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THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL:
DIVERSITY, COHESION, AND IDENTITY POLITICS

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PARTICIPANTS:

Welcoming Remarks:

SUZANNE MALONEY
Deputy Director, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

Session 1: Visions of Israel: Citizenship, Common Cause, and Conflict:

NATAN SACHS, Moderator
Fellow, Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

MK STAV SHAFFIR
Member of Knesset
Labor, the Zionist Union

MOHAMMAD DARAWSHE
Co-Executive Director, The Center for a Shared Society
Givat Haviva, Israel

YEHUDAH MIRSKY
Associate Professor, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Brandeis University

SHIBLEY TELHAMI
Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and
Development, University of Maryland
Nonresident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

Session 2: Secularism, Religion, and the State:

LEON WIESELTIER, Moderator
Isaiah Berlin Senior Fellow in Culture and Policy, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

MK KSENIA SVETLOVA
Member of Knesset
Hatnuah, the Zionist Union

NOAH EFRON
Senior Faculty Member, Department of Science, Technology & Society
Bar-Ilan University

RABBI DOV LIPMAN
Former Member of Knesset
Yesh Atid

ELANA STEIN HAIN
Director of Leadership Education
Shalom Hartman Institute of North America

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. MALONEY: Good afternoon and welcome to all of you, including those of you who are standing in the back. Thank you so much for coming. My name is Suzanne Maloney, and I'm deputy director of the foreign policy program here at the Brookings Institution. It's really a pleasure to welcome you all here today for our event on the Tribes of Israel: Diversity, Cohesion and Conflict.

This event is the conclusion of a two-day workshop with participants from Israel and the United States convened by the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings. The starting point for this gathering was a speech by President Reuven Rivlin of Israel, including his remarks here at Brookings last year, where he describes Israel as a society that no longer has one dominant identity group, secular Jews, but rather, has four tribes of similar size.

President Rivlin went further and suggested that a new compact should be forged among Israel's tribes based on respect for each group's separate approach to governing society. Others have argued that identity politics should not be institutionalized in such a way; that Israeli society should not give up on a common cause that crosses community lines and can be shared by Israelis of all stripes, Jews and Arabs, religion and secular.

What is the appropriate role of identity politics in Israel and elsewhere? How can the tribes of Israel create a better society? What might this teach us both about the future of Israeli foreign policy and about American society and politics? These are among the themes we will explore today.

This program continues with our project on imagining Israel's future, which brings the dynamics of Israeli society to audiences in Washington. We are

grateful to the Morningstar Foundation for its generous support of this project. As always, Brookings maintains strict independence in its research and the views expressed here today and elsewhere are only those of the individual authors and speakers.

Our event today is a special two panel event. The first panel deals with the broad visions of Israel's future. A self-defined Jewish Democratic state with a large minority that is not Jewish, as well as strong differences among the Jewish majority. The second panel will dive into issues of religion and state in a country that has no official separation between the two and where these issues are hotly debated every day.

One more point of order: For those of you who tweet, you can, and we encourage you to use the hashtag #IsraelsFuture. I'd like to now turn the floor over to Natan Sachs, fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings who convened this workshop and this important event today. Thank you.

MR. SACHS: Thank you very much, Suzanne. Thank you all for coming. It's really a pleasure for all of us, and I want to thank the participants in this workshop. It's been a long and very interesting two days, including the people you're going to see on the stage today in both panels.

Suzanne mentioned the speech that President Rivlin gave. He gave it actually in this very room. It wasn't the first place he gave it, but we like to pretend it was. And he spoke about the four tribes of Israel. It was a very sobering assessment of the reality in Israel today. In particular, if you look at the educational system in Israel, there are four streams, quite separate. Some of them will not meet later in life.

They will not necessarily meet in the military which secular Israelis and national religious Israelis serve in. They will sometimes not meet in the workforce. Some of these educational systems are in different languages and have very different

curriculums. The Arab Israeli's of course, educational system is in Arabic, a state funded educational system. Secular Jewish Israelis, traditionally, the hegemonic group of Israeli society, but no longer so. National religious have a different curriculum and a different conception of Zionism, the sort of ordering ideology of the early state, and ultra-orthodox, or Haredi in Israeli parlance, who have a very strict view of religion and reject Zionism, at least officially.

So how do they meet? President Rivlin answers that and mentioned it -- offered and suggested that there should be a compact among these groups; that Israel should recognize this reality of no longer having a single majority, no longer aspiring to have one ordering cause for the state, and rather, recognize it is a diverse society. This may sound familiar from other places, as well.

But the criticism that Suzanne alluded to is very real, too. You may have read in the New York Times just since this last election, a call for people in the United States to set aside the politics of identity. A call to think that identity politics, the basis of asking for respect, asking for recognition of individuals and groups among society can shadow or crowd out other political causes, in particular, economic causes -- this from the left.

From the right, of course, we heard our presidential candidate, now President-Elect talking about political correctness very derogatorily, which in many cases was exactly a call for respect for groups and minorities. This, in small part is a challenge to a very basic philosophical question in the United States. The United States in particular, is based on individualistic liberalism, on the idea that individuals have rights, inalienable rights, and that society should be constructed considering these individuals, and that the state as a direct relationship with that individual. The National Guard might go and help one guard go to school, simply because she has that

individual right.

This conception that President Rivlin suggested for Israel, and that others have suggested elsewhere goes against this. It views groups as an important component of society, as something that deserves respect, deserves perhaps, institutionalization in government policy. Not just that girl should be respected, but the group she belonged to.

In that case, African Americans should be respected as a group; their leadership, their traditions. In Israel, this means that individual, a girl in the ultra-Orthodox society, for example, who may not receive education that allows her full potential in life in some views, might still be going to the same educational system out of respect for that group's authority over its own education. Here ends my preface.

I'm very delighted to have four opportunities for this first panel. We have a fascinating panel following us moderated by Leon Wieseltier. In this panel, just to my left is, MK Stav Shaffir, member of Knesset, the Israeli parliament. Stav Shaffir is from the Labor Party and the Zionist Union list. She heads a transparency committee in the Knesset and is a member of the finance committee where she has had many abuttals with the coalition. She was also one of the central leaders of the giant social protest in 2011 that catapulted her into national fame.

To her left is Mohammad Darawshe. He is the co-executive director of the Center for a Shared Society of Givat Haviva in Israel. He is a very well-known figure in programs for shared society in Israel; speaks very frequently here in the United States. I'm sure many of you have heard him speak eloquently before, and he's really one of the leading voices for a shared society -- not merely for coexistence, but for a deeper understanding of what a shared society might mean in Israel. And we're delighted that they made their way all the way to the United States to be with us.

To his left is my colleague, my esteemed colleague, Shibley Telhami. He's professor of the Department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland. He's nonresident (Inaudible) chair, and he is -- excuse me?

(Inaudible comment)

MR. SACHS: He's one to the left of that. Sorry about that (Laughter). He is also a nonresident fellow with us at the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings. He has done excellent and longtime polling studies of both the United States' attitudes, of attitudes across the Middle East and inside Israel.

Just recently, he launched some fascinating polling on American attitudes towards the Middle East. He's working on a book which I'm eagerly awaiting on evangelical attitudes in the United States, and he will have with us some data -- just a taste of new data he has on Arab-Israeli attitudes and attitudes towards them in Israel.

And to his right is Yehudah Mirsky, who also made the trip down from Boston. He's the professor of Near Eastern Judaic Studies at Brandeis University. He's also no stranger to Washington as a former State Department official and a staffer on the Hill for some very central figures. He's also the author of a fascinating book, "Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution" from 2014, Yale University Press, which I highly recommend. Here are the introductions.

Stav MK Shaffir, why don't I turn to you, first? Your work in the Knesset is focused very strongly on questions of funding, questions of transparency, questions that transcend groups, although you, yourself, obviously coming from a certain segment of the population as well as anyone would, your work has emphasized very much what some people would call the older attitudes of progressives or left, not so much questions of identity.

And then social protest movements, which you were one of the leaders

of, the words and facts of certain -- the names for certain groups were not even mentioned. You talked about social justice, about wages, about cost of living. Am I right to assume you disagree with President Rivlin? What's your attitude on President Rivlin's approach for a communal compact in Israel?

MS. SHAFFIR: Thank you, Natan. Well, it's a very interesting question. Many people would like to see the Israeli public divided into these four tribes, maybe even 10 tribes or a hundred tribes. Are we really divided to these specific tribes?

As a half Mizrahi and as half Ashkenazi, I would say well, I don't know if I'm divided between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi identities. My origins are Iraqi and Polish and Romanian, and two of my grandparents were actually born in Israel and built it with their bare hands.

As a secular Jew who is secular, but at the same time, fast on Yom Kippur and eat kosher, I don't know. Am I divided between these two categories? No, not so much. I feel quite natural about it. I think the young generation in Israel is much less dogmatic in its identity spectrum, you would say.

Who is served by this sectarian or tribal division? It's serving politicians today much more than it serves the people. Our political system is extremely divided. We all can share much more in common, but once we go to vote, we would have our very strict tribal voting patterns. Our political system is not only encouraged and maintains its power with that division, it manifests itself and actually gets us into that vicious cycle that's almost impossible to get out of.

It serves politicians from Prime Minister Netanyahu, who uses these differences in our society many times as manipulation to insert fear and uses fear and hatred in order to empower those who are in the government and remove an ability for a change. It serves also, the people on the joint list who are gaining much power, but by

that division and that need of the Arab society to vote for a very specific party, rather than choosing other voting possibilities.

It serves the ultra-Orthodox parties. It serves almost all the different parties. It definitely doesn't serve the people. If you see -- I can give you thousands of different examples from -- the ultra-Orthodox parties where today the younger generation is more pro-integration, much more willing to get connected to technology through the Internet, through the great possibilities that there are outside, and their political leadership that's trying to keep them inside.

It goes for the revolution that we see today amongst religious women from what we call the tribe of National Religious. The traditional religion -- not the ultra-Orthodox, where many of the women today, there is a big discussion in Israel over military service. Younger religion women have today for many years, since the very beginning -- they don't have to go to the military like secular women have to.

Many young women (Inaudible) religious women really want to go to the military, but they're pushed by their own politicians, by their own leadership to not do so, and they're frightened when they try to do so. So is it really serving the people? Our education system -- our education system is divided into four different parts. They are financed differently. The state budget is divided unfairly between these different education systems. It very much depends on their politicians.

Is this fair for our society? Does our society have a chance to make progress if we keep such enormous economic gaps between us? I mean, we all know today that the biggest economic threat to Israel is unemployment and lack of participation in the market by Arab and ultra-Orthodox societies. This is a problem that we all share. It's not like parts of the society can get better while half of the society is getting poorer and poorer. It's going to affect all of us.

So does it make any sense to keep the tribal division in our education system and keep a different budget for each education system; keep the -- in our case, religious schools get the highest budget. The secular schools, what we call the (Foreign language) is getting the medium range budget, and the Arab sector is getting -- and the ultra-Orthodox sector are getting a poorer budget. Is this going to get us a safe society? Not so much.

That division doesn't serve Israel. We saw what people actually want. We saw it five years ago with the protest movement. In 2011, 10 percent of the (Inaudible)) society went to the street to protest for social justice. It was called here the Cottage Cheese protest, so let me tell you that it was not about cheese (Laughter). And it was later called the Housing Crisis protest. That was really the -- maybe the first incentive. But the protest was not about housing, as well.

The fact that a million people went to the street to protest was not just the housing crisis. It was the crisis with our home and what Israel is supposed to be. What happened to our home? Because Israel was built upon foundations that we're so proud of. It was built by our grandparents, who were the most courageous people that I can possibly imagine who made the impossible possible. They built something that nobody believed it could happen, and they built because they were extremely pragmatic and extremely courageous.

And they didn't look at problems and then just say, okay, well, there are problems. So we'll stop, or we wait for somebody to save us, as today we're encouraged to think politically, let's just wait. Let's maintain the status quo and wait for something.

No. The essence of Zionism is the very opposite. We're not waiting for anybody to save us. We're solving our problems. We're taking destiny in our own

hands. That's what my generation is so much missing in our political system today. We grew up into -- after almost 40 years straight of the cold right wing governments, we grew up into a political system that trains us to think that the best goal that we can achieve is to maintain the status quo.

