *In the Secrets of Leviathan* (Ben-Shemen, 2004) [in Hebrew]. Another non-Israeli Example is: Vivianne Crowley, *A Woman's Kabbalah: Kabbalah for the 21st Century* (London, 2000). As to Jung's affinity to New Age, see Robert A. Segal, "Jung's Psychologising of Religion," in *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative spirituality*, edited by Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 65-81.

28. For example, www.coaching.co.il/index1bb1.html?categoryId=33034 (Interestingly, on this site they mention the Hebrew word *amen* in connection to coaching, *immun*, since they derive from the same Hebrew root). A journalistic survey of more examples is at www.mako.co.il/finances-personal/career/Article-f2d50121f959e11004.htm.

29. See e.g., Elizabeth Puttick, "Personal Development: the Spiritualisation and Secularization of the Human Potential Movement," in *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative spirituality*, edited by Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 201-19.

30. For example, www.yemima.co.il; www.yemima.net.

31. www.nariya-center.com.

32. See: Celia Rothenberg. "Jewish Yoga: Experiencing Flexible, Sacred, and Jewish Bodies," *Nova Religio*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2006), pp. 57-74.

33. www.abirwarriorarts.com.

34. Tomer Persico is currently writing his dissertation on this subject.

35. Aryeh Kaplan, *Jewish Meditation: A Practical Guide* (New York, 1985).

36. E.g. www.jewishmeditation.org.il. A meditation from the global New Age movement, that combines Kabbalistic and other Western esoteric traditions and ideas, is the “Merkaba Meditation,” established by Drunvalo Melchizedek. See www.merkaba.org. For an Israeli manifestation of this global phenomenon, see www.merkaba.org.il.

37. See: Celia E. Rothenberg, “Hebrew Healing: Jewish Authenticity and Religious Healing in Canada,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2006), pp. 163–82; and Susan Sered, “Jewish Healing in Boston,” in *Religious Healing in Boston: First Findings*, edited by Susan Sered and Linda Barnes (Boston, 2004), pp. 43–47. A comprehensive account of New Age healing is: Meredith B. McGuire (with the assistance of Debra Kantor), *Ritual Healing in Suburban America* (New Brunswick, 1988).

38. As for Reiki’s history, see: Gordon Melton, “Reiki: The International Spread of a New Age Healing Movement,” in *New Age Religion and Globalization*, (ed.) Mikael Rothstein (Aarhus, 2001), pp. 73–93.

39. www.beitosher.com.

40. www.lhealing.co.il.

41. www.achlama.net.

42. www.elima.org.il.

43. Lousky.co.il.

44. As to the conceptual association of nature and femininity, see: Sherry Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?,” *Anthropological Theory* (1974), pp. 402–13. As to the affinity of New Age and Feminist Spirituality, see: Mary Farrell Bednarowski, “The New Age Movement and Feminist Spirituality: Overlapping Conversations at the End of the Century,” in *Perspectives on the New Age*, edited by James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany, 1992), pp. 167–78.

45. For this identification, see in: Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel (eds.), *Nature Religion Today – Paganism in the Modern World* (Edinburgh, 1998).

46. Not as developed as in Judaism abroad. Some rabbis strive to expand it, such as Rabbi Ohad Ezrahi who calls to “import” the Jewish Renewal standard of eco-kosher, interpreting the concept of kosher food in light of ecological values. See kabalove.org/articles/eco-kosher.

47. www.tevaivri.org.il.

48. Eventually, they got almost 28,000 votes, not enough to get into the Israel parliament. (Another green party got more than 12,000 votes. For a sense of proportion, it should be noted that the total votes cast amounted to less than 3,375,000.)

49. www.meholelim.org; www.ecovillage-rotem.info.

50. *Shekhinah* is the female aspect of divinity in Jewish tradition. See Chava Weissler, “Meanings of Shekhinah in the ‘Jewish Renewal’ Movement,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2005), pp. 53–83.

51. *Lilith* is a female demon in Jewish tradition, as well as the first woman (before Eve). See e.g., Ohad Ezrahi and Mordechai Gafni, *Who’s Afraid of Lilith* (Ben-Shemen, 2005) [in Hebrew].

52. See also: Y. Yaakov Ariel, "Can Adam and Eve Reconcile? Gender and Sexuality in a New Jewish Religious Movement," *Nova Religio*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2006), pp. 53-78.

