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LETTERS

Casting aspersions

Pity that Amotz Asa-El ("The 'ism' that bucked the trend," History, September 8) does not laud Theodor Herzl without utilizing him to cast aspersions on some of the greatest rabbis of the Middle Ages and to sneer at their faith in Divine salvation.

It is ludicrous to suggest that Rashi was submissive for not demanding Jewish revolt or gentile justice in response to the Crusades. Did Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg engage in a passive "culture of lamentation" when he attempted aliya to the Holy Land, and then, when captured, opted to teach his students from prison rather than allow them to pay a disproportionate ransom for his release that would endanger other Jews? Was Don Isaac Abravanel a mystical messianic escapist? For years, he spent his own money trying to lobby and bribe the Spanish government as a strategy to avert the Jewish expulsion from Spain.

Did the Judaism of these luminaries snuff the Jewish spirit and leave the nation helpless, or did the nature of their faith, scholarship and self-sacrifice serve to inspire the Jewish nation to survive, forever bonded to one another, the Torah and the land?

As we prepare to hear the shofar's call again, it is worth considering how Jewish history, past and present, supports the notion that our fate is indeed very much "outsourced" to the Creator. Herzl and modern Zionism might be examples of this phenomenon, but they certainly do not debunk the premise.

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