It's a political system that's unable to make decisions on the core issues that Israel has to confront. The first one would be the conflict, our borders, that every day that we're not making a decision, it's risking Israel's future as a safe home for the Jewish people and a democracy that's fair and equal to all of its citizens. It's a political system that for decades hasn't made a decision on the relationship between states and religion, between state and synagogue, you may call it, and with poor rules.

And its political decisions has for a very long time -- hasn't made up its mind on our economic issues. If you look at every poll in Israel, you see -- and you look and you ask people for their stance on issues, not for whether they're right or left. The words right and left today in Israel, they don't mean much. They were corrupted by politicians who removed every sense of meanings from these words.

When you ask people what they believe in, if they believe that every child deserves a fair education, if they believe that we need to work harder to make sure that healthcare is given to everybody, regardless of where they come from, and if you ask them what they say about the conflict, if they're pro a two-state solution, or if they want the greater Israel, which means that we may lose the whole thing, because Israel would have to choose between keeping its Jewish character and identity to maintaining its democracy. When you ask people about all of these issues, you see between 60 to 75 percent on the progressive side on each one of these issues.

When you look at how people elect in the elections -- so some -- I guess what you're now thinking is, wait, but people chose the right. They chose Netanyahu.

Well, if you actually count the seats, you see a different picture. You see a right wing camp with about 40 seats, and you see a progressive camp with relatively the same amount of seats, even slightly more seats.

However, while the right is going to election very much united in one or two different parties, the left, the progressive camp, the democratic camp is going to election extremely divided. Something between three to five, even six different parties. With that division in a coalition based parliament, there's just no chance of winning. This is a betrayal in our voters.

The lack of ability to unite behind these very basic questions of our borders, of religion and state, of our economy; and that's where our voters know what they want, and they vote for us to achieve these things. The lack of ability to do that, that ego-based political decision rather than decisions that are based on what's really good for our country, and what's really good for our country is to make a very dramatic change and make decisions over all these issues -- the dimension, and make what the Israeli people want. As long as we don't do that, that's a failure. That's an extreme leadership failure.

What are the reasons? As we all know, well, the reasons are that each one of the leaders thinks that's all about him, rather than about anything else. As long as this continues, we will continue to fail. What we need is to put a very clear line. Those who are pro two-state solution have to go together for the next election.

We can have a primary election for the leadership of that camp. The people will choose who needs to lead it, but they have to go together. It's the same camp of people who are pro civil marriage, the same camp that believes that we need to separate religion and state and that we need to allow people freedom to experience Judaism and their -- and all the other religions that exist in the way that they find and they

want to experience.

It's the same camp that is pro a more humane economy and a more strategic thinking about these basic economic questions that I stated in the beginning. And the camp has to go together. And if it goes together. It will win. That's definite.

So just to end this, I think if there's one conclusion that I got from the protest movement, and that brought me into politics after the protest, it's that most of the Israeli side actually wants to live together. It understands that heterogeneity doesn't have to be an obstacle. It can be an advantage. We can use it for the best of our country. We can use it to achieve better economy, to achieve better goals, to be a much happier society.

When we celebrate our heterogeneity, we enjoy it so much. There is so much to learn and to gain from each other. The more that our political system sees it as an obstacle, the more that we're divided and the more that our politics is based on fear politics rather than strategic and hopeful thinking about our future and pragmatic thinking about how we -- and we solve our problems, Israel puts itself at danger.

If we want to see a future for the country that we love so much, we have to start and we've been strategic about our camp, as well. Uniting the different parts of the camp, putting that line between the choices that Israel has to make, and reminding and showing voters that politics of hope is possible; that our -- these tribes should not be looked at (Inaudible) but should be looked at productively; should be looked at as a source of strength that we can all use for a much better future.

MR. SACHS: Thank you very much. I'd like now to turn to Shibley. And actually, there's some data that we're going to put up. Shibley, we hear you have hopeful vision of what Israel might be and how heterogeneity might work.

But I wonder in your data and your analysis and very long-term view of

society in Israel, what is the actual reality today; relations in particular between Arab Israelis and Jewish Israelis? How do they view each other? How do they view their situation? Is there room for hope, or is the view actually more pessimistic?

MR. TELHAMI: Thanks, Natan. Allow me to speak from here, because I just want to explain this -- the graph. Good afternoon. Natan, thank you for putting this together. It's a great event, and a lot of thinking went into it.

Many of you know that I do a lot of public opinion polling, not just in the U.S., but also in the Middle East, in the Arab world as well as Israel, and some among Israel Jews, some among Arab citizens, Palestinian citizens of Israel. And what I want to show you today is just one slide. I'm not going to talk about it much; just to frame the conversation that I want to have.

This is a poll that I just did in October among Palestinian citizens of Israel. And by the way, I go between Palestinian citizens and Arab citizens, because some consider themselves Arab first, some consider themselves Palestinian first. And I want to just use that as a way of engaging you on you know, what the status is and the way I think about it.

One of the questions I asked -- look at that upper left corner. I asked Arab citizens which factor is most important in preventing stronger identification with Israeli citizenship. So you could see here that by far, the number one answer is continued Israeli occupation. Now notice that of course, the others are important, too, and I can tell you that in looking at that data, this is not just one question I asked.

I asked this question, but I asked each one of these factors; asked them to evaluate how important that factor is. They're all somewhat important, but this is number one, even when you ask the intensity on every single one of those questions.

Now, another question if you see -- you look at the upper right, sort of

which priority should be Arab citizens' priority -- seek equality in the state of Israel, seek a just resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, or both equally? And you can see that essentially, they don't want to choose. They want both equally. Obviously, it's just a marginal difference between seeking full equality and seeking a resolution by itself. But you know, you've got 69 percent who say seek both equally.

Now I'm going to say something about that, because I think obviously, this is -- despite the progress at some level of being incorporated, and maybe I'm going to have to talk about that particularly in terms of maybe a new opening of acceptance of citizenship among Arab citizens. This issue remains hugely consequential, and it's consequential not just theoretically. Let me just that if you analyze even the demographics of Palestinian citizens of Israel, half of them have relatives who became refugees in '48. Half of them.

Okay? So, this is like families. We're not just talking about identity in a broad abstract sense. It's very practical. And more important, I would say, particularly in this current environment, it used to be where you can have an Arab and a Jewish citizen working together in an office or a factory, and then there's the intense conflict. The intense conflict takes place in Gaza, like the Gaza War, or you have stabbings or you have Israeli, you know, demolitions; things that are emotional; things that you know, get to the bottom of the feelings of both Arabs and Jews.

And it used to be where people kept their feelings to themselves. They went back at home and they talked about them in their bedrooms and living rooms, and it didn't really come out. I mean, particularly, they might have an opinion that they express, but the deepest, most threatening feelings were kept private. That's no longer the case because of the social media. So social media, obviously, people have Facebooks and Twitter accounts, and people wear their feelings on their sleeves, certainly on the

Internet, and people sitting next to each other can see it and talk to people who have Arab and Jewish workers, how this is tough to manage, particularly when there is a crisis, an outbreak taking place. So there is -- you know, this obviously a hugely important issue that's not going away.

The second point I want to make from these graphs is that if you look at the prioritizing of the other issues, it's interesting that Arab citizens see the attitudes of Israel's Jewish citizens toward them to be more of a barrier even than state -- official state policy or even the Jewishness of Israel as such. And that, by the way, of course, as I said, all of these are important when you measure them individually, but they're ranked this way. And that's really important and interesting, and it's something that needs to be reflected upon.

And I think in and of itself, it is somewhat expressed in the graphs that are at the bottom of this graphic, the page. This is taken from a very large Pew poll taken in Israel, and I want to look at the two findings that have been talked about. One is how many Israelis agree that Arabs should be expelled from Israel. Now you can see the numbers. Over 50, 45 percent, and those who are under 50, 49 percent. It's actually growing a little bit harsher, and we see that actually, the trend in Israel, up to a point even among Arab citizens, as well, is hardening the position. It's not liberal, unlike what we have here in the U.S., where we have more liberalizing of position among the youth in Israel and among Jews and Arabs, you actually have a hardening of positions. And we could discuss why that's the case, but there's no question that that's the trend that we see.

So, look at that number. And no matter -- you know, the people who raised the question about was this asked -- they think it was maybe the West Bank. I mean, I looked at the data that Pew did. I think it's clear about Israel, but even if it were

about the West Bank, as well, you know, when you were saying, half Israelis want to expel them, think about where you find yourself as an Arab citizen in Israel.

If you also look at the other graphic at the bottom right, which I think is in some ways, more telling, because I think the expression -- we all know that these feelings about expulsion or on the Palestinian side of acts of violence, they're dynamic. So in the middle of intense conflict, you have more hardening of positions.

In the early 1990s, after Oslo, we had softening of position. We know this is dynamic. This is interactive. It's not -- but what's fascinating here is that to me, this one is a little bit more telling. So the question is, do Jews deserve preferential treatment in Israel? And you have the overwhelming majority who say yes, roughly 80 percent across the board. And that's extraordinary, because this separate from the right of return. That's something that is asked separately within the state.

And I say that's something that is subtle, but it is certainly picked up in the nature of relations between Arabs and Jews. Now, I want to say one more point about that. And that is that one of the things that I have been reflecting on -- I've been reflecting on this conflict for a long time broadly, not just citizenship within Israel itself.

As you can see, the Palestine question is not just about the Palestine question. It's also about citizenship, because it has consequences for citizenship. No matter what happens to people on the West Bank and Gaza, it has that consequence.

But I have always -- in the late 1990s, and certainly after the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in 2000, I wrote a warning that you know, we're losing the nationalistic framing of the conflict into increasing religious discourse of the conflict. And I found that religious discourse to become far more threatening to reconciliation.

There's nothing wrong with religion or religious discourse, but religious discourse as a basis for resolution of the conflict is highly problematic. And so what we

find, and I hope maybe this will come up later on in the next panel on secularism, or even secularists, I believe, people who really wanted a secular society, made a strategic mistake by deferring the legitimizing language to the religious authorities in some ways, by essentially framing why it is they want to do x, y, z, like holding onto Jerusalem, or why it is that you would call it not the West Bank, but Judea and Samaria.

When you are using religious symbols and language to legitimize even moderate positions -- to legitimize moderate positions, just like you would in the Arab world where people are using Islam, a kind of more benign interpretation of Islam to fight extremists. You are giving the extremists the legitimizing tool. A secularist is not going to win the religious argument with the most religious authorities. They simply are not. And by appealing to those arguments, you are empowering them, and you don't have a counter when in fact, you then have a narrative that emerges that's based on that.

It is very hard to pull back away from it. And I see that even in the framing of why it is that Israel needs to make peace, because "it is going to cease to be a Jewish and democratic state." And we talk about in terms of what? "The demographic problem."

And okay, I mean, if you are talking internally within the Jewish community of Israel, that is reasonable to talk about, because you're talking about the character of how you envision it. If you're talking about it as a reason for a settlement, as a reason for a settlement, essentially, you're positing the Arabs as a problem, and you are -- the basis for a solution has to always be some measure that sits outside of each community, like international law, human rights, appeal to United Nations resolutions, because that has always been the basis for these resolutions.

So I am worried that we have had the infusion of religious legitimation (sic), even among those who are secular on matters related -- on both sides. I'm just

here focused on the Israel side -- on both sides, in a way that makes it harder even to be clear. There's nothing wrong with people who, in their faith, claim the right to access to holy places. Nothing wrong with it, if a Jew sees Nablus as being extremely important in the holy book, or they have reason to -- should have the right to it.

But we need to separate that from claims of property rights, claims of sovereignty, claims of -- so we have infused that discourse into the discourse about legality and conflict resolution in a way that has really become complicated, and it sure it complicated in the domestic context. By the way, just for measure in -- when Obama came to office, I was one of a few people -- I think my colleague here was also one of the group of people who was there talking about the Cairo speech. We helped give ideas about what the president should do in the Cairo speech.

And one of the points I made is don't put too much religious language in the speech. It was full of references to President Obama, a secular Christian president of the country that's not trusted. It is trying to tell people what they should do because of his own interpretation of what the Koran says.

And imagine if he's going to compete with those on the street who think that (Inaudible) I'm far better than him. He's just giving them -- you know, he's appealing to the wrong legitimizing. By the way, my advice was not taken. It was only marginally taken. It was like reduced by some amount, but not -- which is like what the Obama Administration has done over and over again; cut it by half or cut it by a third (Laughter) or whatever, as if that solves the problem. But that was the case.

