Bar-Ilan, Meʾir Encyclopedia Article

Bar-Ilan, Meʾir

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Bar-Ilan, Meʾir

BAR-ILAN, MEʾIR (1880–1949), born Meʾir Berlin; one of the foremost leaders of the religious Zionist movement Mizraḥi. A native of Volozhin, Russia, he was the son of Naftali Berlin, the head of the famous Volozhin *yeshivah* (rabbinic academy). Bar-Ilan joined the religious Zionist movement and attended many Zionist congresses from 1905 onward. In 1911, he became the secretary of the Mizraḥi movement and moved to Berlin. In 1915, he immigrated to the United States, and in 1925 he settled in Jerusalem, where he remained until his death.

As the Mizraḥi representative, Bar-Ilan held many important positions in the Zionist movement before the creation of the State of Israel. He edited the religious Zionist Hebrew weekly *Ha-ʿIvri* from 1910 through 1921 and was editor in chief of the Tel Aviv daily *Ha-tsofeh* from 1938 to 1949.

In both his political activities and his writings, Bar-Ilan tried to create a central role for Orthodox Jews in Jewish nationalism. He rejected the notion of separation of synagogue and state, but he also rejected the more extreme religious arguments against any cooperation with the secular nationalists. He argued for inculcation of traditional religious values through the educational system. He believed that only by education, not by coercion, could the Orthodox win the struggle with the secularists over the final status of religion in the Jewish state. His position can be summed up in the Mizraḥi slogan that he coined: "The Land of Israel for the people of Israel according to the Torah [God's law] of Israel."

Bar-Ilan's position on the relationship between religion and state in Israel remains substantially that of the present religious Zionist party, the Mafdal (National Religious Party). The Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv, which was founded in 1955 to wed traditional Jewish learning with modern academic scholarship, was named after him.

Bibliography

In addition to Zvi Kaplan's article on Bar-Ilan in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), further biographical information can be found in Moshe Krone's *Ha-Rav Meʾir Bar-Ilan* (Jerusalem, 1954) and in *The Zionist Idea*, edited by Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 546–555.

New Sources

Shemesh, David. *Ha-Rav Meʾir Bar-Ilan: demuto shel manhig*. Jerusalem, 1979.