53. eng.kabalove.org.

54. www.maofm.com.

55. Such as the circles of "Niggun Nashim": www.orianim.ac.il/sites/heb/hamidrasha/woman/levana/Pages/default.aspx. For Jew Age feminist interpretations and practices related to menstruation, see also: Sarit Gayle Moas, *The Value of Menstruation: Positive Meanings of the Female Lived-Body Experience* (MA Thesis, Ramat-Gan, 2010).

56. Jo Pearson, "'Witchcraft will not soon Vanish from this Earth': Wicca in the 21st Century," in *Predicting Religion - Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*, (ed.) Grace Davie, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 170-82.

57. For example, www.witchcraft.co.il (that includes a virtual temple for the Canaanite goddess Anat). See also Tala Bar's articles at www.wicca-israel.com/ar.php?id=196. Another example is the book: Ohad Ezrahi and Yitzhak HayutMa'n, *Let the Old be Renewed and the New be Sanctified - Insights for the meaning of the Temple in our times* (Jerusalem, 1997) [in Hebrew].

58. www.shamansvision.com (Their English site is: www.netofthemoth.com). A research on neo-shamans in Israel, focusing on this group is: Yaron Yavelberg, *Shamanism, Rationality and Femininity in Israel of the Beginning of the 3rd Millennium* (MA Thesis, Tel-Aviv, 2004) [in Hebrew].

59. The Israeli, Jew Age, Neopagans differ from their counterparts in the Diaspora, but this isn't the place to specify these distinctions. Starhawk's books weren't even translated into Hebrew, but they show acquaintance with the practitioners. See also www.telshemesh.org for earth-based Judaism (led by Rabbi Jill Hammer and others); and www.jewitchery.com, a community that is mostly non-Israeli.

60. Melissa Raphael, "Goddess Religion, Postmodern Jewish Feminism, and the Complexity of Alternative Religious Identities," *Nova Religio*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1998), pp. 198-215.

61. For Jewish shamanism in the USA, see www.walkingstick.org (led by Rabbi Gershon Winkler and others).

62. nehara.org.

63. That is conducted in the spirit of Emin Society: maalezvia.org.il.

64. For example, the tombs of the righteous in Eastern Europe, holy sites in the Sinai desert and (ancient) Egypt, temples of the Far East, and spiritual communities (like Damanhur in Italy, Findhorn in Scotland).

65. See, e.g., Brenda E. Brasher, *Give me that Online Religion* (San Francisco, 2001); Douglas E. Cowan, "Religion on the Internet," in *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by James A. Beckford and Nicholas Jay Demerath (Los Angeles, 2009), pp. 357-76; and Marianna Ruah-Midbar, "Sacralization of Randomness - The Theological Imagination and Rationale of Computerized Divination Rituals," *Numen - International Review for the History of Religions* (forthcoming).

66. For example, www.thekotel.org/SendNote.asp; www.po-ip.com/english/main-english.htm; www.ipray.co.il (that recommends downloading Psalms to the iPhone).

67. See: Wayne Spencer, "To Absent Friends: Classical Spiritualist Mediumship and New Age Channelling Compared and Contrasted," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol.16, No. 3 (2001), pp. 343-60.

68. www.kryon.com/k_chanelIsraelPI05.html.

69. Adam Klin Oron is currently writing a dissertation on Israeli channelers.

70. www.oriella.co.il.

71. Literally love. The letters constitute a variant of God's holy name.

72. www.zeevaviraz.co.il.

73. www.messarim.co.il. They have also published a book: Mira Cohen and Daniel Norel, *Messages from the Valley* (Jerusalem, 2009).

74. www.ima-adama.co.il/page/tikva.htm.

75. Paul Heelas, "Expressive Spirituality and Humanistic Expressivism: Sources of Significance Beyond Church and Chapel," in *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* edited by Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 237-54.

76. Chava Weissler, "'Art is Spirituality!': Practice, Play, and Experiential Learning in the Jewish Renewal Movement," *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2007), pp. 354-79.

77. There are many examples for this. See Asaf Lebovitz, "Spiritual Traditionalists' Israelis: The Development of an Active Traditional Identity in Contemporary Israeli Society," *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel studies in Israeli and modern Jewish society* (Beer-Sheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev, forthcoming, Hebrew).

