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OF JEWISH THOUGHT

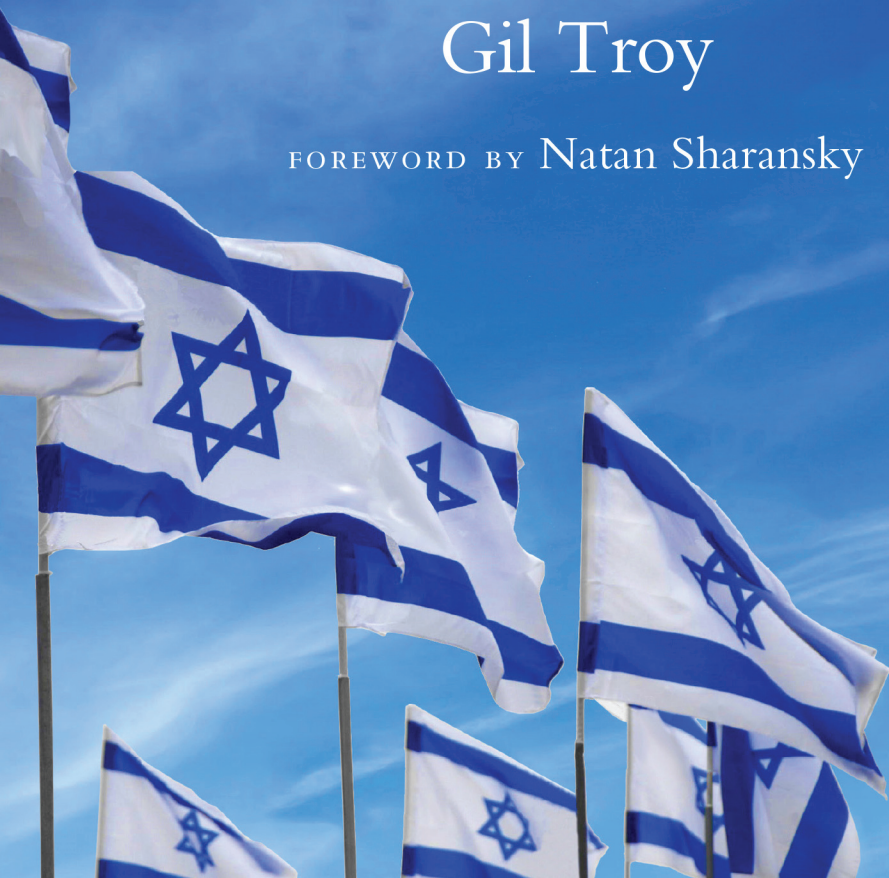
Arthur Hertzberg's *The Zionist Idea* Renewed

The Zionist Ideas

*Visions for the Jewish Homeland
—Then, Now, Tomorrow*

Gil Troy

FOREWORD BY Natan Sharansky



“Expanding the canonical book *The Zionist Idea*, *The Zionist Ideas* clarifies the wealth of rich ideas regarding the Jewish people’s sovereign national home in the land of Israel. This book will help flip today’s destructive ‘dialogue of the deaf’ into a thoughtful, constructive conversation—perhaps from which a new shared vision for Jewish nationalism will emerge.”

—RUTH CALDERON, member of Knesset 2013–15
and author of *A Bride for One Night: Talmud Tales*

“As the story of Zionism continues to unfold in the twenty-first century, Gil Troy provides those who wish to understand its past, present, and future this invaluable guide. Building on Hertzberg’s seminal volume, *The Zionist Ideas* expands our range of vision, exploring Zionism in its political, religious, and cultural dimensions as imagined by Zionists both in Israel and the Diaspora. With expertly curated selections and his own penetrating analysis, Troy accompanies us on a tour of Zionism’s evolution from the ideology of a fledgling, yet ancient, national movement to the philosophical underpinning of its own manifestation: the miracle of statehood for the Jewish people. Embracing the diversity of views about an ideology come to life, he offers clues to Zionism’s next chapters as Israel matures, struggles, and strives to keep faith with its founders’ vision.”

—DANIEL B. SHAPIRO, former
U.S. ambassador to the State of Israel

“This work promises to be an important contribution to Jewish historiography. I highly recommend it.”

—HOWARD SACHAR, professor emeritus of history and
international affairs at George Washington University

“Gil Troy is ideally situated to update this classic: as an outstanding scholar and historian, community leader, and one of today’s most inspiring and influential Zionist thinkers and commentators. The result is a must-read—a Zionist Bible for the twenty-first century—comprehensive and compelling. The impressive range of thinkers, from yesterday to today, from pioneers to torchbearers, from left to right, illuminated by Professor Troy’s extraordinary commentary, attests to and affirms the enduring character of the Zionist idea.”

—IRWIN COTLER, former minister of justice and
attorney general of Canada, and human rights activist

“This is an incredible collection—so very well thought out and conceptualized!”

—CSABA NIKOLENYI, director of the Azrieli Institute
of Israel Studies at Concordia University

The Zionist Ideas



In loving memory of our mother and grandmother, Rosalie “Chris” (Laks) Lerman, who blessed us with a passionate love for Israel and Judaism.

And in loving tribute to our teacher, Mel Reisfield, a life-changing Zionist educator who energized generations of American Jewish youth to understand the centrality of Israel to Jewish life.

Rosalie “Chris” (Laks) Lerman was born in Starachowice, Poland, in 1926 to Isaak and Pola Laks. Isaak and Pola were modern Jews and committed Zionists. They taught their three daughters Hebrew, Torah-driven values, and Jewish history. They raised their children to visualize—and hoped they would experience—a world in which Jews were restored to a national homeland in Israel.

The Nazi invasion of Poland upended their lives. Pola perished in the first death-camp deportations. Isaak died in Auschwitz months before the war ended. Miraculously, the Laks daughters survived Auschwitz and the death march to Ravensbruck.

Despite these experiences, Rosalie believed in the ability of the world to repair, and in the power of light over darkness and love over hate. She, along with our father and grandfather, Miles Lerman, spent a lifetime working to create a world of trust, understanding, and mutual respect among all people.

Rosalie felt privileged to experience the miracle of modern Israel. She celebrated Israel’s successes and was candid in acknowledging its flaws. She viewed Israel as a “work in progress,” knowing we still have much to do before the Zionist dream of a Jewish homeland thriving in peace and harmony with its neighbors is realized.

May the courage and optimism of Rosalie “Chris” (Laks) Lerman and the vision and passionate teaching of Mel Reisfield inspire us all.

—DAVID LERMAN, SHELLEY WALLOCK, BROOKE LERMAN,
JULIA LERMAN, *and* TED LERMAN

JPS ANTHOLOGIES
OF JEWISH THOUGHT

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THE ZIONIST IDEAS

*Visions for the Jewish Homeland—
Then, Now, Tomorrow*

GIL TROY

Foreword by Natan Sharansky



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Foreword

Natan Sharansky

The Zionist idea gave me—and millions of others—a meaningful identity. In June 1967, when I was nineteen, the call from Jerusalem—“The Temple Mount Is in Our Hands”—penetrated the Iron Curtain. Democratic Israel’s surprising victory in the Six-Day War, defeating Arab dictatorships threatening to destroy it, inspired many of us all over the world to become active participants in Jewish history. This notion that the Jews are a people with collective rights to establish a Jewish state in our ancient homeland, the Land of Israel, connected us to something more important than simple physical survival. Forging a mystical link with our people, we discovered identity, or as we call it, “peoplehood.” Suddenly we Soviet Jews, Jews of silence, robbed of our heritage by the Soviet regime, realized there is a country that called us its children.

As thousands of us applied to immigrate to Israel, roused by that cry from our distant past, anticipating a more hopeful future even while knowing the cost we would have to pay in the present, we found meaning in the Zionist idea.

The rediscovery of my identity, my community, my people, gave me the strength to fight for my rights, for the rights of other Jews, and for the rights of others, allying me with dissidents fighting communist tyranny. I discovered that this synthesis of the universal, the democratic, with the particularist, the nationalist, is central to the Zionist idea.

When the Soviet court sentenced me, and I said to my people, to my wife, Avital, “Next Year in Jerusalem!” but told the judges, “To you I have nothing to say,” I found strength in the Zionist idea.

When a Prisoner of Zion incarcerated next to me in the Gulag, Yosef Mendelevitch, informed me by tapping in code that by his calculations the Memorial Day siren was sounding in Jerusalem, and we both stood

in silence, separated by thick oppressive walls, but each sensing the beating of hearts thousands of kilometers away, we were united by the Zionist idea.

When millions of Jews wore those bracelets with Soviet Jewish names on them, twinned their bar and bat mitzvahs with Soviet Jewish kids they had never met, marched in rallies, and shouted “Let my people go,” they championed the Zionist idea.

Years later, in 1991 when I went to Ethiopia amid its raging civil war and witnessed Operation Solomon, Israel sending huge planes to bring Ethiopian Jews home to Israel, we all felt this amazing connection through the Zionist idea.

And today, as the head of the Jewish Agency, transitioning the organization from a Zionism of survival to a Zionism of identity and mutual exchange, we are introducing a new generation of Jews to the Zionist idea—and modern Zionist ideas.

That shift explains why today, nearly sixty years after Arthur Hertzberg’s *The Zionist Idea* was published in 1959, and seventy years after Israel’s establishment in 1948, we desperately need a new edition. We need a modern book celebrating, as Professor Gil Troy notes, the Zionist *ideas*: the many ways to make Israel great—and the many ways individuals can find fulfillment by affiliating with the Jewish people and building the Jewish state.

When I arrived in Jerusalem in 1986, I had lived the Zionist idea but did not know Hertzberg’s classic anthology. Nine years later, while starting the New Immigrants’ Party, I wondered whether having a separate political party for Jews from the former Soviet Union contradicted basic Zionist ideals of unity. A friend recommended Hertzberg’s book for a crash course on the history of Zionism.

Reading the impressive range of Zionist thinkers, I finally understood how people with such different views, from communists and socialists to pious rabbis and liberal capitalist Revisionists, could also be Zionist. This pluralism inspired our party’s move away from the cookie-cutter approach to nation building. Eventually, our new party, Yisrael BaAliyah, encouraged a mosaic of cultures and traditions whereby an individual does not need to sacrifice personal identity for an all-consuming ideology.

That experience proved what this successor to Hertzberg's book demonstrates: We now live in a world of Zionist ideas, with many different ways to help Israel flourish as a democratic Jewish state.

I first met Gil Troy in print, in 2003, when my cabinet portfolio included Diaspora Jewish affairs, and he had just published his best-selling Zionist manifesto, *Why I Am a Zionist: Israel, Jewish Identity, and the Challenges of Today*. In that path-breaking book, and his many eloquent columns, he went beyond defending Israel and combating antisemitism. He also articulated a positive vision of "Identity Zionism" that resonates with Jews today, young and old, in Israel and in the Diaspora.

When we met in 2008, I was struck by the fact that despite coming from different generations, despite having been born into very different political systems and Jewish experiences, both of us are *defending identity* as an anchor in today's world. As lovers of democracy and human rights, we both appreciate the importance of retaining particular cultural, national, ethnic, and religious heritages in a world that dismisses nationalism, often endorsing a selfish individualism or a simplistic, universalist cosmopolitanism that communism's abuses should have discredited.

I am thrilled that the Jewish Publication Society commissioned Gil Troy to update Hertzberg's *The Zionist Idea*. He is the right person for this most right project at the absolute right time. And this magnificent work, his magnum opus, is the perfect follow-up to Hertzberg's work.

Combining, like Hertzberg, a scholar's eye and an activist's ear, Troy has done this classic justice. The book provides just enough selections from the original, supplemented by important Pioneer voices Hertzberg missed. It then escorts us into the Builders' era and up to today, the time of the Torchbearers. Subdividing each time period into six schools of Zionist thought, Troy traces the many Zionist ideas—Political, Revisionist, Labor, Religious, Cultural, and Diaspora—as they developed, all of these Zionisms committed, in different ways, to establishing, and now perfecting, Israel as a democratic Jewish state.

Today, while celebrating Israel's seventieth anniversary, Jews in Israel and beyond are reassessing their own identities—reappraisals that can lead to stronger Jewish identity as we rediscover what makes our people exceptional. In its first seventy years, Israel often served as a refuge,

a shelter from oppression, absorbing more than three million Jews fleeing persecution. This book shows that now we can become a beacon of opportunity, appealing to Jews seeking not only a high standard of living, but a meaningful quality of life. A revived Zionist conversation, a renewed Zionist vision, can create a Jewish state that reaffirms meaning for those already committed to it while addressing the needs of Jews physically separated from their ancestral homeland, along with those who feel spiritually detached from their people.

To survive, every nation needs a glue that binds it together. For some it is history, for others language, and for others a creed. Our strongest glue is our Judaism, whether it be understood as a nationality, a faith, a response to antisemitism, or peoplehood. But no matter how we relate to our Judaism, one thing is clear: If the Zionist idea is to flourish, we must allow our nation to continue being exceptional, to continue representing the deep connection between the desire of people to belong and to be free.

How lucky we are to have this new book, filled with old-new ideas, Theodor Herzl-style, to guide this important and timely conversation, so that Israel, in middle age, can inspire our young and our old, the Jewish nation, and the world.

Introduction

How Zionism's Six Traditional Schools of Thought Shape Today's Conversation

In the beginning was the idea, the Zionist idea. In 1959, when the rabbi, historian, and Zionist leader Arthur Hertzberg published what would become the classic Zionist anthology in English, the State of Israel was barely a decade old. *The* Zionist idea, recognizing the Jews as a people with rights to establish a state in their homeland, *Eretz Yisra'el*, was still relatively new. True, Zionism had biblical roots. True, Jews had spent 1,878 years longing to rebuild their homeland after the Romans destroyed the Second Temple. True, Europeans had spent more than a century debating “the Jewish problem”—what to do with this unassimilable and often-detested people. Still, it was hard to believe that the Wandering Jews had returned home.

