'From a handshake to a handgun: Religious Zionist responses to the Oslo Accords (1992-1995)'

My God, my God why have you abandoned me;

why so far from delivering me

and from my anguished roaring?

(Psalm 22:2)

<u>Introduction</u>

On 13th September 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) Yasser Arafat signed the first of two Oslo Accords (henceforth both Accords collectively referred to as 'Oslo'). Oslo established a framework to transfer governance of the West Bank and Gaza Strip from the State of Israel to a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, now the Palestinian Authority (PA). The Authority would have jurisdiction over education, culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism, but not foreign or defence issues, Israeli settlements nor their Jewish inhabitants (UN GASC; Gilbert 2008:571). On the night of 4th November 1995, Rabin was shot dead at a peace rally by a Jewish extremist student, Yigal Amir. This paper will discuss the political contention surrounding opposition to Oslo in the intervening period within the Jewish Religious Zionist community in Israel. We shall take as our starting point Rabin's 1992 election, and end with his assassination. The range of anti-Oslo political contention from Religious Zionists was the product of wider ideo-theological, political, and demographic circumstances. As such, it is myopic to examine this period on the micro-level of analysis, the level of the individual. We shall therefore predominantly take a macro (societal or national level) and meso (group, organisational, or community level) approach.

This paper will begin by discussing the importance of the Land of Israel in Religious Zionist 'ideo-theology' (Jones 1997, 1999) to better understand why the Oslo Accords led to political contention. From this, we shall argue that Oslo was a 'moral shock' (Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Jasper 1997, 1998) to this ideo-theology. We shall then examine political contention within the Religious Zionist milieu in response to this 'moral shock'. Political contention is 'the

discontinuous, public, collective claim making in which one of the parties is a government […

and where the claims] would if realized, affect their objects' interests' (Tilly 2003: 9). Firstly,

this paper shall argue that non-violent responses were the most common contentious

performances as they were tolerated by the state and so low-risk. Secondly, we shall argue

that framing of affective collective loyalties, and opportunity structures in the settlements

made Palestinians the most common target of Religious Zionist violent repertoires. Thirdly,

we shall examine the feasibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness of a novel tactic in the Religious

Zionist repertoire, a Jew killing the leader of the Jewish state. We argue that the 'moral shock'

of Oslo and the deteriorating security situation facilitated the delegitimization of, and

attribution of blame to, Rabin.

The Importance of the Land of Israel in Religious Zionist ideo-theology

Lustick (1988) and Griffin (2012:127) emphasise that Judaism is unique in the belief that their

land is literally divinely-ordained. Jones (1997, 1999) uses the term 'ideo-theology' to

describe Religious Zionism's fusion of religion and nationalism. Orthodox Judaism's attitude

is that the Messiah would reunite the Jews with the biblical Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael)* (Jones

1999), whose boundaries are stipulated in Numbers 34 of the Torah. By contrast, Religious

Zionism, developed by Rabbi Avram Kook (1865-1935) and his son Zvi Yehuda Kook, argued

that Jewish resettlement of Israel would hasten the messianic advent[1] a process which

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[1] For a discussion of messianism in Jewish thought, see Afterman (2007:78-92).

'cannot be changed or distorted' (Zvi Yehudah Kook: 1979, quoted in Afterman 2007:93). Based on biblical promises (Deuteronomy 30, Genesis 17:8, and Exodus 6:4), Religious Zionists believed that the Jewish people always possessed *Eretz Yisrael.* Yet Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War turned this 'rightful possession' into physical occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, Jerusalem, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Paine 1995:9).

The Moral Shock of the Oslo Accords: A Failing Prophecy

Jasper (1997:106) argues that a 'moral shock' is when an 'unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action'. The territorial compromises of Oslo were a 'moral shock' because they disconfirmed the expectation that post-1967 territorial integrity was the beginning of the linear and irreversible progress towards the messianic advent and the Redemption. This gap between 'theological orientation and the political realities on the ground' (Ravitzky (1996:139, quoted in Magid (2020)) created 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger 1956 [2009]). Cognitive dissonance is when two beliefs or events are inconsistent with each other. (Festinger 1956 [2009]:25). Festinger continues that the magnitude of the dissonance depends on the belief's centrality. Considering the 'cardinal importance' (Lustick 1988) of *Eretz Yisrael*, the dissonance would be massive. Inbari (2009:306) concurs that Oslo created a 'fundamental Religious dilemma' of whether the central tenet of Religious Zionism, that of the Jewish state as a fulfilment of divine will, could be a mistake.