So one final point I want to make on this. This issue of -- you know, this issue, in some ways, goes beyond the Jewishness of Israel, per se, because if you look -- again, if you look at that quadrant -- at that top upper left, you see that the Jewishness of Israel is only one, and actually more worried about the actual policies and behavior. So

the Jewishness of Israel is an issue for Arabs, but there are things that are behavioral that are even more consequential, and this goes to it.

But one bottom line in American polls -- so I do also polling here in the U.S. about how Americans feel about the question of Israel-Palestine. And one of the things I've been looking at is what if there's no two-state solution, and Israel is faced with a choice to be either a Jewish state without full equal rights for Arabs, or to be a fully democratic state and ceases to be a Jewish state? What would you support, meaning the American public -- what would you embrace if that were the choice?

And the large majority say they prefer democracy over Jewishness, even spelled out as I just spelled it out. And that seems to hold, certainly among Democrats, especially among Democrats, overwhelming majority of Democrats, but also among Republicans and also among independents and especially among young Americans, and even a slight majority among the evangelicals. So it's a big issue. It's one that I hope we'll talk about more.

MR. SACHS: Thank you very much. In the interest of time, we're probably going to do just one round and open it up for questions, since we have a second panel, but we have a bit of time before that. Mohammad, I'd like to turn to you with two questions. First, your reaction to these quite striking and quite troubling data that we just saw from Shibley.

And the reality seems weak in terms of coexistence among these groups. But you work on this every single day. Is there good news to be had, as well? Are there things that we're not seeing outside of the narrative realm that give you some hope in terms of the condition of the Arab minority in Israel, the relations between Arabs and Jews?

MR. DARAWSHE: Thank you, Natan. Before I start talking about the

good news, let me even tell you how bad it is, because I think what was presented is not even bad enough. To be on the receiving end of discrimination on a daily basis as a Palestinian citizen of Israel, it's not fun and it's not pleasant to be a Palestinian minority in Israel.

You are not only reminded of your separate identity, but you're even punished of being of a different identity; often seen as an extension of the Palestinian enemy and not as legitimate citizens. And over the last 15 years, the political discourse has become much, much more -- I would say even darker, worse, nationalistic, in Jewish terms that it almost leaves no space for legitimacy of non-Jewish citizens in Israel, and specifically for the Arab citizenship in Israel.

The concept of legitimacy for the Arab citizens in Israel is obviously at question. You saw it from the two points that were the two questions there. Half of the Israeli Jewish population is willing to accept expulsion, ethnic cleansing of our citizens. I mean, that's a reality. It means putting us on trucks and dropping us on the borders. That's -- half of the population is willing to accept that.

Until almost 2001, every time there was a discussion about Israel's tension between its Jewish and democratic nature and people went to court with that, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of democratic over Jewish; that the democratic nature is much more important than the Jewish nature. In the last specifically 10 years, and with the backing of right wing governments in Israel, every time there's contradiction between Jewish and democratic, the Jewish triumphs over democratic on the expense of the legitimacy or certain political freedoms or often, socio economic rights over our citizens in Israel.

And this is even getting stronger and much wider under this government; under Netanyahu's government in the last seven years. More than 30 laws were passed

that shrink the democratic nature of Israel for Arab citizens. Israel is behaving more and more as Jewish towards the Arabs and democratic towards the Jews. It reminds us that this is not our state. Well, which is my state? I didn't immigrate to Israel. Israel immigrated to me.

I'm not -- I didn't choose this citizenship. It was forced on us, and there was a promise with that kind of thing; the promise of the Declaration of Independence that saved social, economic and political equality. That's the promise. That's the promise according to which we accepted Israeli citizenship, and that was the promise of the founding fathers of the state of Israel.

Some people are trying to steal that promise, to steal that promise of the founding fathers and to create not the state of Israel, but the state of Judea, where they relate to Arab citizens as non-legitimate gareen or foreigners that live in the Jewish state. Well, I'm not a foreigner. That's my homeland. I have no problem sharing this homeland with the Jewish people, but I'm not willing to accept a second class status as 89 percent of the Israeli Jews want. Preferential treatment -- that's second class status. I'm not willing to accept a second class status.

Now the question is, where can we actually find ways to have a discussion about that constitutional image and shape of Israel that helps it to mature, to become not just the state of the Jewish people, but also the state of its citizens. I don't think Israel can allow itself not to be the state of its citizens, but I also, speaking in historic terms, I don't think Israel can also allow itself not to be the homeland of the Jewish people.

This is a combination that has to be combined together, and until now, Israel doesn't know how to live this dual identity which has been present in the Declaration of Independence since 1948. But no one actually took real care of it. And

that means, how can Israel become Israeli? You know, most people are saying, is Israel Jewish or a democratic state?

Well first of all, it needs to become an Israeli state. An Israeli state means that it has to be an inclusive state. Inclusive to all of the different groups, whether you call them tribes or you call them ethnic identities. I prefer that Palestinian citizens of Israel be granted a national minority status which recognizes the unique identity.

I do not want to be a tribe that melts in the melting pot of Israeli society. And we have a unique identity that needs to be protected and preserved; that lives in good relations with the Israeli society. And when we talk about good relations, and I'm here trying to answer the second point of your -- the second question you asked about certain good news that might come out of this.

There are two levels of discussion. There is the constitutional discourse about the identity of the state and whether we will have a constitution that will be an inclusive constitution, a democratic constitution, pluralistic constitution versus accumulating successes on the ground, and in the past, accumulating the successes was called coexistence.

Let's create good coexistence between Jewish and Arab children in Israel. And that was a mistake, in my view, one, to use the term coexistence. And second, to put the burden on children. You know, we excuse ourselves as adults from the responsibility of finding solutions, and we put it on the shoulders of children so that in one or two generations, they'll figure out a solution.

My problem with the term coexistence is also that it has -- it can tolerate the principle of coexistence between a horse and a rider where the paradox of hierarchy is so dominant. And I definitely do not want to be the horse in this formula. And as long as it's -- you know, as long as the coexistence was about Jews and Arabs coming for a

temporary encounter where they eat hummus together and we listen to music and then we go home to our segregated, one, and unequal reality. And that's what most Israeli society was trying -- and many organizations were trying to accommodate this concept of coexistence.

And when I rejoined my center, Givat Haviva, they asked me to choose a title for my job there. And I said I want to use the title of shared society. And they said why not coexistence? And I said because I have this problem with this paradox of hierarchy; that Jewish-Arab relations are not about good relations. It's not about pleasant encounters. We have additional elements that need to be in this relationship, and those are -- and the additional elements that move us from the concept of coexistence to shared society include, one, a narrative debate.

Let's talk about the problems and not only about the niceties. Let's be honest about the problems. Let's talk about my problem with some of the symbols, such as the National Anthem and the flag who do not represent my identity. I have nothing against Jewish soul, but I don't have one and I probably cannot accumulate one in my life.

So it shows that the National Anthem is a good national anthem for 80 percent of Israel's population, and for another equal amount of Jews outside Israel. Well, something is missing here -- the 20 percent, our population that needs an actual anthem. Whose anthem should I sing? Whose responsibility is it?

The state has to mature to become an Israeli state and not just a Jewish state. And that's what it's not doing. The same thing with other elements. But that's the constitutional discourse. And I think it will probably take us one, two, three, four, five, ten generations to resolve it. I'm not that optimistic on that discourse, but I think it should be on the table and it should be talked about.

But it should be talked about not as a conditional -- if it's not done today, we break society. We need to try to formulate success stories and islands of success that might have a tectonic capacity to actually bring a new generation that can deal with these issues much, much faster. I don't think that today it's easier to deal with those kinds of issues.

You know, to talk about the national flag today in Israel, if I come and I say, I want to change that flag, and I want to change that flag, I probably will be disowned from all of the forums that are willing to even accommodate any dialogue with Arab citizens. So the third area -- we talked about the coexistence, which is the social contact theory. We talked about the narrative debate.

The third area that I think we can accumulate some successes is on mutual interests in economic integration and some educational exchange type of programs. I have led a number of programs including integrating Arab teachers in Jewish schools and Jewish teachers in Arab schools, and the results are phenomenal in reducing stereotypes, reducing fears, reducing racism.

And a Jewish child that has an Arab teacher, after two years, the racism rate drops from 60 percent to somewhere around 10 percent. An Arab child with a Jewish teacher for after two years, their racism rate drops from 52 percent to somewhere around 8 percent. So there are pills against racism. These are social, educational programs that need to cross those tribes in a way that we challenge the segregated reality that we have in Israel.

Another one last comment: We cannot talk about a shared society without equality. Again, back to the horse and rider. I don't want to have a wonderful joint celebration of music and singing peace, and at the end of the day, the horse goes to the barn and eats hay, and the rider goes to his castle and eats a steak. So,

redistribution of power and the resources has also to be put on the table.

The Arab citizens in Israel, and today, we're considered almost 20 percent of the population, but have only 2 ½ percent of the land. We have a jurisdiction -- a municipal jurisdiction and 2 ½ percent of the land in Israel. That is not sufficient to build proper growth in society. So redistribution of the national resources and the wealth has also to come in this direction, and there are a lot of areas in the economic arena where we can actually accomplish those successes, one of them in the medical arena.

Twenty-three percent of the doctors in Israeli hospitals today are Palestinian Arab citizens. And that's a place where Israeli Jews, because of their need for Arab doctors, they're willing to accept an Arab with a knife that cuts their stomach to treat them. It reduces their level of fear because of the interest factor, and we need to create more and more of those kinds of islands of success to build a proper society.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. Before we turn to the audience, and last but definitely not least, Yehudah, we just heard the need for some kind of common understanding, and Stav pointed to a politics that she envisions of a common cause. Can this be done now? To quote someone from earlier today, should a Constitution be written for Israel today among its groups?

MR. MIRSKY: Yeah, well, I mean, about the constitutions, you know, as I -- earlier -- and just to clue in all of our friends who are gathered here, yeah, earlier in our discussion today I made a vigorous case against Israel, even though I'm a constitution worshipper in many ways. I made a vigorous case convincing at least to myself, maybe some others, against Israel trying to adopt a written constitution, simply because I think that -- well, two things.

One: The specific trade-offs that would have to be made, especially to the chief rabbinate on matters of personal status, et cetera, et cetera, are to me,

intolerable and would be a cause, as we say, (Foreign language), a cause of weeping for generations. And second, something I didn't get into there, that was at the present historical moment -- once upon a time might have been different, the absence currently of a shared consensus.

Now, speaking to the issue of consensus: Consensus for what, and to what ends, a Jewish to what ends (sic). So a few comments. A few years ago, I was in a discussion, a seminar where a colleague of mine (Inaudible portion) made a marvelous observation. People bandy about should Israel be a state of all its citizens or not a state of all its citizens. He said of course every democracy is a state of all of its citizens by definition. A democracy must be a state of all of its citizens.

The question is, is it the state of all its nationalities, and all the nationalities represented therein? This means that fundamentals of citizenship and an individual's relationship to the state qua citizen being mediated through law that in some sense is the same for all, is essential to Israel itself understanding as a democracy, and not just in an abstract philosophical principle, but also when we think of democracy as a way of managing disputes, of enabling disparate groups of people to live together.

Now, how did we get ourselves into this? And I think it's worth recalling that the state of Israel was called -- was created. Zionism, the Zionist movement arose to answer what in late 19th century Europe had come to be called the Jewish question, the Jewish problem. And as Ahad Ha'am, the great early Zionist thinker penetratingly put it in an essay in 1897, he said that the problem of Judaism was really two -- the Jewish problem was two questions -- the problem of the Jews and the problem of Judaism.

How do you secure a Jewish social, political, economic well-being in the circumstances of the modern world? And how do you answer the collapse of traditional Jewish life and the structures and the fragmentation and disorientation of Jewish identity?

Interestingly, he was writing that as a criticism of political Zionism, which he thought had perhaps an answer to the first problem. He wasn't so sure. And he was convinced that on its own terms, had no answer to the second.

Now what that means though is that the Zionist movement went about building two things -- state and community. So much of what we see in Israel arises -- so many of the difficulties and the perplexities arises out of this combination and sometimes conflation and sometimes confusion of where the state and its system of laws, which by definition as in a democracy must be equal to all, meshes with community. Right? And who is about sort of this kind of chosen meaningful belonging.