Building toward Israel's establishment in 1948, the Zionist movement had to convince the world—and the skeptical Jewish supermajority—of the fundamental Zionist logic. The European Enlightenment's attempts to reduce Judaism just to a religion failed. The Jewish people always needed more than a synagogue as communal space. In modern times, Jews' unique national-religious fusion earned them collective rights to statehood, somewhere. Next, the Land of Israel, the ancestral Jewish homeland, was the logical, legitimate, and viable place to relaunch that Jewish national project. Finally, restoring Jewish sovereignty there was a pressing priority, to save the long-oppressed Jews—and let them rejuvenate, spawning a strong, proud, idealistic New Jew.

After realizing this primal Zionist idea in 1948, Zionism evolved. The Jewish national liberation movement now sought to defend and perfect the state—understanding, as the Israeli author A. B. Yehoshua writes, that “A Zionist is a person who accepts the principle that the State of Israel doesn't belong solely to its citizens, but to the entire Jewish people.” As

Israel's builders steadied the state, this second-stage Zionism revolved around the question, What kind of nation should Israel be?

In today's third stage, with Israel safe, prosperous, thriving, yet still assailed, Zionism's torchbearers find themselves defending three politically unpopular assumptions: First, the Jews' status as what the philosopher Michael Walzer calls "an anomalous people," with its unique religious and national overlap, does not diminish Jews' collective rights to their homeland or the standard benefits enjoyed by every nation-state, particularly security and legitimacy. Second, the Palestinians' contesting land claims—whatever one thinks of them, from left to right—do not negate the Jewish title to Israel. Third, Israel has a dual mission: to save Jewish bodies and redeem the Jewish soul.

Zionists, therefore, recognize the Jewish people as a nation not just a religion, who, having established the Jewish state in their national homeland *Eretz Yisra'el*, now seek to perfect it. As Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion said, "Israel cannot just be a refuge. . . it has to be much, much more." Now, nearly sixty years after *The Zionist Idea* debuted, and as Israel celebrates its seventieth birthday, this successor anthology chronicles these Zionist challenges and opportunities—presenting different Israeli and Diaspora visions of how Israel should flourish.

The Zionist Ideas Today

Since 1959, *The Zionist Idea* has been the English speaker's Zionist Bible, the defining text for anyone interested in studying the Jewish national liberation movement. *The Zionist Idea* was so authoritative it took me decades before I realized that all the Zionist voices I heard in my head spoke in English, when few actually had.

Arthur Hertzberg's classic invited readers into sprawling conversations about Judaism, Jewish history, modernity, and industrialization, about nationalism's meaning and sovereignty's potential. Readers jumped from thinker to thinker, savoring the famous Zionists—Herzl, Ahad Ha'am, Gordon—while encountering unfamiliar ones—the Berdichevskys, Katznelsons, Brenners.

To some academics and activists, Hertzberg's tome was such a foundational work that any update is like digitizing the Mona Lisa or color-

izing *Casablanca*. As an avowed enthusiast, I can well understand this perspective. Nonetheless, history's affirmative answer—"Yes!"—to the first edition's fundamental question—is a Jewish state viable?—does necessitate a new volume. In the ensuing decades, political, religious, and social progress transformed the Zionist conversation. Israel's 1967 Six-Day War triumph stirred questions Hertzberg never imagined, especially how Israel and the Jewish people should understand Zionism when the world perceives Israel as Goliath not David. The Revisionist Likud's victory under Menachem Begin in 1977 generated new dilemmas regarding how increasingly left-wing, cosmopolitan Diaspora Jews should relate to an increasingly right-wing, nationalist Israel. And Israel's emergence as a high-tech powerhouse vindicated Zionism, even as some feared capitalism's corruptions.

Six decades of arguments, dreams, frustrations, and reality checks also intruded. Deciding what enduring historic selections merited inclusion in a new edition and which others were outdated required comparing the finalists with hundreds of other texts. What I thought would be a quick attempt to modernize *The Zionist Idea* blossomed into a major overhaul.

In contemplating what *The Zionist Ideas* should be, I returned to the original mandate. In 1955, Emanuel Neumann of the Theodor Herzl Foundation invited Arthur Hertzberg to publish, in English, the key Zionist texts showing "the internal moral and intellectual forces in Jewish life" that shaped this "idea which galvanized a people, forged a nation, and made history." As Neumann noted: "Behind the miracle of the Restoration lies more than a century of spiritual and intellectual ferment which produced a crystallized Zionist philosophy and a powerful Zionist movement."¹

The golden age of Zionist manifesto writing is over. But the rich payload of ideas in this volume—and those left behind on my cutting room floor—testify to the Zionist debate's ongoing vitality. Readers will discover significant writings that advance our understanding of what Zionism achieved, sought to achieve, or still seeks to achieve. No reactive or headline-driven op-eds appear here—only enduring visions. Respecting Hertzberg's dual sensibility as scholar and activist, I sought only defining, aspirational, programmatic texts. The expanded Zionist debate as Zionism went from marginal to mainstream warranted including many

more essays, even if only excerpted briefly. Using this criteria, I reduced Hertzberg's thirty-seven thinkers to twenty-six. To reflect the burgeoning conversation since, I multiplied the number of entries to 169, while respecting the publisher's mandate to shorten the text to approximately 180,000 words—Hertzberg's was 240,000.

Of course, no volume could contain every significant Zionist essay, any more than the argumentative Jewish people could ever agree on a Zionist canon. Nevertheless, all these pieces help assemble the larger Zionist puzzle—an ever-changing movement of “becoming” not just “being,” of saving the world while building a nation. Together, these texts help compare what key thinkers sought and what they wrought, while anticipating the next chapters of this dynamic process.

Non-Jewish voices do not appear here. There's a rich history of non-Jews defending Zionism eloquently—from George Eliot to Winston Churchill, from Martin Luther King Jr. to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, from President John Kennedy to the Reverend John Hagee. Moynihan's United Nations Speech in 1975, for example, galvanized Americans to defend democracy and decency when the General Assembly singled out one form of nationalism, Zionism, as racist. However, most such texts by non-Jews are defensive or explanatory rather than personal or visionary. Beyond this, including non-Jews would detract from the focus on how the Jewish conversation about Jewish nationalism established and now influences Israel. This book gives Jewish Zionists their say—demonstrating how their Zionist ideas evolved.

Like Abraham's welcoming shelter, the book's Big Tent Zionism is open to all sides, yet defined by certain boundaries. Looking left, staunch critics of Israeli policies belong—but not anti-Zionists who reject the Jewish state, universalists who reject Jewish nationalism, or post-Zionists who reject Zionism. Looking right, Religious Zionists who have declared a culture war today against secular Zionists fit. However, the self-styled “Canaanite” Yonatan Ratosh (1908–81), who allied with Revisionist Zionists but then claimed Jews who didn't live in Israel abandoned the Jewish people, fails Zionism's peoplehood test. Similarly, Meir Kahane (1932–90), whose party was banned from the Knesset for “incitement to racism,” fails Zionism's democracy and decency tests. All the visions

included preserve Zionism's post-1948 principle of Israel as a Jewish democracy in the Jewish homeland—inviting debate regarding what Israel means for Israelis, the Jewish people, and the world.

The original work excluded female thinkers, overlooking Henrietta Szold the organizer, Rachel Bluwstein the poet, Rahel Ben Zvi the pioneer, and Golda Meir, the Labor leader. It bypassed the *Mizrahi* dimension. Given his Labor Zionist bias, writing two decades before Likud's 1977 victory, Hertzberg approached Ze'ev Jabotinsky as a fighter asserting Jewish rights but not as a dreamer envisioning a liberal nationalist state.

This new volume also reframes the Zionist conversation within six Zionist schools of thought which this introduction defines and traces: Political, Labor, Revisionist, Religious, Cultural, and Diaspora Zionism. Most histories of Zionism track the ideological ferment that shaped the first five. Diaspora Zionism, the sixth stream, has changed significantly. Zionism began, mostly, with European Jews debating their future individually and collectively; American Zionists checked out from the personal quest but bought in—gradually—to aid the communal state-building project. Today, most Diaspora Jews seek inspiration, not salvation, from Israel.

Organizing the debate around these six schools makes sense because most Zionisms were hyphenate Zionisms—crossbreeding the quest for Jewish statehood with other dreams regarding Judaism or the world. Historians must often be zoologists, categorizing ideas and individuals resistant to being forced tidily into a box. The French historian Marc Bloch—a Jew the Nazis murdered in 1944—explained in his classic *The Historian's Craft* that history should not just generate a “disjointed, and . . . nearly infinite enumeration.” Worthwhile history delivers “a rational classification and progressive intelligibility.”² This insight suits the Zionist narrative.

Refracting Zionism through the lens of these six visions places today's debates in historical context, illustrating the core values of each that sometimes united, sometimes fractured, the perpetually squabbling Zionist movement. Seeing how various ideas cumulatively molded broader ideological camps illuminates Zionist history—and many contemporary Jewish debates.

Some may question the choice to associate certain thinkers who seemingly defy categorization with particular schools of thought. Admittedly, great thinkers often demonstrate greatness through their range. Yet this general categorization locates the texts historically and ideologically, even if a particular Zionist thinker never waved that particular ideological banner. Putting these thinkers into conversation with one another can prove clarifying. For example, placing the philosopher Eliezer Schweid among Revisionists does not make this capacious thinker a Revisionist. Yet his analyses of the ongoing Zionist mission and the Promised Land's cosmic power explain certain directions of modern Revisionist thought. Similarly, the Jerusalem Platform, the vision statement of Herzl's Zionist Organization, later of the World Zionist Organization, defines Zionism broadly, embracing Political Zionism, saluting Cultural Zionism. Still, its multidimensionality best illustrates the many ways Diaspora Zionists engage Zionism today. Moreover, these six intellectual streams never came with membership cards, even though some of these schools of thought spawned some Israeli political parties.

Purists may thus insist that Labor Zionism has become left-wing Zionism and Revisionist Zionism, right-wing Zionism. Using the original terms contextualizes the ideologies, spotlighting how each faction perpetuates—or abandons—its historic legacy. Words like “Religious” in “Religious Zionism” risk fostering incorrect assumptions; some non-Orthodox Jews express a Religious Zionism, meaning their Zionism also stems from faith. Including them emphasizes that no one can monopolize or too narrowly define any one tendency.

The Zionist Ideas catalogues the thinkers within the six schools over these three major phases of Zionism:

1. Pioneers: Founding the Jewish State—until 1948: How dreamers like Theodor Herzl and A. D. Gordon, Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Rav Kook, Ahad Ha'am and Louis Brandeis, conceived of Jewish nationalism and a Jewish state;
2. Builders: Actualizing and modernizing the Zionist blueprints— from 1948 until 2000: How leaders like David Ben-Gurion, Golda

Meir, and Menachem Begin, along with thinkers as diverse as Naomi Shemer, Ovadia Yosef, and Yitz Greenberg built Israel.

3. Torchbearers: Reassessing, redirecting, reinvigorating in the twenty-first century: How heirs to Israel's dreamers and builders reconcile what Professor Ilan Troen calls the Zionism of Intention with the realities of modern Israel—and the Diaspora.

Although, history's progress always tweaks historians' periodization schemes, this division follows a compelling logic. The year 1948 divides the movement that might have failed—until the British mandate's final moments—from the movement that executed a stunning historical feat. Pivoting at 2000 satisfies our bias toward half-century and century markers to shape this splash of time. It also marks a shift in the Zionist conversation, as the campaign to delegitimize Zionism intensified just as Zionists recognized a more stable, prosperous, capitalist yet controversial Israel coexisting with a more confident yet identity-challenged Diaspora.

Sadly, the most frequent question non-Israeli Jews have asked me about this book is, “Will you include anti-Zionists, too?” When feminist anthologies include sexists, LGBT anthologies include homophobes, and civil rights anthologies include racists, I will consider anti-Zionists. This Jewish need to include our enemies when telling our own story tells its own story.

No volume can be everything to all readers. This edition, like the original, addresses English speakers. While sensitive to the Israeli conversation, the selection process reflects a Diaspora sensibility. Israelis need a Hebrew translation—keeping many texts, and adding others.

Zionism: The Prehistory

In his majestic introduction to *The Zionist Idea*, Arthur Hertzberg called Zionism the “twice-born movement,” noting that by the 1860s, the dream Moses Hess and others had envisioned was “stillborn” because hopes of “assimilation and religious Reform” still dominated.³ Antisemitism had yet to disillusion that first generation.

Actually, the Bible spawned the Zionist idea, making Zionism a thrice-born idea. That first premodern birth reflected the Jewish homeland's

centrality to Judaism. The second mid-nineteenth-century attempt emphasized peoplehood—that Jews are distinct not only religiously but sociologically and thus politically. The third incarnation succeeded by creating a movement that established a modern democratic state for this distinct people on their ancestral homeland.

Some start the Jewish story with Abram becoming Abraham in the Bible. Others note the archaeological evidence of neighboring villages in northern Israel: one left behind eaten pig bones, the other did not. Judaism's foundation, however, begins with a holy triangle: In the Land, the People fulfill God's vision.

While every homeland has historical and cultural landmarks, the Promised Land adds moral, and spiritual, dimensions. Jewish heroes—Deborah the poetess, Samuel the prophet, Samson the strongman—flourished in this greenhouse for great collective Jewish enterprises. Such leaders imparted abiding messages mixing pride in the Jewish peoplehood narrative with the universal moral quest for equality and freedom.

Jewish history crests toward David the charismatic founding the national capital, Jerusalem, and Solomon the wise building the magnificent Holy Temple, embodying Jewish piety, probity, and power. Kings I reports that King Solomon merited honors and riches because the justice he dispensed reflected his caring for the people. The Zionist movement sought to restore this glorious history brimming with spiritual and moral potential.