Festinger (1956 [2009]) argues that in response to cognitive dissonance, actors can change one or more of the beliefs involved in the dissonance, acquire new beliefs to increase consonance, or forget the importance of the conditions in a dissonant relationship. Two examples from Religious Zionist history illustrate these differing responses. The Camp David Accords of 1978 returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. The settler movement Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) responded with the latter two of Festinger's possible paths. Gush reoriented the hierarchy of their beliefs to refocus on building the Third Temple to hasten the messianic advent (Sprinzak 1987; Inbari 2010). The movement further reduced the importance of Sinai, and so the cognitive dissonance, by re-focussing on settlement construction in another part of *Eretz Yisrael*, the West Bank (Sprinzak 1987:202-3).

Upon his election victory in June 1992, Rabin ordered a freeze on settlement construction (Gilbert 2008:555). Afterman (2007:238) calls this, and more significantly, the Oslo Accords a year later, a 'further blow' to the settler movement. Sprinzak (1998:122) is much stronger in his analysis, arguing that it was the 'most unequivocal disconfirmation […] unquestionably the worst thing that could ever happen to Zionist messianism in Israel'. There are several reasons to support Sprinzak's analysis over Afterman's. Don-Yehiya (2014:254) argues that Sinai was not considered as an 'integral part of the Land of Israel'. By contrast, the territories Oslo proposed to transfer were its very 'heartland' (Sprinzak 1998:122), where the biblical patriarchs were buried, David had ruled over, and two Jewish kingdoms had been established (Gilbert 2008:397). Moreover, if the success of the settler movement in the West Bank was a 'reconfirmation' of messianic predictions after the disappointment of Camp David (Sprinzak 1998), Oslo disconfirmed this reconfirmation.

Jasper and Poulsen (1995) found that 'moral shocks' may be necessary for recruiting strangers to a movement, but recruitment of friends was primarily through existing networks. This appears to mitigate the importance of moral shocks in moving people from the balcony to the barricades. However, this apparent counterargument can be nuanced by noting that 'moral shocks' are shocking because it creates dissonance between one's pre-existing values and the new situation. The announcement of the Oslo Accords would not be a 'moral shock' to Religious Zionists if they did not already believe that *Eretz Yisrael* rightfully belonged to Jews. Those who have been morally shocked often search out political organizations (Jasper and Poulsen 1995). McAdam (1986) (see also Diani 2007) helpfully links beliefs and networks. He argues that pre-existing ideological attitudes would dispose people towards participation, while a prior history of activism and integration in supportive networks are the structural 'pull' to act on their beliefs. As we shall touch upon later, the perpetrators of our period's two major attacks, Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir, fit this thesis.

Non-violent contentious Religious Zionist responses

Non-violent responses were the most common as they were one of the few forms of contention tolerated by the state. Jones (1999:13) argues that so long as Israeli governments continued Jewish control over the territories captured in 1967, albeit on security grounds, a 'symbiosis of objectives' existed between Religious Zionists and the secular Israeli governments. However, the proposed return of these territories by the Oslo Accords clearly

broke this 'symbiosis of objectives'. This clash led to political contention. Tilly (2003) terms the forms, or 'performances' of political contention available to actors in a given regime their *repertoire of contention.* These are further disaggregated into 'conventional' (operationalised as petitions, legal actions, public demonstrations etc), 'confrontational' (such as occupations, obstructions, or forced entries) and 'violent' (such as attacks on property, antagonists and authorities) (Tarrow 1993:290). Most of the repertoire of contention in our study consisted of 'conventional' (Jones 1997:28), or 'confrontational', blockading road junctions by settler groups such as *Zo Artzenu* (This is our Land) (Jones 1999:17), Occasionally, these protests did turn 'violent', with clashes with security forces (Keinon and Hutman 1995, quoted in Jones 1999:17).