78. Some of her works are available at www.ein-hod.org/artist.asp?GalleryID=60. Ezrahi himself is engaged in sacred art of digital pictures based on body photography: www.all-art.co.il/ArtWorks/ArtWorksChapter.asp?StageId=865&TypeId=4.

79. For example, www.ka-gold-jewelry.com.

80. See: Yaakov Ariel, "Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius: The House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, 1967-1977," *Religion and American Culture*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2003), pp. 139-65.

81. Nurit Zaidman, "Commercialization of Religious Objects: A Comparison between Traditional and New Age Religions," *Social Compass*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (2003), pp. 345-60; and Nurit Zaidman, "New Age Products in Local and Global Contexts: Comparison between Israel and New Zealand," *Culture and Religion*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2007), pp. 255-70.

82. For example, www.k-s-cards.com.

83. www.holylandessences.com, www.maofm.com/essmain.php.

84. Elsewhere, I have dealt at length with the characteristics of Israeli New Age commentaries to *halakhic* practices: Ruah-Midbar and Klin Oron, "Jew Age."

85. Though this is an ethical distinction, I argue that it's also emically intuitively felt.

86. Heelas and Woodhead, *Spiritual Revolution*.
87. www.nrg.co.il/online/55/HP_305.html.
88. light-circle.netfirms.com/Wave.htm.
89. See *Nova Religio's* special issue on extraterrestrials in new religions: Vol. 14, No. 2 (November, 2010).
90. For example, www.hilot.co.il/2008-11-09-14-47-37/2008-11-09-14-50-40/33-2008-07-09-13-46-10, www.tmurot.org.il/article.aspx?id=731.
91. Shiri Hagani, *Bereshit Festival's Production as an Expression of Concrete Representations and Central Themes 'Import' in the 'New Age' Phenomenon in Israel* (M.A. Thesis, Tel-Aviv, 2004) [in Hebrew]. An interesting ceremony for welcoming of the Sabbath took place in the nude *Pashut* festival 2008, as Yoav Ben-Dov narrates at www.8infiniti.com/8473.
92. Another example is an alternative Passover *Seder* (the ritual feast on Passover eve) held by an Israeli Shaman community, where leavened products were served contrary to the main idea of the holiday.
93. See also Yaakov Ariel, "Paradigm Shift: New Religious Movements and Quests for Meaning and Community in Contemporary Israel," *Nova Religio*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2010), pp. 1–21. The boundaries tend to blur. Thus, some new congregations are formed that are in between Jew Age, liberal Jewish trends, and secular Jewish renewal, such as *Tfillat Halev* (Prayer of the Heart) www.beit-daniel.org.il/page.asp?id=2586.
94. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).
95. In this article, I couldn't expand on the vast phenomenon of New Age syncretism with prominent Jewish elements, both in its Jew Age and global manifestations. For a Jewish Israeli example, see: Nahum Langental and Nissim Amon, *When Moses Met Buddha: Conversations on Judaism and Buddhism* edited by Yochi Brandeis (Tel-Aviv, 2005) [in Hebrew]. See also: Joseph Loss, "Buddha Dharma in Israel," *Nova Religio*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (May 2010), pp. 84–105. For a global New Age phenomenon (that also has an Israeli manifestation), see the group of Turkish origin called Mevlana: www.dkb-mevlana.org.tr.
96. David Roper, "The Turbulent Marriage of Ethnicity and Spirituality: Rabbi Theodore Falcon, Makom Ohr Shalom and Jewish Mysticism in the Western United States, 1969-1993," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2003), pp. 169–84; Susser and Liebman, *Choosing Survival*.
97. One example is Rabbi Ezrahi's apologetic text of Judaism (kabalove.org/articles/q-of-the-dor) and of Israeli Jewish Renewal (www.kabalove.org/Kabalove_articles/Heb/Tribal_articles_heb/Jewish_Renewal_Hebrew.htm) lately replaced by his recent calls to continue with "the Hebrew spirit" rather than with Judaism (in some private talks as well as at kabalove.org/articles/ivriyut-vers-judaism). More elaboration on the similarities and differences between Israeli and Diaspora Jew Age needs to be studied and detailed in future papers.
98. Ruah-Midbar, *New Age Culture*, p. 413.
99. Shula Yisraeli, *Through New Gates You shall Come: Lessons with the Holy AR'I* (Rishon-Lezion, 2004), p. 25 [in Hebrew].