Now the state of Israel is largely built by the labor of Zionist movement. I mean, they emerged in the period after World War I as the dominant force in building of the state for all kinds of reasons. But one of the reasons that labor Zionism emerged triumphant was that it created a kind of civic ethos. It created a new interpretation of Jewish history, a new interpretation of Jewish identity that was extremely compelling, an interpretation of Jewish identity which managed to synthesize the particular and the universal, the universal with its emphasis on social justice and seeing itself as an extension of the workers' movement around the world, and a powerful reinterpretation of Jewish history, symbols and so on.

That centralizing civic ethos has been in decline since the 1970s, really starting with the Yom Kippur War. And the mega story, the meta story of Israel in these recent decades has been the decline of the central civic ethos, because the Labor Party was not just a party. Again, it also was a culture. It was a small civilization.

And its decline and corresponding rise of groups that were marginalized, that were -- that either were marginal under labor, which is to say religious Zionists, Sephardic Jews, Revisionist Zionists or simply were not on the political stage, like all the -

- namely the Russians -- the people from the former Soviet Union who came to Israel in such large numbers.

And so I think that part of the leadership failure that Stav talks about very powerfully is precisely resulting in part from the eclipse of the civic faith of Labor Zionism, and the difficulties it has in resurrecting itself. Right? I know something that I -- you know, I remember in my own involvement -- I was in Israel from 2002 to 2012. I was very active in civic issues in Jerusalem; particular issues having to do with gender segregation in the public sphere.

And one of the things that was really hard for me and my colleagues was what a hard time we had in engaging secular activists to take part with us and to get them in secularly leads to get interested in this issue, because they didn't care. And it was sort of the sense -- and this is a microcosm of a larger phenomenon, well, let the religious people run things in their neighborhoods, because then you get off the hook from having to deal with your own Jewishness.

Now, I do have to say -- well, I mean one point that I do want to make, on the one hand, I'm in profound, profound sympathy with everything that's been said here on the panel. I have to say, though, that in terms of how we understand the conflict and the conflict of Israel with the Palestinians across the green line, I do believe that the Palestinian authority, and certainly Hamas have responsibility of their own for the hardening of some Israeli attitudes and the destruction of the Israeli left. I just want to be very clear about that.

I don't think that's the whole story, but I think it's a part of the story that has to be said. I know we're short on time. I just want to make two last points. We see -- well really -- yeah, two points.

One: We're living not just in Israel. We're living today in a period of

liberal recession. Liberalism is in recession all over. It was in recession in Europe for the last few years, and now it's in recession in the United States. Admittedly, a few thousand votes in Wisconsin, Michigan, et cetera, things might have gone differently, but the sentiments that are driving the liberal recession in the United States -- and you know, also shenanigans with the Voting Rights Act, et cetera played no small role here.

But the sentiments driving the liberal recession in the United States are part of this. Part of the liberal recession is the decline of secular and nationalism. It's the decline in the power of secular nationalism, and its replacement by combinations of ethnicity with religion. Right?

Now, I don't know -- on the one hand, I deeply resonate with what Shibley was saying about if you want to -- by bringing religion into things, we muddy the waters and we bring in sets of concerns and issues that make it harder to effectuate certain kinds of forms of conflict resolution.

On the other hand, entirely banishing the transcendent, the sphere of ultimate values, especially as it has been understood and interpreted over time leaves liberals defenseless. Because believe me, the foes of liberals have lots of visions of ultimacy (sic) on their side.

And the very last comment I'll make --

MR. SACHS: Very brief one, please.

MR. DARAWSHE: -- is that nothing is inevitable. The triumph of liberalism is not inevitable, but the worldwide defeat of liberalism, including the state of Israel is not inevitable either, because it is all what we choose to make of it.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. So now we're going to do a special Brookings thing, which is the lightning round. And I'm going to collect three questions, but they have to be, please, questions. They have to end in a question mark. Please, recognize

yourself or present yourself briefly. And then I'm going to ask the panel in succession to answer very briefly, because in 12 minutes we're going to yield the floor to the next panel.

Yes, the gentleman right here.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I'm (Inaudible portion) UNESCO task force since 2000. And when you talk about tribes, what do you think of Jewish-Christians in Israel, Arab-Christians in Israel and (Inaudible) in Israel? What is their influence? How do you integrate them in your thinking?

MR. SACHS: Thank you. Do we have a gentleman there? Right there?

SPEAKER: Hi, thank you. (Inaudible) Ross from the University of Maryland and a Palestinian citizen from Israel.

My question is to all of you, but it's in response to MK Shaffir, especially that we're from the same generation. I've got to admit that the rosy picture you tried to show is, at least the way I see it, is incomplete. I mean, think about it this way. If in 1952 when Israel was constituted out of 80 percent secular Ashkenazis, we were unable to reach a Constitution.

And the reason we were unable to reach a Constitution is because there is no agreement amongst the Jewish community in Israel what it means to be Jewish. So now if we are four different tribes that are demographically divided equally, how exactly will be able to overcome our problems, given the recommendations you gave earlier, which is basically to continue the situation, or that eventually, this new generation will morph into something better.

So the question to all of you, basically is, what are your recommendations? How exactly can we change the reality in Israel so it could be a shared society, as Mr. Darawshe said, a true shared society?

MR. SACHS: Thank you. And the last question? All the way in the

back, the gentleman standing?

MR. RABINOWITZ: Thank you. I'm Dave Rabinowitz. The PO Commission report which in 1937 first proposed partition gave us their reason. They claim that the Jewish, which at the time was strictly secular Ashkenazi culture and the Arab culture were incompatible, and that if the two were forced to mix, the Jewish culture would dominate the Arab culture. And they tried to separate them so that that wouldn't happen.

The U.S. model has been the melting pot, where as you -- each nationality came in --

MR. SACHS: Question, please.

MR. RABINOWITZ: The question will be there.

MR. SACHS: No, a question now, please.

MR. RABINOWITZ: Question now: Can democracy survive when you've got multiple competing cultures that refuse to make any kind of allowances for each other?

MR. SACHS: Very brief answers, please. I want to start with Shibley, if there's anything you want to respond, I'll bring it back. Thank you.

MR. TELHAMI: (Inaudible)

MR. SACHS: Mohammad?

MR. DARAWSHE: Yes. Well, the question about Christian and Jews and Arabs, you know, from my point of view, they are part of the Arab community. There's no question. It's not a question. I do not see them as separate in any different form. They have their own individual or sometimes even collective religious uniqueness, but you know, in my social -- personal, social circles, I do not see any unique aspect to it.

And the same thing also in the political arena in our community. The

Christian community is very significantly integrated. The Jewish community is more separate in their political behavior. Almost 80 percent -- 88 percent of the Arab citizens voted for the joint list, but that's the Christian and Muslim. But in the Jewish community, almost 80 percent of them voted for Zionist political parties. So their political behavior is different, but their cultural behavior is very, very similar.

Regarding what do we need to change -- (Inaudible) question. I think that what we need to change is the dominant government in Israel. The current government, which has been in power with different kind of coalitions since the last seven years, in my view, is destroying any real chance for -- connecting to the last question, for maintaining democracy.

Democracy is eroding in Israel as we speak. It's shrinking towards the Arab community, but ultimately, it ends up shrinking towards other populations in Israeli society. And I think that we need to try to save it as fast as we can. I don't think that grass root bottom up work is sufficient and enough. It's important. It needs to be done on a daily basis. This is what I do for a living.

You know, I'm getting my hands in the real field child by child. But that's not enough. We need -- it's not just bottom up. It has to be a top down kind of change with alternative leadership to the state of Israel that takes it into the correct direction. I don't want to use that term right direction, because the term right is problematic these days (Laughter).

And I think that it cannot -- and here I have just to relate also to the two top findings that Shibley presented in his -- the two pies -- I do think that many of the issues are connected with the regional context as (Inaudible) passing a conflict. We need to find a quick resolution. And Yehudah, I really totally disliked your comment about blaming the Palestinians.

I mean, this is a blame game that one is not to be presented here. This is not the topic. And second, who cares who was the reason for the failures of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations? The failure -- everyone is paying the price for that failure right now. And I think that at this stage, it's mainly Israel that can pick up the pieces and put it together.

MR. SACHS: Thank you.

MR. DARAWSHE: And I think --

MR. SACHS: Sir, we have to yield the floor. I'm sorry --

MR. DARAWSHE: All right.

MR. SACHS: -- about it. Yehudah, very briefly, please.

MR. MIRSKY: Well, no, I mean, I just want to make it dramatically clear. I'm not -- I don't mean to lay blame on one side, but I think that these issues are dynamic. I think there's things that Palestinian leaders say that are not -- say and do that are not helpful. And I know that liberals like me and leftists like me in Israel who try to make -- who have tried to make arguments in Israeli society get knocked on the head with all kinds of things. Okay?

So that's what I'm getting at. Blame games are entirely unproductive, because there's plenty of blame to go around, needless to say. And yes, I mean, we understand who are the people who have the responsibility to move things forward. But I think that that has to be recognized, as well.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. And finally, MK Shaffir.

MR. DARAWSHE: Just a comment on that. Just one.

MR. SACHS: Very briefly.

MR. DARAWSHE: And (Laughter) --

MR. SACHS: Actually, I'm sorry.

MR. DARAWSHE: Sorry.

MR. SACHS: We're going to have many, many panels on the conflict. We're going to table that issue and we'll come back to that on many panels on this. Sorry. MK Shaffir, please.

MS. SHAFFIR: Thank you. Well, after your question, it's not a rosy picture that I'm -- it's not a rosy reality. I'm trying to be pragmatic about the very unrosy reality. The situation today in Israel is -- and that connection between the different tribes is on decline. We need to change that if we want to have a future for our country.

It's not a rosy picture because we're talking about -- not just about different tribes -- we're talking about populations that are in conflict, also, inside Israel. People of our generation who lived from one Intifada to another who experienced terrorism and experienced in our day-to-day lives, this ongoing fear. We need to end this. We need to solve it. But we should not ignore fear while we do that.

How do we do it? First of all, it's not just an economic story. The first thing that has to be changed in order for us to start a new life that society into an Israeli society that is strong and equal is an end to the conflict. The conflict is -- first of all, puts more and more barriers between the society; not just between Jews and Arabs, but also, between -- inside the Jewish community.

The lack of ability of the government to explain its non-solution to the conflict, to explain why they're not doing everything within their power to go for a two-state solution as fast and as efficiently as possible -- they don't have security-based arguments to that, because we all know that a continuation of the conflict or an annexation of the West Bank will not bring to more security. It will damage our security severely and will cause a lot of harm to our society.

But the lack of ability of the right today in Israel to explain that

continuation of the status quo from a security point of view gets them to go for -- to try to change the field of that discourse from a security field to a religious field. It's not about security anymore. It's just religion. So everybody just believe. You need to have faith in that. And that would solve our problems.

Now, that's a whole different field. It's a legitimate field, but it's not the field in which we're talking about the conflict and about solutions to the conflict. We have to go back to the security field in order to -- and the national field in order to end it.

How do we do this? We have to aim as again, a progressive camp for an equal budget for our education system to give -- that's the first priority. Education is the strategy. To give people the ability to fulfill their potentials, to become more integrated within the job market, to become more independent and to live their lives peacefully and with financial security.

We need to do much more in terms of policy, not just in the third sector, but in our policy to create more integration. Today, a Jewish and an Arab child will never meet in school in most cases. Also, not a secular and an ultra-Orthodox kid. They would just never meet, sometimes ever, even in their adult life.

We have to put much more energy into integration within the education system, within the job market in the public sector. And the third thing and the last thing, and that's for our generation, we have to start and push our generation into politics and into the public sector. If we want to see changes, if we want to take our strength, which our technology, our perception of society that has changed thanks to social networks and thanks to the Internet and thanks to our greater -- much greater access to information and to knowledge.

If we want to bring all of that forward and create a much more shared society, we have to get our generation to participate more in politics, in the public sector

to fight corruption and to fight that sectarian politics that doesn't serve us and will not serve our future.

MR. SACHS: Thank you very much. And my apologies to the panelists for cutting everyone short among the last two days. And now, I'm very happily yielding the floor to Leon Wieseltier and our next panel. (Applause)

MR. WIESELTIER: Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to start. Good afternoon. I'm Leon Wieseltier. I sit upstairs at Brookings, very happily.

I'm joined by my friends. Immediately to my left is MK Ksenia Svetlova, who is a member of Knesset from Hatnuah, The Zionist Union. Next to her is Rabbi Dov Lipman, who sat in Knesset, does not longer, for the Yash Atid Party.