Although the wandering Jewish people could not always remain on the land, their land remained in their hearts. After the Second Temple's destruction in 70 CE and the mass dispersion of Jews, culminating with the infusion of Muslims after the Muslim conquest in 636, Jews nevertheless remained tethered to the Land of Israel. Jews always prayed toward Jerusalem, one of the four "holy cities," along with Safed, Tiberias, and Hebron, where Jewish communities maintained footholds. In considering themselves "exiled," Jews defined themselves by their homeland not their temporary homes.

While kept apart from Israel, the children of Israel remained a people apart. That idiosyncratic Jewish mix of religion and peoplehood kept the Jews in a true exilic condition, East and West. Jewish laws and communal

institutions encouraged self-government. In the West, after the eleventh century, most Ashkenazic Jews lived in *kehillot*, independent communities. As long as the community paid taxes and obeyed the external laws, Jews could maintain their rabbinical hierarchy, schools, social services, and community funds. They could be ethnically, nationally, ethically, and religiously Jewish, mastering democratic skills that would be useful centuries later. Their Judaism was so integrated they lacked a word for “religion.” The modern Hebrew word for religion, *dat*, borrows the Persian word for law.

In the East—North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia—*Mizrahi* Jews also were detached. Islam imposed a second-class “dhimmi” status on Jews, Christians, and other minorities. This theoretical protection actually degraded non-Islamic peoples. Still, *Mizrahi* Jews’ instinctive distinctiveness generated praise when the formal Zionist movement emerged in Europe. As “born Zionists” forever dreaming of the Land of Israel, these *Mizrahim* always were ready to return home.

Origins of the Zionist Movement

The nineteenth century resurrected the Zionist idea. Europe had emerged from the Middle Ages into an age of “isms,” powerful modernizing movements. Rationalism celebrated the mind, trusting logic and science to advance humanity technologically and socially. Liberalism celebrated the individual, recognizing every individual’s basic rights—a notion derived from biblical notions of equality. And nationalism celebrated the collective, organizing governments along ethnic, historical, Romantic, geographic connections—and shared destiny.

These movements revolutionized Jewish life. The Enlightenment, the modernizing movement of rationalism, liberalism, and individualism, promised to secure respect for Jews as equals in society. The Emancipation promised to grant Jews basic political rights. The Jews’ version of the Enlightenment, melting their ghetto world, was the *Haskalah*. From the Hebrew root *s-k-l* for brain, the movement’s name reflected its faith that reason would liberate the Jews.

The *maskilim*, the Enlightened Jews, wanted normalization, while valuing their Jewish heritage. In the 1700s, the philosopher Moses Mendels-

sohn advised: “be a cosmopolitan man in the street and a Jew at home.” In 1862 the socialist philosopher Moses Hess further infuriated his former comrade Karl Marx by toasting Judaism’s duality: “my nationality,” he proclaimed, “is inseparably connected with my ancestral heritage, with the Holy Land and the Eternal City, the birthplace of the belief in the divine unity of life and of the hope for the ultimate brotherhood of all men.” Fifteen years later, Peretz Smolenskin, born in Russia, living in Vienna, claimed Judaism survived exile because Jews “always regarded” themselves “as a people—a spiritual nation” with Torah “as the foundation of its statehood.” These and a few other thinkers mapped out Zionism’s core ideas, paralleling Jewish nationhood to the other European nations then coalescing. But history was not yet ready for Zionism.

European nationalism did not tolerate Jewish distinctiveness. In 1789, riled by French Revolutionary nationalism and egalitarianism, the liberal deputy Count Stanislas Adélaide de Clermont-Tonnerre, thinking he was defending Jews’ basic human rights, proclaimed: “We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals.” Then, in 1806 Napoleon Bonaparte convened an Assembly of Jewish Notables, christening it as the venerable Jewish tribunal, the Sanhedrin. Pushing French nationalism, the emperor posed twelve menacing questions probing Jewish stances on intermarriage, polygamy, divorce, and usury—testing whether Jews were French first. Telling Napoleon what he demanded to hear, calling themselves “Frenchmen of the Mosaic persuasion,” these Jews unraveled three millennia of an integrated Jewish identity.

Six decades later, when Enlightenment and Emancipation spread from French and German Jewish elites to Eastern Europe, the Russian Jewish poet J. L. Gordon urged his fellow Russian Jews: “Raise your head high, straighten your back, And gaze with loving eyes open” at your new “brothers.” Gordon echoed Moses Mendelssohn’s formula for the new, double-thinking non-Zionist Jew: “Be a person on the street and a Jew at home.”⁴ He articulated the Haskalah’s promise: an updated yet traditional Judaism at home, but acceptance, normalcy, outside in Europe.

Alas, that old-fashioned affliction—Jew hatred—combined with many Jews’ submissive approach to assimilationism, soured other Jews on the

Enlightenment. Symbolic punches culminated with the big blow from 1881 to 1884: pogroms, more than two hundred anti-Jewish riots unleashing mass hooliganism and rape. “The mob, a ravenous wolf in search of prey,” Smolenskin wrote, “has stalked the Jews with a cruelty unheard of since the Middle Ages.”

The pogroms annihilated Jews’ modern messianic hope of redemption via universal acceptance. Some sulked back into the despairing ghetto. Some began what became the two-million-strong immigration to America. Some escaped into socialism’s class-based promise of universalism. And a determined, marginal minority sought salvation through nationalism. “We have no sense of national honor; our standards are those of second-class people,” Smolenskin smoldered. “We find ourselves . . . exulting when we are tolerated and befriended.”

The great optimism these modern “isms” stirred—rationalism, secularism, liberalism, socialism, communism—had also helped breed that virulent, racial “ism”: antisemitism. Enlightenment fans and critics embraced this all-purpose hatred. Antisemites hated Jews as modernizers and traditionalists, rich and poor, capitalists and communists. Blood-and-soil nationalists said the Jews would never fit in and should stop trying to belong; liberal nationalists said the Jews weren’t trying hard enough to fit in and should stop sticking out.

Antisemitism represented European blood-and-soil nationalism gone foul; perfuming it with lofty liberal nationalist rhetoric intensified the betrayal. The Russian Jewish physician Leon Pinsker, whose very profession epitomized Enlightenment hopes, diagnosed this European disease, writing, “the Jews are ghosts, ethereal, disconnected.” He predicted: “This pathological Judeaophobia will haunt Europe until the Jews have a national home like all other nations.”

This European double cross crushed enlightened Jews’ pipedreams and helped launch a state-oriented Zionism. The “thrice-born” old-new movement finally took, at least among a small band who believed the Jews were a nation; assimilation could never overcome antisemitism, and a reconstituted Jewish national home offered the only hope.

That said, the Zionist backstory is more complex than antisemitism serving as the (unkosher) yeast fermenting Jewish nationalism. The

philosopher Jean Paul Sartre erred when claiming the antisemite makes the Jew. Similarly, antisemitism marks but does not make Zionism: the persecution of Jews has legitimized and popularized the Zionist movement without defining it. Zionism is and always was more than anti-antisemitism.

In 1878 three years before the Russian pogroms, religious Jews established Petah Tikvah, the Gates of Hope, as Palestine's first modern Jewish agricultural settlement. In 1882 members of the group BILU, intent on cultivating the Holy Land, responded to the pogroms with hopes that transcended those crimes, articulating what would be the First Aliyah's communal vision: "HEAR O ISRAEL! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one, and our land Zion is our only hope."

In 1890 the Viennese anti-religious rebel Nathan Birnbaum coined the terms "Zionist" and "Zionism." Birnbaum translated the name of the coalition of post-pogrom organizations in Russia, "Hovevei Zion," sometimes "Hibbat Zion," "lovers of Zion," into German as "*Zionismus*," which quickly became Zionism.

By then, the stubborn linguist most responsible for reviving Hebrew was already at work. Born in 1858 in Lithuania, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda arrived in Palestine in that turning-point year of 1881, understanding that a national revival required a land—Israel, only Israel—and a language—Hebrew, only Hebrew. Forever experimenting, cannibalizing, hijacking, synthesizing, Ben-Yehuda called a tablecloth "*mappah*," from the Talmudic term; ice cream "*glidah*" from "*galid*," the Mishnaic word for frost; and socks "*garbayim*" from "*jawrab*," Arabic for sock—or possibly "*gorba*," Aramaic for leg garment. In waves of intellectual creativity, Ben-Yehuda modernized the language. With steady cultural leadership, he peddled it to the people. On November 29, 1922, when the British authorities mandated Hebrew as the Palestinian Jews' language, this early Zionist miracle achieved official sanction.

Zionist Solutions to "The Jewish Problem"

Movements often romanticize their founding moments, overemphasizing epiphanies supposedly launching their crusade. One oversimplification claims that publishing Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in

1963 triggered modern feminism. Similarly, many mistakenly point to Theodor Herzl's Zionist "aha" moment. A cultivated, assimilated Middle European, Herzl was a frustrated playwright, lawyer, and journalist covering the divisive 1894 treason trial of a French army captain, Alfred Dreyfus. Legend has it that Herzl's Jewish identity awakened—and his Zionist vision emerged—when the crowds shouted "Death to the Jews" rather than "Death to the Traitor," a particularly reprehensible Jew-hating indulgence because Dreyfus had been framed. Two years later, in 1896, Herzl published his manifesto, *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish state).

Herzl's breakthrough is also overstated. Like Friedan's feminism, Zionism had been simmering for decades. And Herzl wasn't such a non-Jewish Jew. Some of his Jewish nationalist musings predated the Dreyfus trial.

Still, Herzl's impact shouldn't be understated. As the nineteenth century ended amid intellectual chaos, fragmenting identity, great anticipation, and sheer Jewish anguish, his vision resonated. Herzl's mid-course correction for the Jewish people in their flight from ghetto to modernity reoriented their messianic hopes from oblivion toward Zion. The model Jewish society Zionism now envisioned would heal the "Jewish Problem" of antisemitism and the Jews' problem of assimilation while—added bonus—inspiring the Western world too.

More than the mugged Jew, the reluctant Zionist, Herzl was the balanced Jew, the model Zionist. He had one foot in the past and one in the present, one in European "isms" and one in Judaism, one in nineteenth-century Romantic liberal nationalism and one in a centuries-old Jewish religio-nationalism. Herzl embodied the thrice-born Jewish nationalist movement's two main streams: he grafted its Jewish character onto a Western national liberation movement.

Herzl was also the great Jewish doer. He could be grandiose, trying to build a state top down through white-tie-and-tails diplomacy, rubbing elbows not sullyng hands or straining muscles. But, like a fairy godmother, he turned Jewish fantasies into realities: a Zionist Congress; a World Zionist Organization; a Zionist newspaper, *Die Welt* (The world); a Zionist novel, *Altneuland* (Old-new land); a Zionist fundraising machine, the Jewish National Fund; and, eventually, a Jewish state. If David Ben-Gurion was the Jewish revolution's King David—magnetic leader and

Spartan statesman—Theodor Herzl was its Moses, delivering the core ideas without reaching the Promised Land.

Herzl's defining axiom testified to his magic: "If you will it, it is no dream." Before Herzl there were various Zionist initiatives. When he died, there was not just *a* Zionist movement but *the* Zionist Movement, building toward a Jewish state for the Jewish people.

Many remember Herzl as garrison Zionist not dream fulfiller, largely because Asher Ginsberg, writing under the pen name Ahad Ha'am, attacked Herzl as Jewishly ignorant and politically grandiose. Worrying about Judaism more than the Jews, Ahad Ha'am doubted a state was "attainable." For a people oppressed by persecution and seduced by assimilation, he prescribed a national cultural renaissance in the Jewish homeland.

The spread of nationalism and antisemitism, combined with the Zionist movement's surprising momentum, made most Zionists Herzlian. Nevertheless, Ahad Ha'am's Cultural Zionism—thanks especially to Eliezer Ben-Yehuda—steeped the movement in enduring Jewish values, folk practices, and redemptive aspirations. Ben-Yehuda's linguistic revolution bridged Political and Cultural Zionism. He understood that without an independent political infrastructure in its homeland, the Jewish body politic would never heal, but without a thriving culture in its historic language, the Jewish soul would never revive. Today, we are Herzl when we flash our passports to enter or exit the Jewish state he envisioned—a flourishing political and economic entity that saved Jews. We are Ben-Yehuda when we speak Hebrew. We are Ahad Ha'am when we enjoy an Israeli song, movie, book, sensibility, personality quirk. And we are all of them when we push Israel to redeem Judaism and improve the world.

In short, Zionism was a Jewish response to the crisis of modernity. Herzl, whose political Zionism is now remembered as pragmatic and unromantic, envisioned that with a Jewish state, "We shall live at last as free people on our own soil, and in our own homes peacefully die." Yet he could also be prophetic. Imagining this new home of the Jews, he wrote: "The world will be liberated by our freedom, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness."

While rooted in Jewish tradition, while inhaling Herzl's utopian yet European spirit, Zionism was also radical. In the early 1900s, the Hebrew

novelist and yeshiva dropout Micah Joseph Berdichevsky flipped the rabbinic warning against being distracted by nature when studying holy books. Insisting that Israel will “be saved” only when Jews notice trees not texts, he cried: “Give us back our fine trees and fine fields! Give us back the Universe!”

This cry went beyond returning to the land. It called for purifying, electrifying revolution. The socialist and Political Zionist, David Ben-Gurion, thus described Zionism’s double challenge: While rebelling against external powers, akin to the American, French, and Russian Revolutions, Zionism also rejected the internal, beaten, ghetto-Jewish personality. Zionism sought to spawn New Jews to form an *Am Segula*, an enlightened nation inspiring other nations—another revamped biblical concept.