Why was most Religious Zionist opposition to Oslo non-violent? On a meso level, Tarrow (1993:291) points out that considering the difficulties of any form of mobilisation, it 'must be particularly hard to get [people] to participate in high-risk confrontational and violent protest'. Tilly (2003:44-50) offers a more macro-level interpretation, that the possibility of contentious performances varies with regime type. He divides regime reactions to performances into prescribed, tolerated, forbidden. He divides regime type along axes of degree of governmental capacity (governmental control of resources, activities, and populations within a territory) and degree of democracy. Considering factors including Israel's military prowess, maintenance of conscription and ability to mobilise quickly (for example, the recent rapid Covid-19 vaccination programme), it is reasonable to define Israel as a high-capacity regime. As a democratic state in constitution and practice, with regular multiparty

elections, we define it as democratic.[2] In high-capacity democratic regimes like Israel, the state tries to channel political contention into a 'modest array of tolerated performances' such as mass demonstrations. As demonstrations are tolerated, there is reduced risk of governmental repression (Tilly 2003:50). The lower the risk or 'cost' of participation, the more people will be willing to participate, and vice versa (see also Omeni 2019:110-2).

Violent Religious Zionist responses against Palestinians

Nonetheless, there was some violence by Religious Zionists, mostly directed towards Palestinians. The deadliest example was the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in Hebron, West Bank, on 25th February 1994, perpetrated by settler Baruch Goldstein. Goldstein shot dead 29 Palestinians, before being killed by survivors. Goldstein acted alone and in secrecy (MFA 1994), but within a 'wider nexus of political contestation' (Marsden 2013:143).

 Much anti-Palestinian violence in this period came from Meir Kahane's Kach movement (Jones 1997). Goldstein was one of Kahane's most devoted followers, a Kach activist, and 'pillar' of the Kiryat Arba settlement (Pedahzur and Perlinger 2009:70). Kahane (1932-1990) attempted frame bridging between nationalist and religious Zionism, and ultra-Orthodox Judaism (Pedahzur 2012:123). Frame bridging is the connection of ideologically congruent,

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[2] For simplicity's sake we refer only to the State of Israel (*Medinat Yisrael),* excluding the Palestinian Authority and Gaza Strip. Some consider these areas to be under Israeli occupation even after the establishment of the PA and the 2005 Disengagement from Gaza (see UN SC 2016).

but hitherto structurally unconnected frames to reach out to those with common grievances (Snow et al. 1986:467), in this case, antagonism towards Palestinians (Pedahzur 2012:123). Kahane argued that after millennia of *hillul Hashem* (desecration of God's name) of humiliation and murder of Jews by non-Jews, including Arabs, Jews must sanctify God's name (*kidush Hashem*). Kahane transformed the framing (Snow et al 1986:474) of *kidush Hashem* from one of Jewish martyrdom to one of Jewish violence: 'a Jewish fist in the face of an astonished Gentile world […] this is *kidush Hashem'* (Kahane 1975:121-2, quoted in Sprinzak 1991). By using traditional Jewish terminology, Kahane attempted to increase the narrative fidelity (resonance with pre-existing cultural narrations) of his ideas (Benford and Snow 2000:622).

To increase this resonance, Kahane 'tried to activate boundaries between particular identity groups' (Marsden 2013:147-8). One way in which movement actors do this by creating antagonist identity fields portraying the opponent as immoral (Hunt et al 1994). Kahane took this to extremes. Echoing Rapoport (1988) and Juergensmeyer's (2003) argument that religious extremists depict the enemy as wholly evil and impossible to negotiate with, Kahane argued that 'there are no Arab moderates' (Kahane 1990, quoted in Marsden 2014:124), and all of them, through 'bullets or babies' (ibid), pose an existential threat to Jews in their land (Sprinzak 1985:6).