Next to him is Elana Stein Hain, who works at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, where she is Director of Leadership Education, and next to her is Noah Efron, who teaches science, technology, and society at Bar-Ilan in Israel.

I'm going to preface this session with a few general remarks. I am not a political scientist. I have an allergy to data. (Laughter) I'm not going to be giving you numbers or pies or anything like that.

What I'd like to do is say a few general things about how to think about the question of religion in the state, drawing mostly upon the Israeli experience, but as some of you will detect, there will be echoes of the American tradition and the American experience as well.

It's very important to begin, I think, by insisting that in order to understand the relationship between religion and the state, one does not need to understand only the state. One needs also to understand religion, and understanding religion is not as easy as a lot of people seem to think it is.

Political philosophers, political scientists can sometimes be very arrogant, or they sometimes behave as if all the realms of life are there to pass before them to be assigned their proper place in reality and how they should relate to each other, when in fact, all these realms, including the religious realm, already exist. There already is a world of believers, Jewish believers, Muslim believers, Christian believers, and so on.

It's very important to state at the outset that when one tries to understand religion, one must not try to reduce religion to material, political, social, or economic factors. They are enormously influential, and we will get to all sorts of causes in our discussion, but it's very important to remember the autonomy and the integrity of religion as a realm of human life, which requires its own understanding.

I will give you an example. One of the things we talk about often, we talked about it yesterday, liberals talk about it and fantasize about it, is how religions change, right?

Many people regard the solution to the conflicts that we are describing between an open society and a religious frame of mind, or between various beliefs in a democracy and so on, regard it as a question of religious reform, but it's very important to understand that religions do not change simply in convenient response to political realities.

That is not how they evolve. They evolve on their own terms, and they cannot change except in a way that will preserve their integrity. It's very important to understand that.

So, for example, if you look at in the Jewish case, Halakha, you look in the Muslim case, Sharia, which we have heard a lot about lately, it's very important to

understand that religious law changes, but it changes in a way that leaves it consistent with its own principles.

It cannot simply decide there's a new political reality, there is a recession, there is a new president, there is a new czar, there is a new king, and so we're going to believe different things or behave differently. That is not how it happens.

There are internecine fights, quarrels, that are taking place within the various religions, the outcome of which the rest of us have no power to determine. Have no power to determine.

Sometimes we find ourselves sort of waiting kind of helplessly in the margins, hoping that various theological or even civil wars will resolve themselves so that we can get on with the business of an open society or a democracy.

Again, the first thing that must be said is that we are here to talk not only about what the state needs from religion, but how religion might regard the state.

It is important also to declare that the question is not just the question of whether religion damages the state, there is also the question of whether the state damages religion. There are many, many ways in which the intersection of religion and politics is as unsalutatory for religion as it is for politics.

Having said that, I want to say a few words about the question of the secularism of the state, right? What is the spiritual status of a state? What is the spiritual status of Israel, and for certain of our Christian brothers and sisters here, what is the spiritual status of the United States? This is not an idle question.

For a minority of believers, the state, and now I'll refer to Israel, actually has spiritual status, they have various theological ways to describe the founding of Israel as the beginning of the redemption, Pidyon Ural, and so on, even the government's acquiescence in the power of the Chief Rabbinate, which I have to say I regard as the

most illegitimate and poisonous institution in Jewish life (Laughter), even the state's acquiescence in the Chief Rabbinate is to some extent some claim for spiritual status for the state.

Of course, there are Israelis, believing Israelis, for whom the problem is not the relationship between the religion of Judaism and the Jewish state, but between the Jewish state and the land of Israel, and we can talk about that. The land presents a kind of permanent metaphysical, theological temptation to Israeli politics, which it does not always succeed in withstanding.

For most Zionists, for most Israelis, and for Haredi, I might add, who are ideologically consistent with the Messianic beliefs of the medieval and early modern times, the state is itself secular, and we in America more so than in Israel have developed -- we have a very, very sophisticated body of thought about the neutrality that the state should have as a matter of principle in matters of religion.

I want to suggest to you that there are two ways to think about secularism. There are two concepts of secularism, two theories of the separation of religion from the state, that I want to present to you that will apply to the various cases.

The first I call hard secularism, the second, I call soft secularism. Hard secularism is the view that religion must be banished from the public sphere because it is false, because it is an illusion, because it is dangerous. This is the view that was espoused by Voltaire, and this eventually led during the French Revolution to the burning of the churches, and this is a view that was espoused most notoriously by Marx, right, and this eventually led to the Russian Revolution, and other such phenomenon.

This is a coercive secularism. You see remnants of it in the French Doctrine of L'lise Sur Ta. It is the idea that everybody must be secular. Now, the problem with the idea that religion must be banished from the public square because it is

false is obviously it leads to enormous intolerance and even to cruelty, even to outright cruelty. The history of this idea in politics has a sorted career.

Secondly, it implies that if it is illegitimate to believe in these things in the public sphere, it is also illegitimate to believe in them in the private sphere.

This idea of hard secularism, which was really the enlightenment's first big blow in this direction, is a very problematic one. I should also add there is this view that religion should be banished from the public sphere, not because it's false, but because it's true.

This was Jefferson's view and Locke's view, Moses Mendelssohn's view, that religion is true and truth has no need of power, and only error has need of government, as Jefferson said.

So, just get it away from here. It's beneath religion. Okay.

There is a kind of secularism which is compatible, which is necessary for pluralism, that wants to banish religion from the public sphere, not because it's true or false, but whether or not it's true or false. The question of its truth or falsity, and this is very hard for believers to accept, the non-secular people have no problem with this, but this is very hard for believers to accept, the question of its truth or falsity is deemed to be irrelevant.

The advantage of this obviously is that it is a charter for social peace. It is a charter for social peace. The price one pays for it is to take the ultimate questions and demote them in society, and as I said, in an open society, and again, secular people such as ourselves, we rarely recognize this, the people who are asked to restrain themselves and inhibit themselves in an open society are not the unbelievers, they are the believers, who after all, believe they are in possession of an exclusive truth, and are being told to keep it out of the street, which is a huge claim to make.

The third point I want to make, and I'll stop in a moment, is one about freedom of religion. It's very important since we're going to talk about freedom of religion to understand that whereas a public square that is no longer ruled by religion is not free of religion, right, it's not at all free of religion, nonetheless freedom of religion is a secular right, a secular dispensation, and a secular privilege.

The fact that religion flourishes in a secular framework does not make the framework itself any less secular. It's very important to understand that the secularism of the state, not only is it not necessarily a blow to religion, it is actually a boom to religion, a benefit to religion, because it underwrites the possibility of religious freedom.

I know of no monotheist tradition that preaches anything like what we mean by "religious freedom." There is tolerance in all the religious traditions, but if you had to bet the farm on tolerance, I would go outside of religion to modern secular traditions, which we do and then reinterpret religions in that light.

All right. I will stop with those general principles. I have a few more for later, but I want us to chat about many things. I think we will go from right to left, just to be refreshing after the last election. I'm going to ask Ksenia. Everybody will speak for about 6-7 minutes, the way I did. (Laughter) Then we will have a conversation. Thank you.

MK SVETLOVA: Thank you very much, Leon. Good afternoon. When I first heard the speech of President Rivlin on the four tribes, the first thing that I thought was this is a horrible oversimplification of things. Why limit yourself to four tribes? In fact, maybe there are 44 tribes. What about overprivileged and underprivileged? What about the Russian speakers, my own community? What about everybody else that are not being represented in his particular speech?

Then I thought again, and I thought, well, there is something to it. Not only because of the education systems, there are four education systems in Israel, this is true, but there are also other borders of this community, these four tribes.

These are the borders of marriages. Some tribes do not inter-marry. I'm not talking only about the Palestinian-Arab minority, which is a different issue a little bit, talking about both Muslims and Christians, of course, but I'm talking about also the Jewish tribes. Orthodox do not mix with seculars. The seculars do not marry with National Zionists, mostly. There are some cases here and there, but mostly not.

They are still living in the faith communities, so of course, their margins are larger. You can go from one community to another. It will be difficult. You might lose your own family on the way, especially if you are leaving your Orthodox community to go someplace else, or if you live in the Arab community and you are embracing Judaism, which also happens very rarely, then you really risk your life, you know.

The margins are wider, but they are still very, very tough. You cannot really go through them.

From this issue of the lack of inter-marriages, which is also predominated by the issue of religious faith, I will go to the issue of the relation between state and religion.

Because we do not have this flow which usually happens in other immigrant societies, because there is no flow, these communities will continue to exist, and the question is how else will we be able to make out of it the unique Israeli identity?

What we have today, and it's being strengthened by the government, especially by the current government and the current Ministry of Education, is the Jewish identity, and Israeli culture. We have Jewish identity and Israeli culture.

What does it really mean? When I speak about Jewish identity, do I speak about secular Jewish identity? Do I speak about Zionist religious Jewish identity? What about the Jewish culture in all of this, where is this component of the Jewish identity?

I, personally, myself, I was born in Moscow. If anybody would have asked me 26 years ago, I would tell them I'm Jewish and I'm a Soviet citizen. When I came to Israel, I finally became a Russian. How did it happen? (Laughter) Magic. This is just an example.

What I am missing in Israel, surprisingly, because I'm coming from Moscow, it's a big city, with not only the inter-marriages and so on, but also the city where the Jewish culture was not very dominant, not very exposed, unlike other places like in Ukraine. Still, there was a component to our identity, cultural, it was not a religious one.

Years after, I made it to Israel, and I became a journalist before my political career, covered Arab affairs for a long time, and I interviewed Saeb Erekat, the chief negotiator, Palestinian, and I posed to him a question that I usually posed to Palestinian politicians because the versions differed tremendously to this question, their answers.

Why wouldn't you recognize Israel as a Jewish state? I don't think we need a stamp by anybody, Palestinians, Jordanians, Lebanese, Saudis, or Americans, to see ourselves as a Jewish state. We are the state of the Jewish people. It's kind of an axiom.

But it was interesting for me why he would say no, so he said to me, you know, because I believe Judaism is a religion and religion only. It's not a nationality.

This is the kind of question mark where I came back to Jerusalem, and I posed it to some people that I know from the Zionist community.

I said do you agree with this? Do you agree that our Jewish identity is only comprised of the religious component? You know what? Some of them didn't find the answer, they could not really tell it to me, you know, whether Saeb Erekat was wrong or not, because we believed there is a Jewish nation.

In my Soviet passport, we had a special graph, number five, in which it was mentioned we are Jews, unlike Russians, Ukrainians. Okay. The state recognizes us as a special, I think, minority. Here in Israel, when we come to Israel, suddenly it's much more complicated. There is the religion component, there is absolutely no cultural component, it doesn't exist.

As to the ethnic issue, well, you know, considering the comments I get on my Facebook page since I was elected, is you're Russian, you should go back to Russia, you do not belong in Israel. I can tell you that the ethnic component is very problematic as well.

What does it leave us with? This is important. This is the pressing issues, this is the status quo, whether it is being eroded or not, and I personally believe it is being eroded, it is not staying, just like the water in the river, it cannot stay where it is, it is constantly on the move.

This is the same with our conflict with the Palestinians, the reality is changing, and whether it has to do with relations between religion and the state. Things are changing but not fast enough. Maybe they are changing to the opposing side of what some of us would want to see. The issues are pressing.

Some of them, of course, is the issue of marriage. I made it about a month ago with -- about returning the expenses to the couples that cannot get married in

Israel. There are about 400,000 Israeli citizens, Jews, that cannot physically get married in Israel.

Some of them are Jews. Others are not recognized as Jews. The third group are not Jews, but when they want to get married, they can't get registered as a couple, they have to go abroad.

If the state forces these people to go abroad, the state should pay. It's simple logic. After they get back from either Cyprus or New York or Prague, their marriage is being recognized by the state, which is kind of absurd. To force young couples to waste more money than they have to on these huge marriages we usually have in Israel, it's absurd.

The other issue, of course, is the recognition of conservative and reformed communities. They are not large, but they do exist. I believe Israel is a state of all Jews.

As was said once by a late Prime Minister, we are the state and we are the responsibility, and we are the promise to every Jew in the world, but if you make every Jew in the world or every second Jew in the world feel uncomfortable in a non-state by not recognizing their marriages, not recognizing them as Jews that can marry other Jews and consequently, join this army of Israelis that cannot get married in their own state, what does it mean? Where do we go from there?