Many entwined this personal Jewish revolution with the return to nature. Zionism’s secular rebbe, Aharon David Gordon, preached that “a life of labor” binding “a people to its soil and to its national culture” would return Jews to “normal,” finally acting, looking, feeling, working, and earning like other nations. The bearded, intense Gordon modeled this principle by moving from Russia to Palestine in 1904 at age forty-eight and eventually, awkwardly, wielding a shovel at Kibbutz Degania Aleph. His insistence on workers’ dignity spurred today’s Labor social justice activism, while his mystical love of the land inspired today’s religious and Revisionist settlers.

As an enlightened movement disdaining ghetto Judaism, Zionism in extreme form mirror imaged Reform Judaism, with some Zionists jettisoning religious not national identity. Some Herzlian Zionists reasoned that, freed from antisemitism, Jews could flourish as cultivated Europeans away from Europeans. This quest for “normalcy” misread Jewish history and civilization: Zionism doesn’t work as a de-Judaized movement or a movement lacking big ideas. It’s as futile as trying to cap a geyser; Jewish civilization’s intellectual, ideological, and spiritual energy is too great.

The symbol of this extreme was Herzl’s consideration of the British offer of a homeland in Uganda—technically the Kenya highlands. Reeling from the Kishinev pogroms that spring, Herzl endorsed this immediate intervention to alleviate Jewish suffering. The proposal almost killed the movement. Recognizing the danger, Herzl concluded the divisive Sixth

Zionist Congress in August 1903, by saying, in Hebrew: “If I forget thee, O, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning”—reaffirming his commitment to the homeland.

The traditionalists’ fury taught the territorialists how central Zion was to Zionism. It also underlay Chaim Weizmann’s classic exchange with Lord Balfour—whose 1917 declaration validated modern Zionism officially, internationally. “Mr. Balfour, suppose I was to offer you Paris instead of London, would you take it?” Weizmann asked. “But Dr. Weizmann, we have London,” Balfour replied, prompting Weizmann’s line: “True, but we had Jerusalem when London was a marsh.”⁵

The territorialists’ defeat was defining. Zionism was a Western national movement seeking political independence and what German theorists called *Gewaltmonopol des Staates*, the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within that political entity. Yet this Western hybrid, steeped in Jewish lore, needed the language to be Hebrew, the flag and national symbols to be Jewish, the land to be Israel, and the mission to be messianic. Zionism was Davidic in its pragmatism—kingly—and Isaiahan in its sweep—high-minded; this cosmic element was essential to its success. In loving the land and people, Zionism—at its most secular—remained a passionate, Romantic, religious movement. Most early secular Zionists could not take the Zion out of Zionism, or divorce the Jews and their future state from Judaism. (Similarly, today’s “secular” Israelis denounce religion while living by the Jewish religious calendar, speaking the holy language, and often knowing Jewish texts better than many of their “religious” American cousins.)

The Zionist revolution also defied the twentieth-century trend toward individualism and the Jewish trend toward sectarianism. “Judaism is fundamentally national,” Ahad Ha’am insisted, “and all the efforts of the ‘Reformers’ to separate the Jewish religion from its national element have no result except to ruin both the nationalism and the religion.” “Hatikvah,” the national anthem, rhapsodized about *the* one, ancient, enduring hope—and, like so many Jewish prayers, spoke of abstractions as singular, but the people as collective: *The* Jewish spirit sings as *the* eyes seek Zion, but *our* hope of two thousand years is to be a free nation in *our* land. Decades later, Rabbi David Hartman would compare Zionism’s

rebellion against religion to the rebel teenager's loud vow to run away from home—without actually leaving.

Thus began a glorious exercise in state building, and nationalist myth making. The hearty *halutzim*, the pioneers, came to the land “*livnot u’lehibanot bah*,” to build and be personally rebuilt. Their sweat irrigated the national revival. They drained swamps, paved roads, founded kibbutzim. They revitalized old cities, especially Jerusalem, and established new cities, most famously Tel Aviv, the rejuvenating “hill of spring.” They put the passionate, land-loving words of writers such as Rachel Bluwstein to stirring, land-building melodies. And they fought like good New Jews—and ancient Israelites. They battled the elements. They skirmished with some Arab neighbors, while cooperating with others. They resisted despair. And as they created a bronzed, self-confident, battle-tested farmer-soldier, a New Jew, they quarreled ideologically with the intensity of their ghettoish Talmudist selves.

January 4, 1925, marked a milestone in national development: the founding of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Opening a university reflected Zionism's rationalist, scientific side, its understanding that a true cultural revolution included what the national poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik called “all elements of life, from the lowest to the most sublime,” and a certain confidence. If you can stop draining swamps temporarily to launch lasting cultural institutions, you're on your way to building a sophisticated nation-state.

Bialik, the poet who rejected exile, now offered prose of liberation. Standing on Mount Scopus with its view of Jerusalem's historic walls, he welcomed this new university into a long line of “nationalist schools in all its forms” that had started with the lowly *heder*, a one room Torah school for young Eastern European boys. He celebrated the union of the rough, secular pioneers with their ethereal religious cousins—the “Earthly Jerusalem” the youth were building alongside the traditional “Heavenly Jerusalem” of their parents' and grandparents' dreams.

Pioneers: Founding the Jewish State

Bialik's address marked a rare ceasefire amid the Zionist movement's characteristic factionalism—clashing schools of thought that illustrated Zion-

ism's vitality. The early Zionist movement was indeed a many-splendored thing: a rollicking conversation synthesizing Judaism, nationalism, liberalism, idealism, rationalism, socialism, and capitalism. These visionary, sometimes doctrinaire, intellectual pioneers tackled the world's problems—often while toiling to make the desert bloom.

The Zionist idea of creating a Jewish state united them. Thinkers in all six intellectual streams viewed the Jews as a people, Israel as its homeland, and the state as having an essential role in saving Jews and Judaism. All struggled with the despair antisemitism induced without ever burying *Hatikva*, the hope of making their Jewish state a model state too.

Political Zionism: Theodor Herzl's pragmatic yet utopian Zionism, his nineteenth-century Romantic liberal nationalism harnessed toward establishing a democratic Jewish state in Palestine, the Jewish homeland, prioritizing securing a state to save Jewish lives. Yet, "Jewish normalcy" would also help Jews cultivate their enlightened and traditional selves, saving the world—and perhaps even saving Judaism.

Labor Zionism: The utopian yet pragmatic Zionism of the kibbutz and the moshav championed rebuilding the Jewish self by working the land. Thinkers such as A. D. Gordon and Berl Katznelson grounded the intellectual, urbanized, ghettoized European Jew in the challenging practicalities of agriculture, while injecting dollops of Marxism and universalism. Although passionately secular, Labor Zionism fostered an enduring love for *Eretz Yisra'el*, the Land of Israel. Kibbutznikim became Bible-quoting amateur archaeologists.

At the same time, the socialists among these Laborites harnessed the prophetic tradition, the messianic impulse, fostering social justice, envisioning the New Jews as a socialist vanguard. The socialist political theorist Nahman Syrkin said the "tragic element" of Jews' "historic fate," meaning antisemitism, could free them to fulfill a "unique historic mission": being the first to realize socialism's "basic principles of peace, co-operation, and cultural progress." Like the secular Marxist Bundists, Labor Zionists were too conscious of antisemitism's toxicity to expect

class consciousness to unite all workers magically. Instead, they commissioned their virtuous people to create a socialist exemplar. By saving the world, they could save Judaism and Jews.

Revisionist Zionism: Ze'ev Jabotinsky's pragmatic, passionate, yet classically liberal democratic Zionism. Revisionists considered themselves Herzl's purest followers, accentuating the political goal of achieving a Jewish state as soon as possible to save as many Jews as possible. "Eliminate the Diaspora, or the Diaspora surely will eliminate you," Jabotinsky warned bluntly, characteristically, in 1937. Two "m's" characterized his approach: what Jabotinsky called "monism," excluding big theories about culture, economy, religion, or society to stress the immediate political mission of state-building; and "militancy," a gruff uncompromising strategy mixed with a martial style that occasionally flirted with fascism.

Although caricatured as a result as lacking in vision, these European Romantics were passionate about peoplehood, their common past, and their homeland. Their politics absorbed A. D. Gordon's love of land with Ahad Ha'am's nationalist cultural revivalism. Their secularism incorporated dashes of pride in their religious traditions too.

Certain Revisionists took Jabotinsky's discipline and land love to an extreme, stirring an ultranationalism. This monist zeal made some devotees very aggressive and others deeply depressed when the post-1948 state began with Jerusalem divided. Eventually, though, Jabotinskyite purists, steeped in his individualistic liberalism, would help Israel privatize, capitalize, modernize, and prosper.

Religious Zionism: This spiritual Zionism, harmonizing "Orthodoxy" and Zionism, rooted Zionism in Judaism's traditional land-based nationalism. According to adherents such as Abraham Isaac Kook, Jews could only fulfill all the mitzvot, commandments, in the homeland. Seeing the political state as the pathway to mystical salvation, religious Zionists accepted their secular allies. As Kook taught: "The state is not the supreme happiness of man." The typical nation-state is about as mystical or inspirational

as “a large insurance company.” The State of Israel, by contrast, “is ideal in its foundation . . . the foundation of God’s throne in the world.” By saving Judaism, they could save Jews and the world.

Cultural Zionism: Ahad Ha’am’s more secular spiritual Zionism called for cultivating the Jewish homeland as a national cultural center to revive Judaism and Jewish pride. Ahad Ha’am dismissed Herzl’s state-building plans as chimerical. Also, as a Russian Jew, he instinctively mistrusted all governments, doubting that even a Jewish state could be virtuous.

This aloofness toward sovereignty anticipated contemporary Israel-Diaspora relations. With a literate Eastern European Jew’s love of Jewish culture, Ahad Ha’am envisioned Israel as the Jewish people’s spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and religious center. Israel would be the center of the wheel, connected to each Diaspora community by spokes. Palestine’s blossoming Jewish culture would ennoble the Diaspora Jew. Trusting in this new Hebrew culture’s redemptive richness, the poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik rejoiced in 1932: “Everything that is created in the Land of Israel by Jews becomes culture.”

Diaspora Zionism: Louis Brandeis and Henrietta Szold developed this philanthropic, support-oriented Zionism reconciling American patriotism with Jewish nationalism. They emphasized Zionism’s liberal democratic character while broadening the definition of a Zionist to include supporters of the Zionist idea. European Zionists were transforming themselves into New Jews; Diaspora Zionists were rescuing distressed fellow Jews. Initially, Jews migrated by the millions to America and by the thousands to Palestine. In the Diaspora, Zionism offered—and often became—a recipe for Jewish renewal the American migration lacked.

Builders: Actualizing—and Modernizing—the Zionist Blueprints

They had done it. They established a state. The Nazi’s butchering of six million Jews had settled the ideological argument for most Jews and much of the world. And the death of six thousand more Jews fighting to

establish a 600,000-person state in 1948's Independence War settled the practical question. Ahad Ha'am was half-wrong: a state emerged despite his doubts. Theodor Herzl was half-right: the state existed, but it was more Jewish and surprisingly Eastern, not just European, especially after 850,000 Jewish refugees from Arab lands arrived.

Proving again that this state was not like any other, politicians and rabbis, novelists and poets, diplomats and soldiers, in Israel and globally, debated its mission. Political Zionism continued underscoring the state's survival, and significance. Political theorists, including Isaiah Berlin, Albert Memmi, and Emmanuel Levinas, assessed the meaning of a Jewish state after millennia of suffering and toasted this model of liberal nationalism. Jewish heroes, including Jerusalem's bridge-building mayor Teddy Kollek and the martyred anti-terrorist fighter Yoni Netanyahu, the eloquent Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, and the heroic Soviet refusenik Natan Sharansky, offered old-new lessons about Jewish values, Zionist grit, and communal idealism. Israel's 1967 Six-Day War triumph, overcoming fears of a second Auschwitz, brought moral clarity and renewed energy to Political Zionism, the Jewish people's protector. By 2000, the scrappy yet still controversial Zionist movement had outlived communism, fascism, Sovietism, and Nazism.

The most revolutionary Zionism experienced a most revolutionary change. After being dethroned in 1977, the Labor Party absorbed the global, post-1960s human-rights revolutions' sensibilities, becoming more committed to women's rights, sexual liberation, gay rights, and Palestinian rights. Labor stopped being the socialist, collectivist, "Knesset-and-kibbutz" party of "us"; instead this party of "you and I" balanced individual rights and social responsibility. The transformed party built national pride through self-actualization and protection of individual rights, while still demanding social justice—and, increasingly, defining itself by insisting on ceding territory for peace.

Revisionist Zionists gained power in 1977, after nearly three decades in opposition, with their charismatic, Jabotinskyite leader Menachem Begin updating Revisionist ideology. As the liberal democratic and nationalist party, Likud competed with the rival Labor Party, juggling Jabotinsky's collectivist nationalism with his individualism. Laborites trusted the

government's ability to address economic and social matters. Likud's formula trusted individuals to prosper with less government supervision and ownership—yet trusted national security policies and national control of culture.

Menachem Begin's rise confused Zionists, right and left. The right-wing territorial maximalists who had spent the 1950s bemoaning the loss of Old Jerusalem and the rise of a socialist Zionist state could grumble no longer: Revisionists were now leading a post-1967 "Greater Land of Israel" movement, settling the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and Sinai Peninsula—the areas Israel captured in 1967. Yet Begin's emergence in 1979 as the first Israeli leader to swap land for peace—with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat—rocked the Zionist Right. Simultaneously, Begin's emergence as a populist peacemaker and social welfare liberal beloved by Israel's neglected *Mizrahim* rocked the Zionist left, which considered itself more committed to social justice.