Jasper (1998; with Goodwin and Polletta 2007:418-9) argue that collective identities are 'affective loyalties'. We feel fondness for members of our collective and negative feelings for those outside it. Hunt et al (1994) argue that by framing the antagonist as immoral, this implicitly frames 'us', the in-group, as moral. However, Religious Zionists frame Jews *explicitly* as separate and superior, on both a spiritual (see Afterman 2007) and, especially on the right

wing, on an ethnic level (Griffin 2012:127; Pedahzur 2012:5) as the Chosen People (see Genesis 12; Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

However, Sprinzak (1998) argues that while the moral shock of Oslo was a necessary condition for Goldstein's massacre, it was not sufficient. Palestinian violence against Jews was also key. Kahane's framing of 'the Arabs' as a threat to Jews in their land would have had great centrality and experiential commensurability (congruency with one's own experiences) to Goldstein's life (Benford and Snow 1988, 2000). The calls of '*itbah al-yahud'* ('kill the Jew' in Arabic) around Hebron in early 1994 (Marsden 2013:143; Jones 1999:17) and intensification of attacks against Jews (Marsden 2013:143; Sprinzak 1998:123) deeply troubled Goldstein and other settlers (Juergensmeyer 2003:49), generating suspicion and paranoia. Goldstein was both an inhabitant of a settlement surrounded by Palestinian towns (Ibid.), and, as the Jewish community's emergency physician, was regularly exposed to the consequences of Palestinian aggression towards Jews (Sprinzak 1998:124). Suspicion and hostility take a direct object (one is suspicious of someone or something). Kahane's framing of *hillul Hashem* as humiliation of Jews by Arabs would have had centrality, experiential commensurability, and, by frame transformation, narrative fidelity with the settler population, making the Palestinian population a natural object for Kahanist violent *kidush Hashem.*

However, there needs to be the political opportunity structures for these framings and emotions to be translated into action (Koopmans and Olzak 2004:201). Marsden (2013:154) argues that settlement life 'opened a space for Kahanism to become a lived reality' offering settlers 'a target-rich environment' with little social or political control. Indeed, when Goldstein entered the Cave of the Patriarchs, in his Israeli army uniform, he was not stopped by security, lax that morning, while those present presumed him to be on reserve, permitting

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him to carry his gun inside (see MFA 1994). Overall, therefore, we can interpret this massacre within the concepts of Kahanist framing of pre-existing collective affects. This framing resonated with the contemporary situation, while the act itself was facilitated by the settlement opportunity structures.

Violent Religious Zionist responses : the novelty of the Rabin Assassination

Rabin's assassination broke with a central tenet in Jewish tradition and history, that 'a Jew does not kill a brethren Jew' (Don-Yehiya 2014:251). There are instances of Jew-on-Jew murder in history (see MFA 1996), but in the State of Israel's history, this was a novel tactic in the Religious Zionist repertoire of contention. Biggs (2013:409) argues that whatever its ultimate source, tactic invention is sensitive to three conditions: feasibility, effectiveness, and legitimacy.

   (i)   Feasibility

Feasibility refers to structural preconditions affecting, and the costs of, a tactic.

The assassination of the Prime Minister, 'the most heavily guarded person in the State of Israel' (Pedahzur and Perlinger 2009:105) would clearly be more difficult than shooting unarmed praying Palestinians in a laxly-guarded settlement. Indeed, Amir had failed three

times to assassinate Rabin (Ibid:109; Karpin and Friedman 1999). As to the cost, this was obviously a forbidden contentious performance. Indeed, the price of participation was too high even for many Religious Zionist students at Amir's Bar Ilan University (Pedahzur and Perlinger 2009:107). Amir's network had decided that close-range shooting would be the most feasible method to kill Rabin and minimise collateral (Ibid 2009; Karpin and Friedman 1999). Like Goldstein, Amir had firearms training, as a Golani Brigade veteran (Pedahzur and Perlinger 2009:104) so shooting was feasible. However, considering Rabin's heavy security detail, this tactic would only be feasible if the assailant were prepared to pay a high price of death or life imprisonment. Amir knew this: he had recited the deathbed confession, the *viduy*, before the assassination (Kifner 1995).

