

Moses' transition plan works today

A secret formula for stable governance, put in place over 3,000 ago, outlasts alternatives that sprung up since

Moses's removal as leader of the Israeli nation triggers an existential crisis. "This Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt," is the only leader the Israeli nation ever had. On top of that, it is not only Moses, but also the other head of the two-legged governance system that is gone. Aaron the priest died the same year. Furthermore, the original elders and judges that Moses appointed as "deep state" are also dead.

To make things even worse, the new leaders are seemingly not the ones originally intended. This raises possible risks of unreadiness, as well as of lack of public support. The heir-apparent to Aaron was not Eliezer. He was deep down the line-of-succession, but his two elder brothers died.

Joshua's selection is also seemingly surprising. Of the two likely contenders, indications seem to be that it would be Caleb. God says that Caleb's seed "shall possess the land" (see previous article on parashaandherzl.com). Moreover, Moses' departure was unexpected. He asks God to continue into the Promised Land, and previous pleas were answered. Hence, it is not unreasonable to believe that this one will be granted as well. Indeed, there is no indication that Joshua was groomed for this day, which possibly led the Israelites to that worrisome feeling that "we went to sleep with Moses and woke up with Joshua".

And so, on the verge of conquering the Promised Land, the nation of Israel is led by two new inexperienced leaders, and is without an elder deep state.

Herzl on transitions and deep state

In crafting his vision for the Jewish state, Herzl understood the dangers of unprepared leaders taking power. He wrote: "I am a staunch supporter of monarchical institutions because these allow a continuous policy, and represent the interests of a historically famous family born and educated to rule, whose desires are bound up with the preservation of the state".

Indeed, for centuries, there was stability of governance in Europe. Notwithstanding the war-per-century European tradition (unexplained ritual of the European religion), the monarchies provided continuity. This was also due to the broad acceptance by Europeans that the monarchs are appointed by God (divine-right-monarchy).

But then came the secular republic,



THE ISRAEL Museum's Wine Festival showcased the revived Israeli wine industry this past week. (A previous year; Miriam Alster/Flash90)

which destabilized Europe. Studying French democracy, Herzl observed how parliamentary tricks can lead to anointing prime ministers and governments that bare only a loose connection to the people's will. Such governments derive their power – not from God as in the case of divine-right-monarchies, nor from the people as in the case of direct democracy – but from a coalition of personal interests that came together to seize power.

Yet Herzl also concluded that it might not matter that much who the prime minister is. That is because the bulk of power does not lie with elected officials but with what we would call today the deep state: the media, civil service, even the French Academy, which elects itself.

While Herzl viewed deep state negatively, he understood that they are the ones who provide stability and long-term policy continuity. "Politics must work from the top down," he argued.

The absence of those mechanisms could have dangerous consequences, as was the case in 1914 Germany, a decade after Herzl's death. A homosexual sex scandal in the kaiser's inner circles took down key elements of the kaiser's deep state. The new inexperienced leaders failed to handle the routine tensions of the summer of 1914, and Europe unexpectedly plunged into World War I.

As mentioned, the absence of experienced leadership and lack of deep state also existed some 3,000 years prior, on the eve of the historic battle of Canaan.

But Moses was able to address those voids. First, through transitional inau-

guration ceremonies of both Joshua and Eliezer. This made clear that those new leaders are nominated by God, and hence have both legitimacy and the grace of God.

More importantly, Moses addressed the absence of a deep state by replacing it with something much more powerful that benefits us today.

From deep state to broad nation

Moses took the knowledge previously kept with deep state and instilled it directly to the people.

This is the book of Deuteronomy (Dvarim) – Moses is expounding the Torah.

Moses provides the template for governance, laws, rules, statutes and ordinances, as well as for the ways to worship God. Deuteronomy is not a manual for leaders nor government officials – but rather, as Moses makes clear, for every man of Israel", wood-hewer and water-drawer alike.

Indeed, Deuteronomy is the Protestantization of biblical knowledge, which in turn reduces the need for a deep state. It is not only the democratization of knowledge, but also of the direct connection with God.

This is akin to the American Revolution, which while agreeing with Europeans that the power lies with God, argued that God does not bestow this power to the monarchs, but rather to the people. The American Revolution was a shift from divine-right-monarchy to divine-right-republic – we the people!

While in Deuteronomy, Moses takes

the Torah from "Then Sang Moses" to "Then Sang Israel," the worship for the next 1,000 years of Judaism 1.0 was still done through the intermediation of the priests in a physical location – the Temple. In the next 2,000 years, during Judaism 2.0, the worship was expanded, yet remained highly-structured, through prescribed prayer, including pleading with God three times a day that he return his presence to Zion.

As Judaism is transforming and Zionism becoming its anchor, it seems that this prayer is being answered. Not only in a philosophical manner, but as witnessed daily in the streets of Zion.

In the last two weeks alone, thousands of Israelis – secular and religious alike – came to the Western Wall to mourn God's removal of his presence from the Temple and from Zion. Later that week, over 6,000 Israelis celebrated the revival in the Jerusalem Beer festival. A few days later, on Tu Be'av, Israelis celebrated love – an essential ingredient for being able to witness God's presence in Zion, because as S.Y. Agnon, the revived-Hebrew novelist, expounded: "Jerusalem unveils herself only to those who love her." The following week, Jerusalem got its first shared bike system, making its holiness more accessible, and in the same week the Israel Museum's wine festival showcased the revived Israeli wine industry – reminiscent of that same evidence Joshua and Caleb used to demonstrate that this "land is very, very good".

Moses addressed the absence of a Deep State

Herzl speculated that the inspiration for Zionism was hidden in a bottle he received from the newly established wineries in the Land of Israel. Wine came in, and the secret – hidden in the deep vineyard roots for centuries – came out.

Unlike in Herzl's France, Israel's stability is not provided by its deep state, but rather by that secret formula planted in Deuteronomy by Moses, which is now being gently unveiled in Zion by Israelis of all political and religious strides, through their reverence and love of Zion. ■

The writer is the author of the upcoming book Judaism 3.0 – Judaism's transformation to Zionism. For details: Judaism-Zionism.com. For his geopolitical articles: EuropeAndJerusalem.com.