The Six-Day War repurposed Religious Zionism. Pre-state Religious Zionists, epitomized by the elder Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, loved secular pioneers, seeing beyond their rebellion into their Jewish souls. By contrast, post-1967 Religious Zionists, epitomized by the younger Rav Zvi Yehudah Kook, loved the biblical land so much they prioritized settling the newly conquered land over uniting the people. Resulting movements, such as Gush Emunim, the Bloc of the Faithful, seeking to reestablish Jewish settlements in the ancient Jewish heartland, despite Palestinian resistance and global opposition, radicalized much of National Religious society. Once-fanciful spiritual fantasies now spawned militant plans. This mobilization—and the rise of the Jabotinskyite right—also mainstreamed religious nationalists professionally and politically. The once-quiescent community became more central, powerful, and prosperous in Israel—sociologically and ideologically.

Other Religious Zionisms blossomed. Reform Jewry Zionized. These once universalist believers that Judaism was just a religion imbibed the Zionist faith when the Holocaust proved that oppressed Jews needed a homeland. Subsequently, the Reform rabbi Richard Hirsch and others recognized the Jewish state's theological significance. Traditional Reli-

gious Zionists, including Professor Eliezer Berkovits, started mining the Jewish state's ethical, religious, spiritual, even halakhic—legal—potential.

Meanwhile, Israel's dynamic culture vindicated Ahad Ha'am's Cultural Zionism. A distinctive culture in Hebrew, high and low, in literature and song, radiated throughout the Jewish world. Israel often provided a vivid triptych for Jewish lives: a rousing soundtrack, inspiring Jewish images, and a rich vocabulary for Jewish meaning. The New Jew was celebrated, mass marketed, and often mimicked throughout the Jewish world. Even as songwriters like Naomi Shemer delighted in "Jerusalem of Gold," poets like Yehuda Amichai emphasized a treasured new normalcy: the Jerusalemite shopper carrying his groceries whom tourists should photograph instead of the city's ancient ruins.

Like Reform Zionism, Diaspora Zionism buried its ambivalences, demonstrating a new American Jewish focus on supporting Israel—while benefitting culturally and spiritually from the Jewish state. Initially, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg worried in 1949 that the movement was "now in search of a program" as American Jewish Committee president Jacob Blaustein demanded that David Ben-Gurion stop negating the Diaspora, pushing *aliyah*, and presuming to speak for American Jews. However, the euphoria after the Six-Day War and Entebbe Rescue "miracles," exorcising widespread Jewish fears of Israel's annihilation in May 1967, then October 1973, confirmed Israel's importance to most Jews, including those increasingly assimilated in the Diaspora.

Zionism brought "profound changes" to Diaspora Jewry, particularly in the United States the historian Jonathan Sarna notes, from strengthening the Jewish body to stretching the Jewish soul. Throughout the Jewish world, Israel instilled a sense of peoplehood and renewed Jewish pride. It inspired the teaching of Hebrew and the revitalizing of camps and Hebrew schools while religiously invigorating America's Conservative and Reform movements. Diaspora Jews in democracies learned how to mobilize politically, democratize their leadership, and galvanize generations of Israel-oriented fundraisers.⁶

Jews didn't only ask what they could do for their country; Diaspora Zionism became Identity Zionism as Jews realized what their country

could do for them, religiously, culturally, and personally. Writers like the passionate American immigrant to Israel, Hillel Halkin, and the ambivalent Upper West Side Jewish liberal, Anne Roiphe, endorsed Israeli Judaism, Israeli life, and Zionist values as healthy, non-materialistic alternatives to Western selfishness and American Jewish superficiality.

At the same time, by Israel's fiftieth anniversary in 1998, a new ambivalence seeped into the discourse: worries that modern Israel didn't measure up to history's now mythic heroism or Zion's lofty ideals. This disappointment had been building, especially after Menachem Begin shifted the country right in 1977, then led Israel into the 1982 Lebanon War, resulting in the Sabra and Shatila massacre Christian Phalangist soldiers perpetrated against Palestinians. Israel was no longer above criticism.

In 1973 the liberal rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf blasted Israel's attitudes toward the Palestinians, the poor, the ultra-Orthodox, the rabbinate, and the Jewish left. Many jeremiads would follow. For a movement that considered itself exemplary, Zionism suffered as the Palestinian issue in particular muddled its self-image. Even as the worldwide obsession with the Palestinian issue reinforced paranoid Zionists' fears that "the world hates the Jews," the difficulties of a democracy depriving people of basic rights—no matter how justified by security threats—dimmed idealistic Zionists' hopes that Israel would be that light unto the nations. Dismissing generations of blue-and-white oversimplifications, Israel's great novelist Amos Oz bluntly admitted: "My Zionism is hard and complicated." Repudiating the settlement movement, Oz added: "I am a Zionist in all that concerns the redemption of the Jews, but not when it comes to the redemption of the Holy Land."

Torchbearers: Reassessing, Redirecting, Reinvigorating

By the twenty-first century, it had become fashionable in academic circles to declare Zionism irrelevant, anachronistic, racist, colonialist, imperialist, evil. Post-Zionist cynicism spread within Israel as a delegitimization campaign blackened the state's international reputation and the high hopes of the Oslo Peace Process collapsed into the deep dread of Palestinian terrorists' suicide bombings. Often the Zionist response was too defensive, reducing Zionism solely to Israel advocacy.

Eventually, a modern, mature, Zionist conversation emerged, weighing big questions about Jewish peoplehood and statehood, Jewish political power and religious influence, Jewish democracy and spirituality, Jewish traditions and universal ideals: How should a Jewish national liberation movement welcome Arabs who constitute 20 percent of Israel's citizenry? How should a Jewish democratic movement address anti-democratic voices? How should a liberal nationalist movement striving for perfection accommodate ugly realities—and failures? And how do you tend your own particular Jewish cocoon while soaring forth into the world with high ideals?

Although many thinkers often crossed wires, the six streams of Zionist discourse remain discernable. Each Zionist “school” has a characteristic institution or symbol. Political Zionism has the Knesset, Israel's temple of sovereignty and democracy. The kibbutz still embodies Labor Zionism's highest ideals. Revisionist Zionism's capitalist revolution has launched thousands of start-ups. Religious Zionism prizes the Western Wall's national and religious significance. Cultural Zionism, disseminated through the innovative *ulpan* method of Hebrew teaching, is today broadcast through *ulpanim*, television studios, among other media. And Taglit-Birthright Israel has epitomized Diaspora Zionism's new mutual, inspirational, identity-based approach to connecting Israeli and Diaspora Jewry.

Delving into the transformations:

Political Zionism: Increasingly sensitive to the attacks against Israel, Political Zionists now explain how a Jewish state can be democratic too. They press Israel to extend Herzl's founding vision beyond survival, applying Jewish and Western ethics to morally complex situations, from fighting asymmetric wars against terrorists hiding among civilians to achieving economic fairness without sacrificing prosperity.

Labor Zionism: Even as communism's collapse discredited socialism and Israel's culture of abundance led most kibbutzim to privatize, the desire to make the Zionist state epitomize liberal ideals with a Jewish twist persisted. The Israeli leftists who emerged were

often more urbanized, more individualistic, than their ideological forbears. Nevertheless, the Labor Zionist dream of an equitable Israeli society persisted. Even as many leftists repudiated Israel, Israel's liberal legacy could not be ignored. As some liberal Zionists countered: "Progressive Zionism is not an Oxymoron."

Israelis on the left have embraced the human-rights agenda, juggling individualism with liberal communal ideals advocating exchanging land for peace and pursuing social justice. The novelists David Grossman, Amos Oz, and A. B. Yehoshua, among others, have refused to let the settler movement define their Zionism, demanding a Zionism that respects Palestinian and Jewish rights. Especially after the Social Protests of 2011 against pricey cottage cheese and astronomical rent, the Labor Party became the voice of activists like Stav Shaffir. She and her peers speak about preserving *Hatikvah*, "the Hope," to synchronize egalitarianism with Zionism.

Revisionist Zionism: Years in power made many Revisionists fear that the necessary compromises governing entails trumped Jabotinsky's enduring principles. Yet Jabotinsky's proactive approach to fighting antisemitism and asserting Jewish pride spurred his heirs to treat the delegitimization campaign against Israel and Zionism as strategic threats. And while some right-wing Knesset members occasionally floated undemocratic proposals, Revisionist Zionist purists continued tempering their nationalism with Jabotinskyite liberalism, championing individual rights for all. As a result, Revisionists like Benny Begin and Reuven Rivlin now bring to Israeli politics a passionate patriotism combining a maximalist approach to the territories, with demands of equality for Israeli Arabs.

Religious Zionism: Post-1967 war triumphalism propelled Religious Zionism into a best-of-times, worst-of-times scenario. Religious Zionists have flourished as observant Jews in the Jewish state, far more than their grandparents imagined. Yet, Religious Zionism has been divided and demoralized. Those on the right, including

Rabbis Zvi Tau and Eli Sadan, often attack the government for being too secular and accommodating of Palestinian demands. The alienation peaked following the Gaza disengagement in 2005, which many called “the Expulsion”—heavy Jewish historical overtones intended. Meanwhile, those leaning toward the center or the left, from Rabbi Benjamin Lau to Leah Shakdiel, disdain their camp’s triumphalism, rigidity, and occasional harshness toward others. Still, Religious Zionists seek a robust Judaism in the democratic State of Israel. If Political Zionists usually justify the Israeli experiment in modern Western terms, Religious Zionists usually explain it with traditional Jewish language.

Cultural Zionism: While the initial Zionist conversation revolved around addressing the core needs of the Jewish people and the state, today, with the Jewish refuge having become the hi-tech “Start-Up Nation,” more personal and tribal concerns proliferate. Many Zionists today are hyphenate Zionists, in modern identity parlance rather than classical ideological terms: articulating Queer Zionism, Feminist Zionism, *Mizrahi* Zionism. Thus Cultural Zionism has also become Identity Zionism. In this way the Zionist idea has helped Diaspora Jews navigate what Taglit-Birthright Israel leaders call “their own Jewish journeys,” individual quests for meaning.

Within the Jewish homeland, questions now arise about Israel’s cultural mission: Should Israelis seek a generic normalcy or a particular Jewish identity? Should Israelis emphasize their membership in a globalizing world or a still healing and rebuilding Jewish one? And how does being steeped in full-time, total Jewish culture affect Israelis’ conversation with their fellow Jewish worldwide?

Diaspora Zionism: Two demographic revolutions have recast the American Zionist debate. The Holocaust made the American Jewish community the world’s largest. Then by 2013, Israel’s Jewish community had outstripped American Jewry, a result of American Jewry’s escalating intermarriage rate and Israel’s thriving Jewish birth rate—even among secular Israelis.

Beyond supporting Israel, Diaspora Zionists found inspiration in Israel's integrated, authentic, 24-7 3-D people-powered Judaism. At the same time, many American Jewish intellectuals began negating the notion that the Diaspora was "exile." Some rejected the notion of a "Diaspora" with Jewish communities dispersed around Israel the center. Demanding mutuality, they reconceived of global Jewry with what Simon Rawidowicz of Brandeis University called two ellipses—Israel and North America. This reorientation sparked discussions about how Israel helps the Jewish people—and how the Jewish people help Israel.

Meanwhile, another, more controversial, institution—the settlement—defines Israel for millions. Originally, Political and Labor Zionists treasured settlements as the country's building blocks. Today, Political Zionists divide over the issue. Most Labor Zionists oppose most settlements. Nonetheless, the vast majority of Israelis endorse maintaining sovereignty over key Jerusalem neighborhoods and the five consensus suburban "Settlement Blocs." Negev land swaps could balance this potentially negotiable terrain, cumulatively comprising ninety square miles, housing about 200,000 people. Revisionist and Religious Zionism have thrived, partially by expanding settlements throughout the lands Israel acquired in 1967. These different perceptions of the same phenomenon emphasize the challenge the Palestinian problem poses to Zionist unity, purity, and popularity.

Controversies, Challenges, and Dreams

Inevitably, critics claim that Zionism's identity anomalies invalidate the movement. Such harsh verdicts show that Israel is targeted for special, obsessive condemnation as "the Jew among the nations"—in the Canadian academic and politician Irwin Cotler's phrase. Each of the world's 196 countries represents some kind of identity cocktail mixing religion and ethnicity. Yet only the Jewish mix is deemed toxic.

In fact, Zionism's seeming paradoxes highlight the legitimacy of the Zionist mission to establish a Jewish democratic state for the long-

suffering Jewish people in their traditional homeland. Judaism, as uniquely both a religion and a nation, allows individuals to convert to Judaism, then join the Jewish people—a biologically permeable, non-racist form of nationalism. Both the Zionist movement and the idea of nationalism formally began in Europe. Slightly less than half of the world's Jews live in the Jewish state today, but more Italians live outside of Italy and there are seven times more Irish Americans than Irish citizens. The Jews and the Palestinians assert rival claims to the same land, just as other nations have conflicting land claims without invalidating one another's essential claims to nationhood. Nationalism isn't an exclusive land deed; it's an identity-building process based on a shared past or present.

These exceptions demonstrate the Zionist idea's resilience—and Jewish civilization's post-1948 renaissance. Zionism was the great miracle maker. It reestablished Jewish sovereignty in the Jewish homeland as Israel cumulatively welcomed three million refugees from the Holocaust, the Arab expulsion, Soviet persecution, Ethiopian dislocation. It returned the Jews to history, transforming the world's perma-victims into robust actors on history's stage, with rights and responsibilities. It established a Western-style democracy in the hostile Middle East with a significant minority of Arabs and a majority of Jews, mostly from undemocratic countries. It started a Jewish cultural revolution: reviving Hebrew, modernizing the Holy Tongue into a language for blessing—and cursing. And while facilitating ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox revivals, it generated creative religious inspiration that revitalized Jewish life worldwide and offered the most viable home for perpetuating secular Jewish identity.

Today's Israel is robust. These miracles have become routine realities in a high-tech, science, and pharma behemoth; a breeding ground for do-gooding civil society NGOs; and a laboratory for creative Jewish living whose population has grown ten-fold, as its gross domestic product has multiplied thirty-fold—per capita.