(ii) <u>Legitimacy</u>

 Legitimacy refers to the sense that the tactic is just and right—from the perspective of the perpetrator(s) (Biggs 2013:409).

For Amir, religious justification was a necessary and sufficient condition to legitimise this high-risk tactic: 'without believing in God, I would never have had the power to do this' (Amir's interrogation, quoted in Afterman 2007:243). Amir was born in a *haredi* (ultra-orthodox) family reputed for their devoutness. He then studied at *haredi* schools, *yeshiva* (Jewish religious college) and *kolel* (institute for higher scripture studies) in the Religious Zionist-dominated Bar Ilan University (Afterman 2007; Odenheimer 2016). Jasper (1997:183-4) argues that rationality is culturally determined. Martyrdom, which Amir expected to attain,

and Goldstein did,[3] can be considered more rational in cultures, such as religious ones (see Rapoport 1984) which emphasise the ultimate end than in cultures of personal maximum profit (Ibid). In the Religious Zionist ideo-theology, the Jews are the Chosen People, and God covenanted *Eretz Yisrael* to them. Amir's act was rational in that it was calculated on whether it would salvage this, God's ultimate destiny for His People in their Land, from Oslo's attempts to 'reverse' it.

A key external circumstance further increased the resonance of the framing of Rabin as endangering Jewish lives in their land: the Palestinian suicide bombing campaign by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, opposed to negotiations with Israel. Snow et al (1998) argue that disruption of taken-for-granted daily routines ('quotidian disruption') can lead to collective action. The five scenarios they offer are of qualified utility to our study.

First, accidents are likely to generate collective action insofar as they '(a) disrupt the quotidian, and (b) can be attributed to human negligence and/or error'. While Oslo was not an accident (an oil spill, a nuclear accident) territorial compromises were viewed as a 'human error' halting the linear process of Redemption (Sprinzak 1987). Therefore, a reworking of this first proposition holds explanatory power. Second, violations of the *Umwelt* (neighbourhoods, homes, family etc). We argued above that this was one of the triggering factors that led Goldstein to perpetrate the Cave of the Patriarchs Massacre. Amir was a settlement activist and idolised Goldstein (Afterman 2007:242; Karpin and Friedman 1999:16). Moreover, the Hamas and Islamic Jihad campaigns included attacks during urban rush hour in people's neighbourhoods and public transport. Gilbert (2008:157-162). Snow et al's third and fourth propositions regard collective action when declining resource bases or

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[3] We use 'martyrdom' in the most value-free sense possible, of dying for one's religious beliefs.

increases in demand alter taken-for-granted subsistence routines and expectancies. This scenario is not applicable to our study. We are not dealing with subsistence communities, and one key resource (land) had *increased* in 1967 to three times the size of the pre-1967 state (Gilbert 2008:393). The fifth proposition regards changes in structures of social control that necessitate abandonment or alteration of daily routines. Collective action would occur to 'thwart' these changes (Snow et al 1998:16). Although Oslo's provisions would not apply to settlements, settlers felt 'abandoned' by their state to an 'existential' Palestinian enemy, imposing a siege mentality on them (Jones 1997:39).

Snow et al (1998) argue that quotidian disruption can reduce the importance and arduousness of framing because those facing disruption will already be motivated to act to return to normality. Pedahzur (2012:116-7) supports this analysis, arguing that 'most Israelis were consumed by the immediate fear of falling victim to a terror attack on their way to work' and cared little about the potential, and remote fruits of the peace process. Public support fell from 60% in September 1993 to 50% in July 1995 (Gilbert 2008:575).