The last thing that I'm going to mention is, of course, the issue of -- I have to put it very bluntly, racism. Of course, a lot of racism in Israel is expressed at your community, but I can tell you within our own community, I met a member of the Aliana Absorption Committee, and every single day I am receiving complaints from Jews that cannot get married, despite them recognizing Jews in Israel.

I received complaints from Jews in my own community, for Russian speakers, that are being buried in separate plots in cemeteries as Russians, because Russians apparently have different traditions and a different way to bury their loved ones.

In the most difficult moment of their lives, people have called me and told me, you know, this is outrageous. We are being pushed to this, almost the border of the cemetery because they are from their own community.

So, this question cannot be postponed any longer. We have had many debates, and views expressed that now is not the time to write a constitution, we don't have the consensus, but we also are lacking the time and opportunities to find this consensus.

I will just end with this. I'm saying there are enough Israelis who advocate religious pluralism, inside the Knesset and outside the Knesset. We will continue what we are doing, although the biggest problem of this issue is that as painful as it is, it's not as relevant as it should be. It's not on the priority list of Israelis, either reformists, conservatives, secularists, it is just not high enough.

Some are satisfied with the status quo, others think it is outrageous, but they think security and economic issues are way more important. We don't have the spare time. We don't have the luxury to deal with state and religion. It is considered to be a luxury. I consider it to be the vital part of our life, as Israelis, as Jews, and as Zionists. Thank you.

MR. WIESELTIER: Thank you, Ksenia. Dov?

RABBI LIPMAN: Thank you, Leon. It's always great for me to come to the town where I grew up, in the Washington area, and always even better to be here on the days following a Redskins' victory, so people are in a much better state of mind. (Laughter)

I have to make a point, introduction to my words. Seventy-three years ago, my buddy, may she live to be well, my grandmother, when she was languishing and suffering in Auschwitz, if she could have imagined that 73 years later, we would be having a discussion about all the challenges of the four tribes or the 40 tribes or the 100 tribes within Israel, the challenge of how do we deal with the Jewish-Arab divide, and how do we deal with divides within Judaism, she couldn't have imagined that we would be in a time where we would even be discussing these issues in a Jewish state within the context of a state of Israel.

So, whenever we talk about these very difficult issues, and sometimes they can be depressing, and sometimes it leaves people feeling hopeless and pessimistic, I always remind myself of this point, of the amazing times, the incredible times in which we live that we are fortunate to be able to have this discussion, and the blessing that I feel that I can be part of trying to find solutions to these challenges, and also to remind ourselves that the state is 68 years old. Sixty-eight years old in the perspective of history, in our baby stages, just starting.

Look at other democracies. Look at the United States when it was 68 years old, look at where we are as a country with all the challenges. Again, I view it as nothing short of a miracle. Everyone can define it in their own way.

We always have to view it in this perspective as well and to say don't think within the little box that we're in right now, but think in terms of historic terms, and that is also the approach we have to take towards dealing with these issues.

The religion and state challenges that we have in Israel are not challenges that we're going to fix tomorrow. We're not going to fix them a year from now, and not 10 years from now.

We have to be doing things now that will impact the situation and the discourse 50 years from now and 100 years from now, and that's the way we have to be thinking, and with that perspective, let me state very, very clearly, as someone who is Orthodox, as someone who is a rabbi, as someone who spent over 10 years studying in Yeshiva, and rabbinic seminaries, I believe that religion mandated by the state is terribly, terribly damaging to the religion which I view and love so dearly, and as a result, it is very damaging to the state.

I think it's a mistake. I understand historically why it happened, but I think it's only damaging to Judaism and to the flourishing of the state of Israel.

So, the question is so, now what? That is the situation. It's there. What do we do about that? My perspective in dealing with this, and I'm going to focus my words right now on the issues that I've been dealing with in Israel, and that relates to the ultra-Orthodox community, which ultimately is the source of the tension that we have regarding these issues.

I have to tell you, and there are people in this room who will disagree with me strongly, I am nothing short of incredibly optimistic in terms of where we're heading in the long term. In the short term, and it's terrible that there are people suffering, and I use that term very deliberately, suffering in a society. People who can't get married the way they choose. People who aren't accepted as Jews. Women who can't get married. All kinds of issues.

People are literally suffering in the meantime, but in terms of the long term outlook, nothing short of optimistic. Why? It's an absolute fact that as the ultra-Orthodox community is insulated, the more they are insulated, the more they are in their enclaves, that's where the extremism is bred, and that's where the approach of everyone else out there is the devil, everyone out there is horrific, that's where that is bred.

The trend that we see in Israeli society is the younger generation, the ultra-Orthodox community, seeking ways to integrate into Israeli society.

We see it in the areas of employment where you have a higher number -- I'm focusing now on the males. The females in the ultra-Orthodox population were already at a very high percentage of employment, but the males, we have crossed 50 percent, and I see that trend only growing further and further as they seek to be part of the workforce. Higher numbers serving in the military than ever before. Higher numbers in higher education than ever before.

These are trends which are only going to lead towards more and more moderation in the issues of religion and state because what happens is as they go to the workforce, all of a sudden there is a place of interface between the two communities.

For the first time, ultra-Orthodox people are meeting secular people in some kind of a real way. By the way, the opposite. Secular are meeting the ultra-Orthodox, and both are realizing that all these myths they have been told for years, in their entire education, are false.

I was having a discussion before with Mohammad about these issues. If you just humanize it, if Jews meet Arabs and Arabs meet Jews, all the myths they have been taught and have been hearing about falls to the side, because you realize they are just people like ourselves.

That is what is happening between the ultra-Orthodox and the secular as well. If I could capture it in just one anecdote, and I don't want to suggest that we have reached utopia. I don't want to come across as naïve.

As one CEO who I worked very hard with to convince him to hire Haredi, to hire ultra-Orthodox, he was very nervous about it, what's going to happen with their

demands about how women dress, what's going to happen with their demands about the kitchen.

He finally did it, and he reported back to me, and he said an incredible thing happened, a fellow from Batar, which is an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood, made a Bar Mitzvah, and he invited all the secular co-workers of his in his department to the Bar Mitzvah. Made no demands at all about how they dressed, told them nothing, just come to the Bar Mitzvah.

For those who understand the ultra-Orthodox community, that's an incredible step forward for someone to have that kind of courage.

The flip side, one of the secular members of his company got married and asked two of the ultra-Orthodox to be witnesses under his chuppah.

Again, a small little anecdote. I'm not suggesting this is happening en masse throughout Israel, but it shows what happens when we are able to bring the two together.

My perspective is we are talking about two-three generations until we are able to break down those barriers, and on a political level, we will see the results in terms of being able to resolve some of these critical religion and state issues.

One story which is critical to understand in all of this, and I mentioned this during the last two days, is the modern world is coming to an end. No matter what the rabbis want to say, no matter what the community leaders want to say, it's coming to them.

The CEO of a major cell phone company who told me that the number one store for sales in his company, the number one branch in sales per capital in a certain radius around the store, is in Mea Shearim, the heart of the extremist ultra-Orthodox community. Why? How can that be? The highest number of cell phone sales?

Because the rabbis demand that everyone purchase and own a kosher phone. A kosher phone is just a phone, no text messaging, no Internet. A phone. It has a stamp of approval from a rabbi.

They all purchased that phone, but they also all buy a smartphone (Laughter), and they have it in their pocket, under the mattress, in the drawer. So, people are buying two phones, and it is the highest number of sales in the country for this company.

The world is coming to them, and they see the world, they want to be part of that world, and it's upon the Israeli society to try to pave the way to make that happen.

One last point, there are many, many movements outside the government, which is not helping us in any way, in fact, undoing much of what the previous government that I was part of was able to accomplish on these issues, but there are a number of grassroots movements.

The same way when it comes to Jewish-Arab relations, a lot of the success is going to come from some of the grassroots movements of people who are saying let's reach out to one another and bridge that gap.

So, we're trying to reach some of those levels as well. We have renegade rabbis who are doing conversions against the state policies, doing marriages against the state policies, and trying to create a grassroots movement to try to force the state to make changes as well.

So, all of those things are happening. In the near term, it's not a positive outlook in terms of the religion and state issues, and it is very much driven by the extremist agenda in terms of certainly reform and conservative Judaism being accepted

in Israel, we can't even implement a government approved policy about the Western Wall.

We are far from making progress, but in terms of the long term prognosis, as long as we keep our eye on the ball, which is to continue making progress regardless of what the government does, continue making progress on the ground, I am nothing but optimistic in terms of where we can go and what we can achieve.

And making Israel a Jewish state which first and foremost allows all Jews to feel at home in a Jewish state. You think that should be the basic and to get there. Also, a Jewish state where every single citizen in the state completely feels at home. We have to keep working towards that, and God willing, we will get there.

MR. WIESELTIER: Thank you, Dov. Elana?

MS. HAIN: Hi, everyone. I have to say sitting next to Rabbi Lipman, I feel less like a mutant or ideological mutant than I usually think of myself. I'm a person who spent eight years as modern Orthodox clergy on the Upper West Side, and I currently work for the Shalom Hartman Institute, where I come into contact with the other 90 percent of the Jewish people in North America.

It's rather refreshing, I just have to say, given the changes in the modern Orthodox community, both in America and in Israel, to have such an exemplar of that combination of observance, traditionally observing Judaism and liberal values. It's really something, I have to say.

That said, I'd like to tell you two stories speaking of Leon's points about what state coercion does to religion. Two stories that took place -- they're rather short -- 10 years apart from one another.

The first is when I was serving as a clergy member at Lincoln Square Synagogue on the Upper West Side. About twice or three times a year, I would have an

Israeli woman knock on my door, you don't know me, but I'm here because I need you to teach me family purity classes, so that I'm allowed to get married by the rabbinate, and I would like you to write me a letter that you have taught me.

So, I would sit with such women for about an hour at a time and try to give them the basics, first get a sense of what they wanted to know, and try to give them a genuine view of what the books that I hold my life by say about family purity laws.

Then I would be very worried about what the letterhead that I put my note on for them was supposed to say, what it was supposed to call me, whether it would be legitimate, whether not to call myself "Doctor," I wasn't quite sure. That was like a minimal experience, and a lot of these women were not so happy about their experience, but they were okay with it.

I, myself, several years later in my own family purity experience, had a rather negative experience with religious coercion at a Mitzvah in Jerusalem, and I said to myself, wait a minute, this is what other people are feeling. I didn't get it.

As much as the perspective that I had from sitting for an hour with people who randomly had to find me to talk to me about family purity law without knowing how strict I was going to be, how lenient I was going to be, whether I was going to be a good listener or a bad listener, actually being in that situation myself made me completely understand what was going on even for that small second.

All that is to say that I think speaking to Leon's point about what coercion of religion does to religion, you can't say enough about what a negative impact it has on religion, but you also can't say enough on how little people who are traditionally observant in the United States realize it is doing that in Israel.

I have to say that if we were to work on something in terms of secular religious divide in Israel and thinking about how pluralism can come to Israel more

readily, it's actually to speak to people who are very comfortably traditionally observant about the coercion that people are seeing and the fleeing from religion that people are doing as a result, or just quite frankly, feeling put upon by religion, or feeling a sense of resentment towards their fellow Jews, which is incredibly problematic from my perspective.

That said, I also think there is something to do besides grassroots movements in Israel. Yes, it's true, the technical changes or just making legal change is unfortunately not going to work because there is going to be blow back, and you know there is going to be blow back, and the adaptive change of allowing grassroots movements to take place and continue, that is all fine and good.

This is actually based on my conversations with all these wonderful people these last two days. I wonder what the role of creating some sort of like real civics curriculum or some real sort of shared space across all four tribes can play in the interim, while people are experiencing this coercive situation, to help create a sense of comradery, even among people who deeply disagree and may even resent each other because of what they look like, because they assume they are somehow related to the party that is coercing them.

I kind of wonder about that as something for us to think about and not just about the grassroots efforts that are happening on their own.

Lastly, I would just say I think part of the problem with religion and state is about education. We have legislation. We have grassroots. We have common interests when say even "Orthodox Jews" in Israel don't like the conversion courts, but what about education?

What I mean by that is not just a civics education that allows people to have somewhat of a neutral playing field, but I also mean a different kind of religious

education, and secularism can be your religion, national religious can be your religion, Haredi Judaism can be your religion, but what is the education that people are getting in their youth about their religion that makes them assume it's a zero-sum game?