Yet today's Zionist conversation is fragile. The anti-Zionist campaign against Israel has distorted the discussion. On the left, opponents of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians frequently join the delegitimization derby—sometimes consciously, sometimes not—emboldening those

who escalate from criticizing Israeli policy to rejecting Zionism. Some trendsetting intellectuals purport to reject all nationalisms. Yet somehow they favor politically correct nationalisms like the Palestinians' while disfavoring "First World" ones, with an obsessive disdain for Zionism. Even some Zionists, like Ari Shavit, speak about "Zionism" as a force compelled to displace and demean Palestinians.

On the right, Israel's defenders often become so defensive, they quash the open, critical discourse all democracies—and ideological movements—need to mature. Denying any wrongdoing, even any dilemmas, has alienated Zionist critics of Israeli policy, polarizing the community unnecessarily. Many on the right try monopolizing the word "Zionist"; many on the left oblige, abandoning Zionism. In 2014, Israel's center-left coalition called itself the Zionist Union to restore Zionist pluralism. However, beyond Israel, especially on Western university campuses, even some Israel advocates avoid the "Z-word" because "it doesn't poll well."

Retreating from "Zionism," which has inspired and empowered millions over generations, just because enemies target it, violates Zionism's main mission of nurturing Jewish dignity. Such submissiveness disregards the feminist example of "taking back the night." In weighing "the strange career" of the "troublesome" N-word, the Harvard Law professor Randall Kennedy, an African American, observes that "targets of abuse can themselves play significant roles in shaping the terrain of conflict and thus lessen their vulnerability through creative, intelligent, and supple reactions."⁷

If in Hertzberg's day, Zionist triumphalism overlooked Israeli imperfections, a creative, intelligent, supple Zionist conversation today should acknowledge problems—and tap Zionist ideas to fix them. To a West increasingly skeptical about liberal nationalism, Zionism might model its constructive form of democratic nationalism—that nations should stand for something, bound by a sense of the past that enriches the present and builds a better future. To a West that increasingly regards particularism as merely selfish, Zionism might model its understanding of particularist national identities as value anchors and launching pads for communal good works to benefit others.

A mere six decades but eons ago in terms of Jewish potency, dignity, and stability, the philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin looked at his scattered, tattered, shattered people and praised the miracle of Israel at its most basic. “The creation of the State of Israel has rendered the greatest service that any human institution can perform for individuals,” he avowed. Israel “has restored to Jews not merely their personal dignity and status as human beings, but what is vastly more important, their right to choose as individuals how they shall live.” Today, even as Israel still faces lethal threats, Jews are stronger, prouder, safer—indeed freer.

If Zionism originally provided communal protection, most Zionists today would acknowledge that the Zionist future depends on helping to elevate the Israel that has been established. Traditionally, most Jews struggled to survive; today, most Jews seek meaning. Israel, a laboratory of authentic Jewish living, may offer the Jewish communal answer to individual ennui. In Israel, many Jews feel whole; they have integrated their “Jewish” and “modern,” “secular” and “spiritual” selves; they live by a Jewish calendar; they are rooted in the Jewish home.

In this book, many Zionists share a dream for Israel to become a vast *tikkun olam* project: a noble experiment in democratic nationalism synthesizing the best of Jewish and Western teachings, a Jewish force for universal good. In pushing Israel to be a “Values Nation,” Zionism activates what Israel’s president Shimon Peres called the Jewish dissatisfaction gene—that predisposition to see what isn’t right, then fix it.

Achieving this goal requires engaging Jews from right to left, in Israel and the Diaspora, in debate about why Jews need a Jewish state today—and what that state’s character ought to be. In marrying the traditional Zionist sources with recent texts bearing new ideas, *The Zionist Ideas* can help reinvigorate this conversation. I submit *The Zionist Ideas* as a tool to reclaim the discussion from polarizing political wars into a robust, substantive debate about the meanings of Zionism, the missions of Judaism, and the value of liberal nationalism. Diverse texts spanning the political and religious spectrums invite ever more people of different backgrounds and beliefs to consider what Israel is, how it should grow, and how it addresses the contemporary debate about national identities—

especially when that debate roiling the Western world about how we organize and see ourselves has turned so venomous.

To help ignite this new Zionist conversation, readers can visit www.zionistideas.com. There they will find the discussion guides to this volume and can sign up, as many already have, to host Zionist salons—thoughtful, text-based discussions examining Zionist dreams, values, and visions of about the Zionism of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

With such open-ended discussions in mind, there is no one, right way to read this book. While its logical, chronological flow lends itself to reading it “English style,” from start to finish, others may find it more compelling to read it “Hebrew style,” from right to left, meaning from today to yesterday. Still others may prefer a free-style reading, sampling thinkers, akin to how I read Hertzberg as a youth.

These quintessentially Zionist teachings can help guide all readers—scholars, teachers, students, religious leaders, members, activists, spectators, critics. As the 1944 Nobel laureate in physics, Isidor I. Rabi, recalled, he became a scientist because his mother never asked what he learned in school. Instead, she always queried: “Izzy, did you ask a good question today?”⁸ Modern Zionists would best turn some exclamation points into question marks—while preserving some exclamation points. Second, in 1914 Henrietta Szold’s protégé Jessica Sampter launched Hadassah’s School of Zionism, because “knowledge is the only safe foundation for ideals.” Considering Zionist education “our most important work,” Szold agreed, cautioning, “A nation cannot be made by instinctive, vague, misty feeling, however fine the instinct may be. . . . We must bring emotion out of its obscurity into the clarification of thought.”⁹ Finally, the American Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis observed: “The great quality of the Jews is that they have been able to dream through all the long and dreary centuries. . . .” At last, Zionism gives the Jews “the power to realize their dreams.”¹⁰

The Zionist idea succeeded: it exists, it works. Today’s mission involves questioning, studying, dreaming, and fulfilling different Zionist ideas. The challenge is to look back accurately—with a dash of romance—and to look forward creatively—with a touch of rigor—weighing what Zionism can mean and become, today and tomorrow.

Notes

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4. J. L. Gordon, “Awake My People” (1866), in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 384.
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8. *New York Times*, January 19, 1988.
9. Rebecca Boim Wolf, “Jessie Sampter and the Hadassah School of Zionism,” in *The Women Who Reconstructed American Jewish Education, 1910–1965*, ed. Carol K. Ingall (Lebanon NH: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 47, 49.
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Builders

Religious Zionism

The State of Israel's founding transformed the Religious Zionist discussion. Underlying practical questions about riding buses on the Sabbath and selling bread on Passover were deeper questions about this new state's meaning and Judaism's new opportunities to thrive back home in its natural habitat, the Land of Israel. Even for secular Jews, the debate about the Jewishness of the state pitted the Zionist quest for normalcy against the Jewish mission seeking universal justice. And, if Religious Zionists first tried explaining how Jewish tradition justified creating a modern Jewish state, after 1948 they tried interpreting the state's spiritual significance, especially following the Holocaust.

Many rabbis reexamined the nature of God's covenant with the Jewish people while rethinking God's role in human affairs. Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik, among others, deemed the Holocaust a time of *hester panim*, literally the hiding of the face. God was obscured from humanity as people exercised their free will, even to do evil.

The miracle of 1967, with the switch from fearing destruction to celebrating Jerusalem's liberation, intensified the debate about Israel's spiritual meaning as even many secular Jews treated the triumph as a modern miracle. Religious Zionists focused on settling the biblical lands now under Israel's control. In non-Orthodox circles, many liberal Zionist rabbis reexamined their movement's relationship with Zionism. Most dramatically, Reform Judaism Zionized, embracing the great modern Jewish peoplehood project in ways that would have scandalized the Reform movement's founders.

Ben-Zion Meir Chai Uziel (1880–1953)

Nationalism is a worldview committed to improving our human life on earth.

Born in 1880 to a leading Sephardic family in Jerusalem, by 1911 Uziel had become the *hakham* (sage) of Jaffa's Sephardic community. With his colleague Abraham Isaac Kook, he worked on uniting Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities while establishing Yeshivot and other communal institutions. Eventually, he served as the *Rosh Yeshiva* (dean) of Yeshivat Tiferet Yerushalayim, the Old City's leading Sephardic institution.

In 1917 the Ottoman Turks exiled Uziel with other leaders to Damascus. When he returned in 1920, he joined the Religious Zionist organization Mizrachi. Serving for three years as rabbi of Salonika, then as chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, he became chief Sephardic rabbi of *Eretz Yisra'el* in 1939. Nine years later, that made him the first chief Sephardic rabbi of the new State of Israel. He served until his death in 1953.

As a religious nationalist, Uziel understood Zionism's success as a first step in fulfilling Israel's redemptive mission in the world. Nationalism was a tool toward greater spirituality. The Jewish people's values took precedence over land, state, or government, which were means to the broader goal. In that spirit, as early as 1947, he emphasized the Jews' and Muslims' shared religious origins when appealing to Muslim leaders for peace.

In September 1948, Uziel and the Ashkenazi chief rabbi Yitzhak Halevi Herzog published a prayer for the new state in the Religious Zionist newspaper *HaTzofeh* and the general paper *Ha'aretz*. Apparently, the author S. Y. Agnon helped, possibly contributing the famous line characterizing the state as *resheit tzmeechat geulateinu*, the first flowering of our redemption. The incongruity of a prayer that rabbis wrote, a novelist edited, and daily newspapers published, suited the complexity of a secular democratic state's chief rabbis praising its religious meaning after many decades of secular Zionists having rebelled against the rabbis.

Prayer for the State of Israel (1948)

Our Father in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the first flowering of our redemption. Shield it with Your loving kindness, envelop it in Your sukkah of peace, and project Your light and truth upon its leaders, ministers, and advisors, and grace them with Your wise counsel. Strengthen the hands of our Holy Land's defenders, rescue them, and adorn them in a mantle of victory. And You shall bestow peace in the Land and grant its inhabitants eternal happiness.

And our brothers and sisters, the entire House of Israel, protect them in all the lands of their Diaspora, and lead them quickly upright to Your city Zion—to Jerusalem, Your name's dwelling place, as is written in the Torah of Moses your servant: "If you will be scattered to the ends of the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and from there he will take you. And the Lord your God will bring you to the land that your ancestors inherited and you shall inherit it; and He will be good to you and expand you more than your ancestors. And the Lord will sculpt your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, for the sake of your lives."

Unite our hearts to love and revere Your name, and to follow all the words of Your Torah. And quickly send us the son of David your righteous Messiah, to redeem those waiting for the era of your salvation. Reveal gloriously the genius of your strength to all the inhabitants of Your physical world and all who have breath in their nostrils shall say: "The Lord the God of Israel is King and his sovereignty reins over all," Amen Selah.

On Nationalism (ca. 1940–50)

Nationalism is not about a common race, it is not homeland or government or monarchy and it's not about leaders or shared obligations or literature or a common culture. All these are expressions of the collective or the state. But nationalism in the strict sense is a worldview committed to improving our human life on earth. It's about achieving the peak of human consciousness and success, by imparting the truths

about goodness and law and morality to our descendants and spreading these spiritual ideas and ethics “not by power and not by force” but with explanations and insights that foster appreciation of these attitudes’ spiritual power and truth, and that cultivate goodness within all those who follow their ways. . . .

With Israel’s righteous nationalism preceding its politics, the noble idea of *tikkun olam*, fixing the world through the kingdom of God, takes precedence over nationhood and statehood. This primacy orients and shapes Jewish politics. The father of our nation Abraham was commanded by the Lord, who said: “Go forth from your land and your birthplace and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1). Jacob the father to God’s tribes also lived a nomad’s life. From this you learned: neither patrimony nor the customs of the country created Jewish nationalism. Rather, God’s will in beneficently guarding over us chose our nation’s ancestors and their descendants to be an *Am Segula*, a righteous people. . . .

Israel is a patriotic nation deeply connected to its land and homeland, even when distanced from it. This commitment stems from a sincere understanding that its Exile was neither natural nor accidental, but a divine decree to test it and spread its Torah among the masses. Israel remains loyal to its land as a commandment. . . . This nation preserves its nationalism and its love and hope for its homeland. This duality does not fracture its soul, just the opposite. From a deep love of the land of Israel it adds love and loyalty to the lands of its exile.

David Edan (1872–1955)

**We need to celebrate her holidays and enjoy her joys,
by immigrating en masse to this new place.**

Rabbi Yosef Kapach (1917–2000) once asked, “If Zionism is the cure, what is the disease?” This Yemenite wise man noted that for most Jews—he was too polite to say especially Ashkenazim—choosing to be Zionist and move to Israel was an exceptional act. By contrast, his

Yemenite community was waiting to move, and thrilled when granted the opportunity.

The Wise One, HaChacham David Edan, was among many *Mizrahi* Jews who took Zionism personally, experiencing the call to *aliyah*, to settle the land. A cantor, *mohel*, and shofar blower in the great synagogue of Djerba, Tunisia, he also established Djerba's first Hebrew printing press, the Zionist Press.

Despite Edan's yearning to fulfill the Zionist dream, ill health kept forcing him to defer his move. He died before immigrating. Nonetheless, his writing captured the excitement many *Mizrahi* Jews felt when embracing a personal challenge—"risking it all, physically and materially," to "ascend there."

A Call for *Aliyah* (ca. 1950)

Behold, I want to talk to and rouse our brothers the children of Israel to wave the Israeli national flag, the flag of our country and our patrimony, and to offer some words of praise. . . .

It is not only our duty to love Israel from a distance, we also need to celebrate her holidays and enjoy her joys, by immigrating en masse to this new place, and joining in the novel and practical task of settling the land. This is our goal and it's good for us. Thus, those blessed by God with wealth and assets and clear vision should prepare themselves to ascend there, and, quite quickly, to start building and planting to settle the Land.