Although it may increase motivation, moral shocks and quotidian disruption do not automatically lead to mobilisation. Jasper (1997:10) argues that activists work to avoid potential recruits resigning themselves to unpleasant changes, by generating 'moral outrage and anger' and targets against which these can be vented. Angry crowds at the scene of Palestinian attacks would shout 'Rabin is to blame for this' (Gilbert 2008:574). Yet villainising the leader of the Jewish State as betraying Jews would have been arduous as Jewish tradition holds all Jews are God's Chosen People. Rabin's Jewishness therefore had to be delegitimised. At some of the many anti-Oslo rallies, Rabin was portrayed in a Nazi SS uniform or in Palestinian *keffiyeh* headwear (Gilbert 2008:585; Jones 1997:10; JTA 1995). The personal

attacks on Rabin made him a 'condensing symbol' of the argument that Oslo posed an existential threat to Jews. A condensing symbol is a verbal or visual image that 'neatly capture […] a range of meanings and convey a frame, master frame, or theme' (Jasper and Poulsen 1995:498).

Benford and Snow develop three core framing tasks that movement actors use to 'mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support and to demobilize antagonists' (1988:198-204). *Diagnostic framing* identifies the problem and attributes blame. *Prognostic framing* constitutes solutions and strategies. The *motivational framing* is the 'call to arms' or 'rationale for action'. Benford and Snow (1988:202) argue that 'more often than not there is a direct correspondence between diagnostic and prognostic framing efforts'. Religious Zionists, the Jewish canon contained *halachic* (Jewish law) prognoses for the 'crimes' pinned on Rabin. In *yeshivas,* there was open discussion of whether Rabin was a *rodef* or *moser (*Afterman 2007:239-41; Sprinzak 1998; Pedahzur and Perlinger 2009:106; Karpin and Friedman 1999:114-130). A *rodef* is a Jew who commits or facilitates the murder of Jews. Rabin was accused of inadequately protecting Jews against Palestinian terrorism. Amir himself argued that he assassinated Rabin primarily to protect 'the human lives he abandoned in such an absurd way' (quoted in Afterman 2007:244). A *moser* is a Jew who sells Jewish property (in this case, land) to Gentiles (Sprinzak 1998:124). The *rodef* or *moser* must be foiled, 'the sooner, the better' (Maimonides, quoted in Afterman 2007:239), if necessary by murder (Karpin and Friedman 1999:106) to save Jewish life (Sprinzak 1998:124). Considering the fearful atmosphere in settlements and cities, the prognostic framing of killing a *rodef* and *moser*, and the motivational framing of urgency ('the sooner the better') would have had salience among the extreme Religious Zionist circles where these concepts were discussed.

Benford and Snow (2000:621) argue that 'hypothetically, the greater the status and/or perceived expertise of the frame articulator [...] the more plausible and resonant the framings or claims'. Rabbinic sanction can confer or deny legitimacy for action. In the 1980s, Gush Emunim had rabbinic authority to carry out attacks on Arabs, and subsequently did so. However, no rabbi agreed to sanction the plot to destroy the Dome of the Rock mosque on Temple Mount.[4] As a result, that operation was aborted (see Sprinzak 1987:200-1,213). Sprinzak (1998) argues that Amir did not receive rabbinic sanction for the assassination; Pedahzur and Perlinger (2009:106) suggest that he did. Amir himself claimed that he did, but refused to divulge details. However, even if there was consensus that Rabin was a *rodef* and/or a *moser,* the reports of controversy over whether that merited his murder (Karpin and Friedman 1999:114-30) emphasises an oft-overlooked caveat of frame theory, that prognostic framing *'may not necessarily follow directly from the causal attributions'* of the diagnosis (Benford and Snow 1998) (my italics).

(iii) Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the probability that a tactic will be successful, which depends on a myriad of factors —including the tactic's legitimacy in the eyes of others (Biggs 2013:409).

For Amir, success was defined by whether he could 'take Rabin down' (Karpin and Friedman 1999:18) and thereby stop the Oslo process (Ibid:27). Amir succeeded in killing Rabin. Marsden (2013:144) describes the assassination as 'perhaps the most consequential piece of

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[4] For detailed discussions of this plot, see Sprinzak (1987), additionally Pedahzur and Perlinger (2009:55-62), Hoffman (2017:236-8).

political violence in Israel's history'. Bowen (2015) agrees, arguing that had Rabin lived, with his reputation as 'Mr Security', the hero of the 1967 War, that Rabin would have won the 1996 election, and 'the future would have been different'.