So, the political philosopher, Avi Sharma Galete, has this wonderful distinction that he makes between compromising the holy or the religious or the identity core, and compromising in economic terms. He says economic compromise is not so easy, but you wrangle for long enough, you figure out who wins the cost-benefit, and make it as equal as you can, there is a substitution that can be made. When you talk about religious compromise, you are really asking people to compromise on the holy. You're asking them to compromise on their identity.

When I first read that, I said yep, that's totally true, as a religiously observant person, I don't want to compromise on the holy, not one bit. Then I thought about the fact that there are actually a lot of ways of conceding of the holy, and there are a lot of ways of conceding of identity.

Maybe the problem is in the education system to begin with, that each of our four tribes in some way is taught that their identity is a zero-sum game with other people's identities, and compromising anything is a compromise of the holy.

If we think about how to tackle this problem, we have legislation, we have grassroots activism, we have education for American Jews, we have education in civics, and crucially and critically, education in religion. Education, and I say this not because it pads my own pockets because I'm an educator, that is what leads to those transformations.

So, instead of just getting the education when somebody is 25 years old and working for their first time alongside people who are different than they are, maybe

there is something that can be done in the school system even earlier if we're willing to actually support the change agents who want to do that. Thank you.

MR. WIESELTIER: Thank you, Elana. Noah?

MR. EFRON: It's an honor and a pleasure to be on this panel and to be in this place, thank you very much.

I gather that a proposition about which every other person at this table agrees, the proposition that separation of church and state is necessary, is basically a moral deuteranope demand of our times, one about which I am ambivalent.

I don't disagree necessarily, but I don't obviously agree. First of all, it's worth noting that the state of religious life and importantly of secular life in Israel is much more varied and creative and vital and innovative and beautiful than we typically imagine.

We are living through a golden age of Israeli secular culture. I think we're also living through a number of golden ages of Israeli religious cultures as well, but an Israeli secular culture, the state of Israeli film and music and literature and theater and comedy and humanities in the Academy, even though they are desperately underfunded, and science, and in fact, a secular version of Yiddish, secular absorption of Jewish texts and Jewish forms and reformulation of these in a completely secular mode, which some of the early Zionists desired very much.

I think it is taking form in a way that 15, 20, or 30 years ago, we despaired could never happen, and yet it's happening in front of our eyes, which is to say that the state of affairs that exist today, and I have nothing positive to say about some of the coercions that have been mentioned, but the state of affairs today, it is less obviously to be damaging to the prospects of vibrant secular culture than it is often taken to be.

I think something similar is happening in religious cultures as well, which are changing dramatically in front of our eyes. Anyone who has followed the dramatic

revolution of the place of women in Orthodoxy, including ultra-Orthodoxy, and the cascade of changes, small and large, that that has brought, that is bringing in front of our eyes, can attest to the fact that these religious cultures are changing in front of our eyes, including in ways for the better, for the dramatically better for ways that advocates of separation of church and state would also recognize as being for the better.

So, separation, that there must be separation of church and state in the circles I travel in is an article of faith, but it's a faith, as I said, I'm ambivalent, having the public square be a site of ongoing public adjudication of the questions of how really de-sensibilities are to be balanced with the ironclad demands of democracy that recognize equal rights for all, for instance, without regard to gender, sex, ethnicity, religion, and creed.

That question of how these things are to be balanced in the public square including about matters having to do with state power is a state of affairs that I agree with some enthusiasm alongside the great anxiety that other people on this panel have also discussed.

The modern constitution or the modern modus vivendi that sees a radical break between sources of my moral judgment as an individual and the legitimate expressions of my political judgments as a citizen, that constitution that sees a radical break between those two things is one that I don't accept with total comfort.

I register, Leon, and I appreciate you made a persuasive point, I think beautifully and correctly, that a fully secular public square is a site of vital and lively moral thought, including morally informed thought. It's just not religious when it is in the public square, and I recognize that.

MR. WIESELTIER: No, religion is in the public square.

MR. EFRON: I understand religion is in the public square as a force behind the expressions of individuals, but corporate religion and the interest of --

MR. WIESELTIER: No, there are civic institutions that are religious. Religion just doesn't dominate the public square or dictate the terms of the public square.

MR. EFRON: Okay.

MR. WIESELTIER: Or do you like that point less?

MR. EFRON: No, I like that point more. Again, I'm speaking as someone who is ambivalent about this. I'm not trying to press my case. I would be happy to shut off my microphone having been persuaded that in fact there is nothing about which I ought to be ambivalent, but I'm still not yet fully persuaded.

I think the opposite could possibly be true or have some purchase that the result of forced meeting of religious and secular values in the public square, again, about matters explicitly of government policy, while this meeting can be ugly and destructive and often is, I think that this meeting can also be generative.

I offer as an example what I take to be really the worse example I could bring to bolster my case. My daughter is the most talented Torah reader that I know. She reads Torah beautifully. She was asked to go and read Torah at the Wall, as young women will be, and she was deeply conflicted about it and decided that she would go do it. She goes monthly to the Wall with the other women.

When I hear the stories and sometimes see with my own eyes how she is regarded, how she is spit upon and treated by people who believe they have the full power of the state behind them in insisting that a 22-year-old woman who reads Torah beautifully has no right to do that in this part of the public square.

It is heartbreaking, it is awful, it is ugly, and at the same time, I find that the kinds of questions it raises, including for my daughter, about how to balance the

broad metaphysical beliefs of ultra-Orthodox and the broad metaphysical beliefs that she has about what Judaism is and how it should be practiced and where it should be practiced, that meeting is in fact one that has been very productive for her.

It is an ugliness that I don't wish on her, and I don't wish on anyone, and I don't sanction, and I don't think should continue, but I do think it is a generative meeting in many ways. I observe that for her.

I compare this to the place of religion in the United States, which I regard typically from afar, from Tel Aviv, and I'm certainly no expert, but where, for instances, in Texas, lawmakers manage effectively to ban abortions on the bogus grounds of somehow protecting the rights of women's health by ensuring that they be a certain number of kilometers or meters from a hospital every time they get an abortion. Thus, setting up a debate that is impossible to carry out in the public square on the real terms in which it should exist.

I'm not entirely sure that alternative is a better alternative than the Israeli one, ugly as it is, that forces us to ask these questions on the grounds on which they are really being fought, the deep grounds on which they are really being fought.

One of the reasons why I can allow myself despite the ugliness of the debate now to maintain this or at least maintain the flicker of the ambivalence that I have about it is I believe that there is a more than small chance that in the fullness of time, this will be resolved producing cultural change of more deep and profound value to Israel and to the citizens of Israel, and the individuals who live in Israel, then the kind of modus vivendi you get by separating them more clearly.

It is in some ways a matter of faith that I think that, optimistic disposition, but it is also to go back to my very first point, and I'll end here, it is also the product of having observed the dramatic degree to which cultures in Israel, secular culture and

religious cultures, are changing in front of our eyes and in interaction one to the other, and I have no desire to diminish that.

Now, one might argue that bringing the whole force of the state into this and having this debate devolve into people being abused and mistreated is the worse way to have this debate, and that might be true. I might be wrong about that. I recognize it.

I'm not sure that I'm wrong. I'm not sure this debate isn't generative and that my children's children won't look back and say they are thankful that my daughter went through this and I was willing to live with it.

MR. WIESELTIER: Thank you. I haven't seen so many optimists in Washington since late October. (Laughter) We have talked about how various religious Jews should get along with various other kinds of religious Jews. We have talked about developments within Judaism. We have talked about varying definitions of Jewish-ness.

We haven't talked about non-Jews. I want to pose a question to my colleagues here, in two parts. One of the things that I detect in the debate in Israel, and to a certain extent here today, is a kind of deep discomfort with the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural reality of Israeli society.

I'm not speaking ideologically now, no "isms" here. It is a fact, a very colorful florid fact that Israel is both a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society within the confines of Jewish society alone, right? Israel is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society as a state, which includes many citizens who are not Jews.

It's actually rather an American sort of question, which is what if multi-ethnicity and multi-culturalism was not the problem but the solution? In other words, isn't it a fact that the only time multi-ethnicity and multi-culturalism is a problem is when there

are authorities or institutions that arrogate themselves the power or the right to make definitions?

What is this whole search for definitions, certainly as Jews, Ksenia, you brought it up, but I have spent my whole life debating publicly and privately whether Jews are a religion or a nation or a people or this or that, and the truth is, we are all a little bit of all of this, and after a while, does it turn out the best definition of a Jew is a Jew who wonders what the definition of a Jew is. That is not interesting either.

What if in fact in the absence of institutions, governmental institutions, quasi-governmental institutions, and quasi-pontifical religious institutions, centralized institutions, which insist upon making definitions, what if fact the answer is that the Jewish community in Israel, like the Jewish community that existed long before Israel, is a pluralistic Jewish community as a matter of fact, not as a matter of ideology? Right?

In Jewish history, we flourished and survived because we existed as a platitude of Min Akim, basically. There were different Jewish religious communities. We all referred to the same scripture, and we worked it out, and it worked.

Similarly, beyond the confines of the Jewish community in Israel, isn't it the case also that instead of -- I'll stop here -- Zionism inherited happily the European idea of nationalism, which is a very flawed one, according to which every nation should have a state, every state should incardinate a nation. The political boundaries and the cultural boundaries ideally should coincide. They never do coincide. We have this thing called the problem of minorities.

The Jews experience what it was like to be that problem. Palestinians experienced it, Israeli Arabs experienced it. We all know about that.

What if that whole framework isn't correct, and it would be more healthy both for religion and the state if we regarded the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature of Israel as in fact the answer to the problem, and not the problem itself.

MR. EFRON: I do to a large degree regard it --

MR. WIESELTIER: You're ambivalent again, I see.

MR. EFRON: To be a Jew is to be ambivalent.

MR. WIESELTIER: No, it isn't.

MR. EFRON: Not always, yes. To be this Jew is to be ambivalent. I think that it is to a degree an answer. However, I'm not so quick to give up also on some of the bounty of nationalism, which does in some ways bond people of different identifies together in a better identity.

I think of this as two-tiered thinking. I think yes, absolutely, we should view ourselves as a multi-ethnic society. That is the fact, like you said. We have no alternative, and it's a good state of affairs. However, I think we need to seek and also create ways to create cross cutting connections and a broader identity that is kind of a roof or tent over that, because it brings joy, and it brings meaning, and it brings more complicated identifies, and it brings human connections that enhance each of the ethnicities that is individually part of the multi-ethnic framework.

MR. WIESELTIER: It brings joy to people who are in the tent but it doesn't bring joy necessarily to people who are outside the tent. In other others -- anyway, blah, blah, blah. Who has something else to say? Ksenia?

MS. SVETLOVA: First of all, I will say that all my life, while covering war in the Gulf, Gaza, I used to be an optimist. After I came to Knesset, then I became a realist, okay? Not a pessimist but a realist. Being a realist, I can tell you that I think while Israeli society is changing, and maybe for the first time in the whole 67 or 68 years of our

existence, we are becoming a multi-cultural society. Multi-ethnic, definitely, we always used to be.

Abandoning the melting pot towards more accepting, I would not use the word “minorities” but rather “communities,” differences, this is something that is actively taking place today.

I personally prefer to look at our society as the gathering of brothers who were once separated for their different ways, myriad of different ways, and then came one home. Isn’t it the time to update about each other, to ask how have you been, what are your cultural habits, what language do you speak, how do you perceive being Jewish, Israeli, and Zionist?

This exchange of ideas never happened until now. The communities were secluded. For the first time, I think it is only the beginning of this issue that we see in the Knesset, and I am a part and very happy to be the head of the caucus for the preservation of the culture of the Sephardic Jews. I’m an expert in this field.

But you’re coming from Russia, how can you head a caucus for the culture of the Sephardic Jews, precisely because I’m from there. Precisely. If we will just stay in the situation where the Ethiopian Jews will protect the Ethiopian Jews, and the Russians with the Russians. The tribalism will just flourish, and it will never actually become the one mosaic that we want to become.

I do think any culture is not a problem. The problem is now how to convince the state. This is just another issue. I think we will be able to deal with this because the face of Israeli politics is changing. The traditional figures that used to be the politicians, you know, the image of who the politician is, this is going through tremendous changes. We are seeing a much more variety of faces in the Knesset.