This is what the great human and Zionist effort will yield: God Almighty will bless those who arrive and work hard for many years. All our efforts should be devoted to settling the Land by planting and other initiatives that will persist for generations. . . .

And despite all we have donated to be planted in Israel via the Zionist movement, we still have not fulfilled our personal religious obligation, because each of us is commanded to try, to band together and unite in this regard, to build, to plant, and to envision this great new society, risking it all, physically and materially.

Joseph Ber Soloveitchik (1903–93)

Listen! My beloved knocks!

Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik validated Zionism as a political phenomenon bursting with spiritual meaning. Interweaving religious and political language, he rejoiced in the modern miracle of Israel's founding on Israel Independence Day 1956—and challenged Jews to move from their covenant of Egypt, their shared fate, to the mission-oriented covenant forged at Sinai. His sermon—published as *Kol Dodi Dofek*, (*Listen! My Beloved Knocks!*)—thus charged the Jewish people to become a “holy nation,” striving to ennoble humanity by living exemplary ethical and religious lives.

Born in 1903 in Pruzhan, Poland, into a distinguished rabbinic line, Soloveitchik earned a doctorate in 1931 from the University of Berlin. Arriving in Boston in 1932, he became chief rabbi in the city, founded the Maimonides Day School and, starting in 1941, headed Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York. Carefully navigating the modern world, he opposed mixed seating of men and women in synagogues and dialogues with liberal denominations but fought stubbornly to teach women Talmud. Similarly, his Zionism balanced his daily life in Boston with his yearnings for the Promised Land, and his hard-headed assessment of the need for a Jewish state with his soft-hearted vision of that state as a light unto the nations.

Listen! My Beloved Knocks! (1956)

Eight years ago, amid a night of terror filled with the horrors of Majdanek, Treblinka, and Buchenwald; in a night of gas chambers and crematoria; a night of absolute divine self-concealment; a night ruled by the devil of doubt and destruction which sought to sweep the maiden from her house into the Christian church; a night of continuous searching, of yearning for the Beloved—that very night the Beloved appeared. “God who conceals Himself in his Dazzling hiddenness” suddenly manifested

Himself and began knocking at the tent of His despondent and disconsolate love, twisting convulsively on her bed, suffering the agonies of hell. Following the knocks on the door of the maiden, enveloped in mourning, the State of Israel was born!

How many times did the Beloved knock on the door of the tent of His Love? It appears that we can count at least six knocks.

First, the Beloved's knock was heard in the political arena. No one can deny that from the standpoint of international relations, the establishment of the State of Israel, in a political sense, was an almost supernatural occurrence. Russia and the Western countries jointly supported the state's establishment. This was perhaps the only resolution that united East and West [during the Cold War]. . . . If John Doe had chaired the United Nations' session, the State of Israel never would have been born. The Beloved knocked on the chairman's podium, then the miracle occurred. Listen! My Beloved Knocks!

Second, the Beloved's knocking resounded on the battlefield. The small Israeli Defense Forces defeated the mighty Arab armies. . . . Listen! My Beloved Knocks!

Third, the Beloved also began knocking on the door of the theological tent. This may be the strongest knock of all. . . . The establishment of the State of Israel has *publicly refuted* all the Christian theologians' claims that God deprived the Jewish people of its rights in the Land of Israel, and that all the biblical promises regarding Zion and Jerusalem refer, in an allegorical sense, to Christianity and the Christian church. . . .

I always derive a particular sense of satisfaction from reading in a newspaper that the State of Israel's reaction is not yet known since today is the Sabbath and government offices are closed. . . . Listen! My Beloved Knocks!

Fourth, the Beloved is knocking at the hearts of the perplexed and assimilated youth. The era of self-concealment—*hester panim*—at the beginning of the 1940s sowed great confusion among the Jewish masses and, particularly, among young Jews. Assimilation grew, becoming even more rampant, as the impulse to flee from Judaism and the Jewish peo-

ple peaked. Fear, despair, and sheer ignorance caused many to spurn the Jewish community. . . .

Many of those who, in the past, were alienated from the Jewish people are now tied to the Jewish state by a sense of pride in its outstanding achievements. . . . The very fact that “Israel” always is on everyone’s lips reminds Jews in flight that they cannot abandon the Jewish community to which they have been connected from birth. . . . Listen! My Beloved Knocks!

The fifth knock of the Beloved is perhaps the most important. For the first time in the history of our exile, divine providence has surprised our enemies with the sensational discovery that Jewish blood is not cheap, not *hefker*—open season is over! . . . Blessed are You for granting us life and bringing us to this moment, when Jews have the power, with God’s help, to defend themselves.

Let us not forget that the venom of Hitlerian antisemitism, which made the Jews like the fish of the sea to be preyed upon by all, still infects many in our generation who viewed the horrific spectacle of the gassing of millions with indifference, as an ordinary event barely requiring notice. The antidote to this deadly venom that poisoned minds and numbed hearts is the State of Israel’s readiness to defend the lives of its children, its builders. Listen! My Beloved Knocks!

The sixth knock, which we must not ignore, was heard when the Land of Israel’s gates opened. A Jew who flees from a hostile country now knows that he can find safe refuge in the land of his ancestors. . . . Listen! My Beloved Knocks! . . .

The individual is tied to his people through the chains of fate and the bonds of destiny. . . . The covenant in Egypt was a covenant of fate; the covenant at Sinai was a covenant of destiny. . . .

The Camp emerges from a desire for self-defense and is nurtured by fear. The Congregation reflects longing to fulfill an exalted ethical idea, nurtured by the sentiment of love. Fate reigns, in unbounded fashion, in the Camp; destiny reigns in the Congregation. . . .

With Israel’s establishment, secular Zionism declares we have become a people like all peoples. . . . Only the religious *shivat Zion* movement, with its traditional, authentic approach, can rectify these distortions. . . .

The mission of the State of Israel is neither to terminate the unique isolation of the Jewish people nor abrogate its unique fate—in this it will not succeed! Rather, the mission is to elevate a Camp-people to the rank of a holy Congregation-nation, transforming shared fate to shared destiny. . . .

Our historic obligation, today, is to raise ourselves from a people to a holy nation, from the covenant of Egypt to the covenant at Sinai, from an existence of necessity to an authentic way of life suffused with eternal ethical and religious values, from a Camp to a Congregation. . . .

Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–94)

**We brought this state about by dint of our
common efforts as Jewish patriots.**

Just as the Puritan Roger Williams called for separation of church and state in Rhode Island to protect the church from the state's impurities, the Orthodox intellectual virtuoso and political provocateur Yeshayahu Leibowitz tried protecting the purity of Judaism from the messiness of the Jewish state—and its politics.

Born in Latvia in 1903, educated in Berlin, he moved to Israel in 1935. A chemist and physician, he also edited the *Encyclopedia Hebraica* and became a controversial philosopher who called settlers the reprehensible term “Judeo-Nazis.”

Leibowitz noted that “of all the political movements that arose during the nineteenth century, only Zionism fulfilled its goals.” Still, he refused to consider Israel's founding redemptive, or spiritually significant. And he insisted that religion required protection from the state.

For decades, Leibowitz's bracing rhetoric and iconoclastic approach to religion, nationalism, diplomacy, and security vexed Israel's leaders and Zionism's greatest thinkers. Nevertheless, appreciating Zionism as a “political program” that meant “national independence for the Jewish people in its own country,” Leibowitz wanted that independence to liberate the Jewish people's moral energies in this real-world test of Jewish ethics.

A Call for the Separation of Religion and State (1959)

From a religious viewpoint . . . the present relations between the state and the Torah appear as *hillul ha-Shem*, contempt of the Torah, and a threat to religion. . . .

The State of Israel that came into being in 1948 by the common action, effort, and sacrifices of both religious and secular Jews was an essentially secular state. It has remained essentially secular and will necessarily continue to be such, unless a mighty spiritual and social upheaval occurs among the people living here. The secularity of this state is not incidental but essential. . . .

Whether we are religious or secular, we brought this state about by dint of our common efforts as Jewish patriots, and Jewish patriotism—like all patriotism—is a secular human motive not imbued with sanctity. Holiness consists only in observance of the Torah and its Mitzvoth: “and you shall be holy to your God.” We have no right to link the emergence of the State of Israel to the religious concept of messianic redemption, with its idea of religious regeneration of the world or at least of the Jewish people. There is no justification for enveloping this political-historical event in an aura of holiness. Certainly, there is little ground for regarding the mere existence of this state as a religiously significant phenomenon. . . .

There is no greater degradation of religion than maintenance of its institutions by a secular state. Nothing restricts its influence or diminishes its persuasiveness more than investing secular functions with a religious aura; adopting sundry religious obligations and proscriptions as glaring exceptions into a system of secular laws; imposing an arbitrary selection of religious regulations on the community while refusing to obligate itself and the community to recognize the authority of religion; in short, making it serve not God but political utility.

This is a distortion of reality, a subversion of truth, both religious and social, and a source of intellectual and spiritual corruption. The secular state and society should be stripped of their false religious veneer. Only then will it become possible to discern whether or not they have any message as a Jewish state and society. Likewise, the Jewish religion

should be forced into taking its stand without the shield of an administrative status. Only then will its strength be revealed, and only thus will it become capable of exerting an educational force and influencing the broader public. . . .

Zvi Yehuda Hakohen Kook (1891–1982)

Where is our Hebron—have we forgotten her?!

Where is our Shehem, our Jericho,—where?

For some Religious Zionists, as with some Revisionists, Israel's founding was bittersweet. Losing Old Jerusalem tempered their joy. In May 1967, celebrating Israel's nineteenth Independence Day, the head of Mercaz HaRav, Zvi Yehudah Hakohen Kook, articulated those mixed emotions, calling for "our Hebron . . . our Shehem, our Jericho." The son of the Religious Zionist Abraham Isaac Kook, he maintained his father's patriotism. He encouraged his students to serve in the army and became even more of a maximalist regarding settling the Land of Israel.

After the Six-Day War triumph weeks later, Kook's Independence Day address seemed clairvoyant. Hearing of Jerusalem's liberation, Kook rushed to the Western Wall and participated in the *Minha* afternoon service. Years later, he recalled: "It was the first national prayer at the Kotel after a nineteen-hundred-year separation! A prayer which was utter cleavage to God. Every eye was filled with tears. Soldiers prostrated themselves on the ground of the square. Others wedged their fingers between the stones of the Wall. Everyone chanted the Psalm, 'A Song of Ascent; When the Lord brought back the exiles of Zion, we were like dreamers.'" Interviewed on radio and television, Kook declared: "Behold. We announce to all of Israel, and to all of the world, that by a Divine command, we have returned to our home, to our holy city. From this day forth, we shall never budge from here! We have come home!" This fiery nationalism inspired Gush Emunim

and the broader settlement movement. Rav Zvi Yehudah served as the settlers' spiritual grandfather until his death in 1982.

On the 19th Anniversary of Israel's Independence (1967)

Nineteen years ago, on the night when news of the United Nations decision in favor of the reestablishment of the State of Israel reached us, when the People streamed into the streets to celebrate and rejoice, I could not go out and join in the jubilation. I sat alone and silent; a burden lay upon me. During those first hours I could not resign myself to what had been done. I could not accept the fact that indeed "they have . . . divided My land." (Joel 4:2)! Yes [and now after nineteen years] where is our Hebron—have we forgotten her?! Where is our Shehem, our Jericho,—where?

Have we forgotten them?! And all that lies beyond the Jordan—each and every clod of earth, every region, hill, valley, every plot of land, that is part of *Eretz Yisra'el*? Have we the right to give up even one grain of the Land of God? On that night, nineteen years ago, during those hours, as I sat trembling in every limb of my body, wounded, cut, torn to pieces. I could not then rejoice. . . .

The question has been asked, "Is this the state that our prophets envisioned?" And I say: This is the state that the prophets envisioned. Of course, it has not yet attained perfection. But our prophets, our sages and those who followed them, said: "The seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will return and will reestablish settlement and independent political rule in the Land." We were not told whether those who return will or will not be men and women of righteousness. . . .

Indeed, surely as a result of the return of Israel to their Land there will come about the increase of Torah and its glorification. But the first step is the settlement of Israel on their land! . . . [T]he order of Redemption is: agricultural settlement, the establishment of the state, and as a consequence—to follow—the uplifting of that which is sacred, the dissemination of the teaching of Torah, its increase and glorification. . . .

The true Israel is Israel redeemed, the kingdom of Israel and the armies of Israel, a people in its wholeness and not a diaspora in exile. . . .

Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–72)

The State of Israel is a spiritual revolution, not a one-time event, but an ongoing revolution.

The Polish-born American rabbi, Abraham Joshua Heschel, is remembered today as a mystic, social activist, friend to Martin Luther King Jr. and the entire civil rights movement, and an inspiration to Jewish environmentalism. But Heschel was also a Zionist, profoundly connected to Israel and Jerusalem.

Born in Warsaw in 1907, yeshiva trained and raised within the Hasidic tradition, he earned a doctorate at the University of Berlin and a liberal rabbinic ordination too. Fleeing the Nazis, he arrived in New York City, teaching at the Conservative Movement's Jewish Theological Seminary until his death in 1972.

Mourning the Nazi murders of his mother and three sisters, he wrote, "If I should go to Poland or Germany, every stone, every tree, would remind me of contempt, hatred, murder, of children killed, of mothers burned alive, of human beings asphyxiated." By contrast, visiting Jerusalem shortly after its liberation in 1967 enraptured him. In his subsequent book, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*, a lyrical celebration of Jerusalem, Israel, and Zionism, he viewed Israel's rebuilding as promising humanity's redemption.

Israel: An Echo of Eternity (1969)

Jerusalem, you only see her when you hear. She has been an ear when no one else heard, an ear open to prophets' denunciations, to prophets' consolations, to the lamentations of ages, to the hopes of countless sages and saints; an ear to prayers flowing from distant places. And she is more than an ear. Jerusalem is a witness, an echo of eternity.