However, this is contestable. Palestinian attacks, which had so damaged 'Mr. Security's' reputation, showed no signs of abating, and continued into 1996 and beyond. It is not certain Rabin would have won re-election (Sprinzak 199b:30). In May 1996, even with any potential post-assassination sympathy vote, his Labour party (now under Peres) only marginally won the election, but Oslo-opponent Netanyahu won the Knesset vote for the premiership. Moreover, even if Rabin had won re-election, support for Oslo was slipping. The fateful 4th November 1995 rally was organised to bolster a process which Rabin felt was losing public support (Gilbert 2006:586). Oslo (II) was passed in the Knesset by 61-59 votes with the support of Israeli Arab parties (Ibid:585). Yet in the 1996 election, Knesset representation of anti-Oslo Religious Zionist parties were strengthened (see Gilbert 2008:595). Moreover, Jasper (1998) argues that while rational, actions can still be strategically mistaken. Sprinzak (1998b) suggests that Netanyahu's right-wing government partially implemented the Accords[5] because of the trauma of the assassination, and to distance themselves from their role in the antagonistic framing of Rabin (see Gilbert 2008:584) and its deadly consequences. In this case, and presuming a Labour defeat, had it not been for Amir's act, the Accords could have been shelved. At time of writing, peace negotiations continue, albeit in fits and starts. Overall, the effectiveness of the Rabin assassination is doubtful at least, and backfired at most.

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[5] For the development of Oslo after Rabin, see Gilbert (2008) Chapters 30 and 31.

However, while the Rabin assassination was a watershed moment in Religious Zionist political violence, it was also something of an aberration, and widely seen as illegitimate in Israeli eyes, religious and secular. Whereas many Religious Zionists praised Goldstein's massacre of Palestinians (Paine 1995), they generally condemned Rabin's assassination (Afterman 2007:246-7). It led to 'soul searching' (Ibid.) and 'guilt' (Sprinzak 1998:126) about the open discussions of *din rodef* and *din moser*. However, Karpin and Friedman (1999:186-7) emphasise the undercurrent among many Religious Zionists of sympathy for Amir's motives and 'self-sacrifice'. Overall, Amir's act may not have been legitimate in Religious Zionist eyes, but his motives were more so.

Notwithstanding this, there are indications that Religious Zionists questioned the strategic utility of such an act *post hoc.* There was increased scrutiny on the rhetoric of settler rabbis, including some arrests (JTA 1995). We can test whether Religious Zionists adopted Amir's tactic by examining their responses to the Disengagement from Gaza a decade later. The moral beliefs surrounding territorial retrenchment remained largely unchanged: the rabbis nearly universally condemned the Disengagement (Inbari 2007). However, what Sprinzak (1998:126) identified in 1998 as 'a conscious rabbinical effort to exercise control over the rhetoric [...] and to rule out political violence' continued. In line with Festinger's (1956 [2009]) theoretical framework, following this further disconfirmation of the messianic promise, the rabbis urged increased religiosity and proselytising. However, aware of the impact of their status as authoritative frame articulators, the rabbis were careful not to revive discussions of whether Prime Minister Sharon was a *rodef* or *moser*, and to limit their prognostic frames to state-tolerated repertoires (Inbari 2007). We see similar patterns of Religious Zionist contention surrounding both Gaza and Oslo. Most contention was conventional, although there were some confrontational performances, such as rioting and roadblocks (Pedahzur and

Perlinger 2009:123), and a minority of contentious performances were violent. The violence, often influenced by Kahanist thought, again tended to be against Palestinians (Afterman 2007:248-50).

Conclusions and Counterfactuals

In conclusion, no single theory can fully explain all Religious Zionist political contention in response to the Oslo Accords. Even a cursory glance at the general literature as to what motivates individuals to participate in cliques (for example the small UFO cult in Festinger (1956 [2009]), mass movements (for example Hoffer 1951), or political violence or terrorism (Richardson 2006; Juergensmeyer 2003; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011) indicates manifold reasons involving multiple variables. Variables raise counterfactuals. If Rabin had never announced the Oslo Accords, would other moral shocks or disruptions have led to the emergence of the same patterns of contention? Marsden (2013:153) argues that Kahane's 1990 death left an organisational void in Kach. Yet would Kahanism have even developed without Kahane? If Goldstein and Amir had not committed their respective attacks, would somebody else have done so? How would Religious Zionist contention have developed if Rabin's assassination had never occurred?