MR. WIESELTIER: Except for one very important example, but go ahead.

MS. SVETLOVA: One notion about women and Orthodoxy, which was mentioned, that there are amazing changes going on. You know, again, I'm not an expert on ultra-Orthodox, although I have many friends that are from that community, surprisingly, but what I do see is total disobeyance to the basic law of the Knesset.

There are two political parties that are represented in the Knesset, that completely prohibit women to participate in the Democratic political process, which are two ultra-Orthodox parties.

Every bill that is designed to make better the situation of the women and to promote their situation inside this political practice, and to enforce the basic law of the Knesset, is being rejected. In this regard, I see no improvement, and even I would say deterioration, because even the talk, the possibility of them maybe being part, is now just being reversed.

MR. WIESELTIER: Dov?

RABBI LIPMAN: This idea of the four tribes that were established during the conference these last two days, there was a slide that was shown about the religious Zionist camp in which there was a pie, in which they were divided into about 10 or 12 different groups within their group.

All of the traditional camps where people said this is who we are, that's all very much falling to the side. When I came to join politics, to predominately a secular party, I almost had to learn about this term "secular" which for my mind living in my little English speaking bubble, okay, secular Israel is not religion.

All of a sudden, I started to finding out that within that term "secular," there's such a wide spectrum in terms of religious observance, beliefs. All of these

traditional camps that we talk about, and these tribes, really from my perspective have sort of melted away.

I think even if we maintain the different education systems, which I'm fine with, there has to be a determined effort of education within those systems, to be learning about the other. To actually bring children together, to bring adults into the room to learn about one another, because there is no place of interface otherwise.

There is no doubt that from the youngest of ages, secular children meeting religious children within the Jewish community, Jewish and Arabs, they don't meet each other, they don't have the opportunity to get to know and understand one another, that is where I think we really have the breakdown.

I'm very comfortable with the definition of a Jewish state, which has a declaration of independence, supposed to be providing equality for all minorities within that Jewish state. I don't think we're living up to that declaration.

We have to be educating, and I believe through education, that can happen. I have to tell you that for me as an American moving to Israel, this whole concept of all these different boxes, it was so foreign to me. Define yourself. I never had to do that here.

Here, all of us stood up together and we all said the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America, and that's something that I believe Israel is lacking, and that is what we have to create.

First of all, educating about one another, and trying to create some unifying something which says that across all religious beliefs and across all faiths and across all boxes, we have something which brings us together as Israelis, and that is something we have to aspire toward.

MR. WIESELTIER: Thank you, Dov. Elana. Then we will have time for a few questions.

MS. HAIN: Leon, on your question about whether nationalism should be a thing of the past, I think I would go back to Ksenia's anecdote --

MR. WIESELTIER: Wait, did I say that? No.

MS. HAIN: Meaning whether multi-culturalism should substitute instead of nationalism.

MR. WIESELTIER: No, but go ahead.

MS. HAIN: No, please clarify.

MR. WIESELTIER: No, I see no contradiction. Never mind, I've said what I have to say. You talk.

MS. HAIN: Okay. I'll have to watch the video. (Laughter) What I just wanted to emphasize, I think in the anecdote that Ksenia said about the question of is Judaism a religion, is it a nation, when you ask your national religious friends, and they couldn't answer the question, I think aside from nationalism being a 19th century phenomenon that we picked up, there is also a strong desire for Jewish self-perception to see itself as more than a religion, as an actual national people.

Now, I don't know what to do with the fact that there are four tribes and three of those tribes are Jewish, and one of those tribes is not Jewish. What you are left with is exactly what Rabbi Lipman is talking about, this sort of at the same time being able to look at the Jewish people as a nation while also being able to create Israeli-ness, which is something bigger than that.

How you do those two things at the same time I think is exactly what Israel has been trying to figure out for almost 70 years. I think that's the challenge on the table.

MR. WIESELTIER: We have time for a few questions. A hand went up but I don't see a body attached to it. (Laughter)

QUESTIONER: Hi, thank you very much. This is quite exciting for me to listen to these wonderful discussions. My background is Africa/Nigeria. I'm a Christian. In Nigeria, we have tribes. You are identified as a tribe and not by your religion. Everybody can be anything that you want to be, but your first identity is as a tribe.

The question to the panel and I think some of those who were probably there earlier, in 1948, when the state of Israel was created, was it created as a Jewish state or Israeli state, and what does the constitution say?

MR. WIESELTIER: There is no constitution. Declaration of independence.

QUESTIONER: All right. So, the follow-up question is do you identify yourselves by tribe or by religion? My understanding as a Christian, from kindergarten and Sunday school, is to be a Jew, you practice Judaism, but the common denominator is you are Hebrew. That's a tribe from Abraham. Those who chose to practice in this way are called Jews.

Why not identify yourself as a tribe of Hebrew and then some Jews and some Christians and some Muslims?

MR. WIESELTIER: That is the million-dollar question. (Laughter) I have a word to say about it, but you go first.

RABBI LIPMAN: First of all, the declaration of independence says Jewish state, and talks about treatment of minorities, but it doesn't say what a Jewish state means. We really haven't had that discussion for all the decades of the state's existence. Many people attribute that to the fact that we have been fighting for our existence and lives, but now that discussion is being held, and it's a very important one.

If you go to the Knesset and you ask that question, what is a Jewish state mean, there are 120 members of Knesset, will there be 50 different answers to that question at least, ranging from those who say Jewish state means it has to be governed by Jewish law to those who say it's a place where Jews can find safe haven, to those who say it's governed by Jewish values.

We are having that discussion. That is part of what is taking place today. In terms of the last point you made, that is an approach that we can definitely deal with in a land which is holy to the three major faiths in the world, where we can come from this perspective of children of Abraham and what that means in terms of unifying together, not in terms of religious practice, but perhaps in terms of certain values, certain world views, which that can bring together.

There are faith-based initiatives in Israel today which are trying to bridge together the gaps in our societies based on that concept, but that could be the beginning. Again, not religious practice because obviously we will be all over the spectrum on that, but some kind of shared values which we could say all of us have as the Abrahamic people, so to speak, which we all share.

There could be a basis for some kind of formula for what that pledge of allegiance, so to speak, would look like.

MR. WIESELTIER: I don't agree; I think holiness would be a bad basis for anything that is supposed to unify desperate people. I think to the questioner, when it comes to the Jews, you're going to have to make peace with a certain essential lack of clarity about the definition.

The Jews have regarded themselves as a people from their earliest documents. They created a civilization. The civilization they created was fundamentally generated by a religion. It's silly to deny otherwise. Religion is at the heart of it. The

civilization that the Jews created as centuries wore on was not entirely religious. Some of it was downright secular, even profane.

There is a sense in which the definition of what it is to be a Jew is over determined. Now, this lack of clarity should not be politically abused, and it can be politically abused. On the other hand, we have been many things. Some of the richness of Jewish life and Jewish civilization, and not just the bitterness of Jewish life and Jewish civilization, is owed to this lack of clarity, is owed to this over determination.

I don't think we will ever have a definition until the Messiah comes, and I don't expect to see him in my lifetime. I don't think anyone will have the authority to issue a definition. Et cetera. Et cetera.

Next question. Sir?

QUESTIONER: One thing that hasn't come up at least in this discussion is next year will be the 50th anniversary of the Occupation, which seems just as unresolved as it was 50 years ago.

I guess I have a chicken and egg question. Does the Occupation have to be resolved in some way in order for this discussion, this debate among Jews, among Israelis, to be settled in a healthy or at least to advance in a healthier way that some of the panel imagines, or does this debate over how Jews get along with other Jews and what the nature of the status is, does that have to be settled before the Occupation can be dealt with in a way that's more satisfying. Which is it?

MR. WIESELTIER: Ksenia?

MS. SVETLOVA: Well, I believe the question of the Occupation and continuation of control over the Palestinian population and the demographic majority of Jews in the state of Israel and the continuation of the state of Israel itself is a question that is relatively easily solved than the question of who is Jew.

This discussion will go on for probably, I don't know about the Messiah times, but for a few generations ahead of us, that is for sure.

As we are talking about the Occupation, this is something that we again cannot postpone any more. Fifty years being long enough. The Occupation is corrupting every sphere of our life. Of course, it's corrupting also the internal question of relations between Jews and Arabs, and also between various kinds of Jews and Israelis, left versus the right wing and so on. It corrupts our attitudes to our army. It corrupts the whole notion of what are armies. It effectively now became a police force, which the primary idea is to control the population which is not Israeli population, will not ever become Israeli population.

I personally believe if we are not to solve promptly this issue within the next few years, we will be forced to be in a situation with internal civil war between different sorts of citizens, which is the name for this reality, the "A" word, which nobody wants to pronounce, but everyone might have to if we do not solve it.

Again, 95 percent of the solution is known to us. It's known to us because we don't have to start from square one. There were people, believe it or not, and yes, they negotiated, and yes, they had maps, and yes, they had agreements.

So, this is the question. What do we do with these agreements? We just start every time from the beginning and say okay, how do we deal with this question of borders, how do we deal with Jerusalem, how do we deal with that. This is another story for another discussion.

MR. WIESELTIER: Dov?

RABBI LIPMAN: Yes, without getting into anything at all, just to answer your question, there is no doubt that the right wing/left wing divide in Israeli politics precludes the overwhelming majority who want to resolve the religion and state issues

from coming together, so the idea on the construct in which we will gather together to deal with the religion and state issues is not possible because all of our politics tend to revolve around the right/left issue.

I don't see on the political level in the near term being able to resolve religion and state issues because we have the right/left wing divide.

MR. WIESELTIER: To be fair, there is a small group of Jews, a minority, but many of them live in the territories, for whom Jewish sovereignty over those territories is an essential part of their Jewish identity, and who regard that Jewish identity as validated scripturally, and not just scripturally, but through generations of interpretation.

I think it's safe to say that even though they are the majority, they are not the majority of even the religious Jewish community, and I think it's safe to say that the Occupation of the West Bank is not, in my view, a condition for the continued formulation of Jewish identity and Jewish culture. It's a moral and a political problem faced by a state, which is occupying another people. In that sense, Israel is like other states, et cetera.

One more question.

RABBI LIPMAN: I just want to say you can also believe, and I'll put myself in that category, you can believe there is a scriptural and religious basis for it, but being willing to compromise that for the sake of reaching a solution as well.

MR. WIESELTIER: Absolutely. I'm told we are out of time. One more question.

QUESTIONER: Thank you, very interesting. I am a member of the UNESCO Taskforce. I regard what you say from outside, from my friends in Japan, Korea, China, and so on. I was involved with two projects to identify the contribution of the Jews to European history and culture.

My question is how shall we -- there is a huge interest, talk about what you say, what is missing in information about what is going on in Israel so that we can share in a more informed way, whether in China, Korea, Japan, and even in Europe.

There is a lot of misunderstanding, and your brothers and sisters are suffering plus others. I don't want to go too far, but what I heard today makes sense. How do you give voice which can be understand to Palestinians, Jews, and others in Israel so Israel can be understood for the Jews and for Jews around the world and for the whole world? I hope that makes sense. Thank you.

MR. WIESELTIER: Ksenia, go ahead, if you have something to say.

MS. SVETLOVA: I'm a politician, I have to say to almost everything. Generally speaking, I can tell you, and Rabbi Dov knows it very well from the Knesset, we are all meeting a lot of delegations from every part of the world in the Knesset, so sometimes it seems like the main occupation we do in the Knesset.

The only thing that I'm trying to relate and transfer to the people who I meet, and usually their guide says to me you have 20 minutes, please explain to them about the Arab-Israeli conflict. (Laughter) Okay.

In only want them to leave the sense that it's complicated, that it's not black and white. Nothing is black and white about this country, its religions, its conflicts, its description. The picture is very multi-faceted and many, many colors. Just to convey this complexity, I think, this is a goal for us. The NGOs and every citizen of Israel that tries to explain what we are about.

MR. WIESELTIER: That's not a uniquely Israeli problem, by the way, try explaining in 20 minutes the two Koreas, or the relationship between Japan and China. I think Israel still and I think will always be an open society. I think you have to learn Hebrew and Arabic, and you have to follow what actual Israelis and Palestinians are

saying and writing, and form an impression on the basis of that. The deeper you get immersed into a culture, the better you understand it. I want to thank our friends for being with us, and I want to thank you for coming. Thank you very much. (Applause)

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