By adopting a macro and meso level approach to minimise idiosyncratic variables, using multiple conceptual frameworks, and exploring a range of repertoires of contention, we can draw some tentative conclusions. Broadly speaking, we have argued that the Oslo Accords

was a moral shock to Religious Zionists, galvanising many in attempts to prevent their implementation. In answer to our first counterfactual, Oslo, in surrendering the 'heartland' of *Eretz Yisrael*, was a much greater 'moral shock' than Camp David. This arguably led to a far greater intensity of contention, culminating in Rabin's murder, never attempted on Begin by Religious Zionists. Most of the Religious Zionist repertoire of contention consisted of relatively low-risk tolerated performances. A minority of claimants resorted to violence. Most of this was directed towards Palestinians. Political entrepreneurs like Kahane, who organize, link, divide, and represent constituencies (Tilly 2003:30) re-packaged existing elements of Religious Zionist ideo-theology, using concepts with narrative fidelity, centrality, and experiential commensurability. In answer to our second and third counterfactuals, while Kahane articulated ideas in new ways (Sprinzak 1985), his ideas were based on leveraging and reframing pre-existing concepts and affective loyalty-driven cleavages (Marsden 2013). Tensions between Jews and Arabs, and competing visions for Zionism's future (see Karpin and Friedman 1999:Ch.2), especially after the Oslo Accords, would have likely eventually led to the emergence of similar theologies, and practices, of violence.

Finally, the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin was a watershed moment in the repertoire of Religious Zionist contention. We broadly agree with Sprinzak (1998) that the 'moral shock' of Oslo among Religious Zionists and the quotidian disruption by anti-Oslo Palestinian terrorism were both necessary conditions in delegitimising Rabin and precipitating his assassination. Yet we have argued that this novel tactic was not effective: it arguably did not change the course of history, and was not adopted into the Religious Zionist repertoire of contention. In answer to our final counterfactual, as most post-assassination Religious Zionist political contention to date has returned to the pre-assassination patterns detailed above, these patterns probably would have continued had no assassination occurred.

Finally, this paper's topic, Religious Zionism between 1992 and 1995, remains one of profound relevance today. The March 2021 legislative elections saw the Religious Zionist Party coalition win 6/120 Knesset seats. One of their leaders had a portrait of Goldstein in his home, and has spoken at rallies in front of 'Kahane was right' posters (Gur 2021). Another has called for separate facilities for Jews and Arabs (Douek 2016).

After weeks of post-election negotiations and coalition-building, Naftali Bennett, a former leader of the Yesha Council of settlement municipalities, succeeded Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister on 13th June 2021. Part of Bennett's coalition includes the Islamist United Arab List (Ra'am) party. This collaboration with Ra'am has led to right-wing activists and Religious Zionist lawmakers to openly call Bennett a 'traitor' and his coalition 'un-Jewish'. Notable rabbis had called on supporters to 'do everything' to thwart the 'change' coalition taking power, a coalition they claim, 'will harm the most fundamental matters of religion and state […and] matters of security, which relate to our very existence' (*The Times of Israel* 2021). In recent days several commentators, and the Director of Israel's internal security agency, the Shin Bet, increased security protection for Bennett and other senior politicians, and warned about the revival of incendiary discourse of 'treason' by 'selling' out the Land. The Director warned that 'this discourse may be interpreted among certain groups or individuals as one that allows violent and illegal activity and could even lead to harm to individuals'.

 In November 1996, former President Chaim Herzog warned against extremist elements of Religious Zionism: 'the fires of destruction are burning at the edge of the camp. If we do not, together, hasten to extinguish them, they will destroy our entire house' (quoted in Gilbert 2008:599). 25 years on, his words, and this paper's study of that period, remain pertinent.

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