Jerusalem was stopped in the middle of her speech. She is a voice interrupted. Let Jerusalem speak again to our people, to all people. . . .

The State of Israel is not only a place of refuge for the survivors of the Holocaust, but also a tabernacle for the rebirth of faith and justice, for the renewal of souls, for the cultivation of knowledge of the words of

the divine. By the power and promise of prophetic visions we inhabit the land, by faithfulness to God and Torah we continue to survive. The land presents a perception which seeks an identity in us. Suddenly we sense coherence in history, a bridge that spans the ages. . . . A land that was dead for nearly two thousand years is now a land that sings. . . .

We have been beset by a case of spiritual amnesia. We forgot the daring, the labor, the courage of the seers of the State of Israel, of the builders and pioneers. We forgot the pain, the suffering, the hurt, the anguish, and the anxiety which preceded the rise of the state. We forgot the awful pangs of birth, the holiness of the deed, the dedication of the spirit. We saw the Hilton and forgot Tel Hai. The land rebuilt became a matter of routine, the land as a home was taken for granted. . . . The State of Israel is a spiritual revolution, not a one-time event, but an ongoing revolution. . . .

However, it was not justice as an abstract principle which stirred us so deeply [in 1967]. Auschwitz is in our veins. It abides in the throbbing of our hearts. It burns in our imagination. It trembles in our conscience. We, the generation that witnessed the Holocaust, should stand by calmly while rulers proclaim their intention to bring about a new Holocaust?

A new life in Israel has bestowed a sense of joy upon Jews everywhere, by creating a society based on liberty, equality and justice, by the great moral accomplishments, by their scientific, technical and economic contributions. In the Land of Israel those rescued from the Holocaust of Europe and the refugees from persecution in Arab lands have found a home and are able to renew their lives. A well which had been blocked and sealed in some deep corner of the soul was suddenly opened. What sprang forth was the realization that while we may be extending our lives in so many different directions, our secret roots are near the well, in the covenants, with the community of Israel. This is not an ideology, a matter of choice, it is an existential engagement, a matter of destiny. We may not all understand the meaning of the divine but to us our relationship to the community of Israel can never be detached from our gropings for the divine. . . .

One of the insights learned from the great crisis in May 1967, is the deep personal involvement of every Jew in the existence of Israel. It is not a matter of philanthropy or general charity but of spiritual identification. It is such personal relationship to Israel upon which one's dignity as a Jew is articulated. . . . The Lord's compassion is over all that He has made (see Psalm 145:9). We mourn the loss of lives, the devastation, the fruits of violence. We mourn the deaths of Jews, Christians, Moslems. The screams of anguish are not to be lost to our conscience. . . .

The six days of war must receive their ultimate meaning from the seventh day, which is peace and celebration. . . .

What is the meaning of the State of Israel? Its sheer being is the message. The life in the Land of Israel today is a rehearsal, a test, a challenge to all of us. Not living in the land, nonparticipation in the drama, is a source of embarrassment. Israel is a personal challenge, a personal religious issue. It is a call to every one of us as an individual, a call which one cannot answer vicariously. It is at the same time a message of meaning, a way of dealing with the monsters of absurdity, a hope for a new appreciation of being human. The ultimate meaning of the State of Israel must be seen in terms of the vision of the prophets: the redemption of humanity. The religious duty of the Jew is to participate in the process of continuous redemption, in seeing that justice prevails over power, that awareness of God penetrates human understanding.

Esther Jungreis (1936–2016)

How will the Jews in exile answer to future generations when they ask, "Where were *you*?"

The 1973 Yom Kippur War frightened Jews all over the world who once again feared Israel's destruction. It triggered an outpouring of financial support—and guilt. The gap between the comforts of the Diaspora and the travails Israelis faced daily, even without war, generated a constant undercurrent in Zionist discourse. Some Israelis specialized in making Diaspora Jews feel guilty—and many Diaspora Jews internalized

and echoed it. Today, the older generation's guilt tripping has made a younger generation of Diaspora Jews particularly resistant to such an approach. But in the 1960s and 1970s, especially among Holocaust refugees, this quite literal survivors' guilt could be scorching.

The Hungarian-born *rebbetzin* Esther Jungreis, a survivor of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, was a charismatic practitioner of Orthodox outreach. Known as "the Jewish Billy Graham," she stayed in America to fight what she called the growing "spiritual Holocaust" of assimilation and mass Jewish illiteracy. The organization she founded, Hineni (Here I am), mounted mass rallies to stir Jewish consciousness, hosted once-alienated Jews for Sabbath getaways, and broadcast weekly television programs teaching Torah in the 1980s.

In one of her trademark parables, Jungreis wondered how someone standing by an enchanting violinist could resist such hypnotic sounds. Those are the Jews who failed to return to the restored Jewish homeland, she concluded. Imagine, having "been given *Eretz Yisra'el* and to be indifferent to it." Her 1977 pamphlet, *Zionism: A Challenge to Man's Faith*, similarly chiding American Jewish softness and self-absorption, is also laden with the non-*aliyah*-making Zionist's guilt.

Zionism: A Challenge to Man's Faith (1977)

In the Holy City I met a woman. . . . She related a tale to me . . . which reflects the agony of Zionism in the twentieth century.

This woman of Jerusalem had a son by the name of David. He was twenty years old. She also had a sister who lived in New York. She too had a son of the same age. His name was Chaim.

The American cousin came to Jerusalem for a year of study. Then suddenly, the Yom Kippur War broke out. Both boys were in the synagogue praying side by side. David, still wrapped in his tallit [prayer shawl], without pausing for food or water, ran to answer the call of his people. He bid farewell to his cousin, to his mother, to his father, and to his young bride. He had no choice but to go forth to defend his people.

The following day, the mother in Jerusalem received an emergency call from the United States. "Please, please," a near hysterical voice called across the great ocean, "Where is my Chaim? Please do not let him do anything rash . . . you must find him and get him out on the first plane to safety. We are sick with worry. I want him home!"

The mother in New York was overcome by fear and somehow in her agitation she forgot to ask about David, her sister's son, the son of Jerusalem, whose heart at that very moment was pierced by a shell in the Golan. . . .

The story haunts me. It leaves me no peace. . . . For indeed, if the Land of Israel has been given by God as an inheritance to all Jews, then by what right do we in the United States go to sleep in security, knowing that our sons are well and sound, while our sisters lie awake with a gnawing fear gripping their hearts . . . asking the question, "Where is he now?" and whispering a silent prayer, "Hashem, Almighty G-d watch over him. . . ."

No matter how much the American Jew has given and will give on behalf of Israel, he will never equal the sacrifice of those who live there and offer their very lives for the land.

No matter how much the American Jew continues to give, he will never be able to justify the fact that he belongs to the generation that was given Jerusalem yet opts for New York or Los Angeles.

To have waited 2,000 years, to have suffered the agonies of exile, to have dreamt and hoped, to have been given the land only to reject it. How will the Jews in exile answer to future generations when they ask, "Where were *You*?"

Talma Alyagon-Roz (b. 1944)

**To a people who will not go unheard, /
Who will not abandon their sons to others.**

Just three years after the horrors of the Yom Kippur War—which Israel won in an impressive military comeback—the mythic hostage rescue at Entebbe restored the country's reputation. As part of the

subsequent mythmaking, the Israeli actor and singer Yehoram Gaon starred as the martyr Yoni Netanyahu in the movie celebrating the event, *Operation Thunderbolt*. The producers commissioned the Israeli author, television writer, librettist, and songwriter Talma Alyagon-Roz to write a song Gaon would sing in the movie.

Alyagon-Roz's composition, "Eretz Tzvi / The Land of Beauty" she later wrote, "symbolizes our symbiotic relationship with the land of Israel, with her people, her landscapes, her history . . . our mutual responsibility for one another as a people." The song became a popular anthem in the religious community, especially with members of the B'nai Akiva youth movement. As a result, the non-religious Alyagon-Roz has shaped modern religious Zionism.

In 2006 during the Second Lebanon War, Major Roi Klein threw himself on a grenade to save his men—yelling as he died, "*Sh'ma Yisra'el*," "Hear O'Israel," a Jew's final words. At Klein's sister's request, "The Land of Beauty" was played on radio in his memory. Eight years later, Klein's family attended an Alyagon-Roz concert. After singing the song for them, she wrote a new stanza, in Klein's memory, included here.

Eretz Tzvi, The Land of Beauty (1976; updated May 12, 2014)

In the middle of the night they rose,
Striking the edge of the world.
Like angels of fire, they flew skyward,
Restoring the dignity of man.

To Eretz tzvi,
To the honey of its fields,
To the Carmel and the desert,
To a people who will not go unheard,
Who will not abandon their sons to others,
To Eretz tzvi which in its mountains,

Pulses a city from generation to generation,
To a motherland whose sons are attached to her
For better and for worse.

In the middle of the night a scorching wind
Blows through our fields,
And the mute willow bows her head
For those who did not return at sunrise.

To Eretz tzvi,
To the honey of its fields,
To the Carmel and the desert,
To a people who will not go unheard,
Who will not abandon their son to others,

To Eretz tzvi whose tears
Drop onto a field of sunflowers,
Whose sadness and joy are woven into her gown.

*

When sunrise cut through the dark,
He rescued the injured from fire.
He lay his body on a thrown grenade,
To protect his comrades is what he craved.

So Eretz tzvi—
conquered her tears in the face of martyrdom,
And when he called out—"Sh'ma Israel!"
The wind silently carried his name.

Roi, may God protect you,
Your way of innocence, your courage,
May God protect Eretz tzvi—which your soul
Weaves forever into her gown.

Eliezer Berkovits (1908–92)

The great spiritual tragedy of the exile consists in the breach between Torah and life, for exile means the loss of a Jewish-controlled environment.

Born in Oradea, Transylvania, in 1908, Eliezer Berkovits became a leading theologian and philosopher while living the life of wandering Jew and academic troubadour. Fleeing Berlin in 1939 after having received rabbinical ordination and earning a PhD there, he ministered in Australia, England, and the United States, eventually chairing the department of Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew Theological College in Skokie, Illinois. In 1976, at age sixty-seven, he made *aliyah*, writing and teaching in Israel until his death in 1992.

Berkovits emphasized the Jewish religion's unique relationship to the Jewish nation. While most people are born into their nation, anyone could convert to Judaism and join the Jewish nation. Those who denied Judaism's national dimension, he argued, were rejecting the Torah itself, whose natural habitat was the Land of Israel. Zionism, therefore, and the new state, enabled Judaism to grow organically again, repairing the Exile's anomalies.

Rejecting the Zionist push for normalcy, Berkovits claimed it produced Jewish pagans aping American values. He also criticized Orthodox colleagues who neutered Judaism by cutting it off from the land or imported the Diaspora version back to Israel. *Halakhah*, Jewish law, Berkovits insisted, is a way of life, requiring a Jewish context to thrive. In Exile, be it forced or voluntary, *halakhah* became defensive, a bastion against assimilation rather than a dynamic system.

On Jewish Sovereignty (1973)

The rabbis in the Talmud declared that a Jew who lives outside the Holy Land is to be considered as if he were an idolater. This rather startling pronouncement flows from their understanding of Judaism. . . . It links the importance of the land not so much to the Jew as to the realization of Judaism. . . .

Israel alone is a people made to fulfill a God-given task in history; the people whom, as Isaiah expressed it, God “formed” for himself. Normally, religion follows nationhood; for the Jew, his peoplehood flows from his religion. This is not only an accurate account of the emergence of Israel; in a sense, it is valid to this day. An Englishman might accept Hinduism or Buddhism in London; it will not make him Indian or Burmese. He will remain an Englishman.

If, however, the people of Israel is the instrument of realization, there must be a Land of Israel as the place of realization. There must be a place on earth in which the people are in command of their own destiny, where the comprehensive public deed of Judaism may be enacted. Individuals may live in two cultures; but no distinctive culture may grow and flourish authentically in an area already preempted by another one. The individual Jew may well find a home in any democratic society; Judaism must remain in exile anywhere outside the Land of Israel. Outside the Land of Israel, Judaism is capable of partial realization only. . . .

Those Jews who separate Judaism from Zion, Torah from the Land of Israel, give up both Torah and the land. Judaism without the opportunity for its comprehensive fulfillment is a spiritual tragedy. For the longest period of its history, Jews have lived with it. But to embrace the tragedy as a desired form of Jewish existence is a falsification of the essence of Judaism. Those who sever Zion from the Torah have severed Judaism from its authentic realization. They have surrendered, as a matter of principle, Judaism’s *raison d’être*, which is fulfillment in history. They have transformed its character by reducing it to the level of religion. They have reduced it to a credo, a regimen of worship, and some customs in the home. All this may well be accompanied by fine, humanitarian resolutions; but the unique significance of the Judaism of history will have been abandoned. . . .

Halakhah, in its authentic function, must address itself to the Jewish people and not to members with congregational ideologies. What we have in Israel today is an understanding of *halakhah* and its application to an exilic reality that no longer exists. It is the *halakhah* of the shtetl, not the *halakhah* of the state; it is not the Torah of the Land of Israel. . . .

There is widespread secularism in Israel today. But there is also an awakening to the truth that, especially in Israel, secularism is leading

the people toward a spiritual and moral dead end. There are many who search for a Jewish way. The people will not be the Jewish people and the state not a Jewish state without Judaism, and Judaism will not be true to itself without finding the way to the people . . .

And yet, this is the land and this the people. It is here, in the Land of Israel, that the destiny of all Israel will be decided for all generations to come. Thus, the problems of this land become the problems of the Jewish people the world over. Their solution is the responsibility of us all.

Gush Emunim

Come, let us go up and settle the land!

The opportunity to resettle the biblical Lands of Israel revitalized Religious Zionism—but also distracted it. Increasingly, the political, diplomatic, and military dimensions of the settlement question blurred with its theological and ideological aspects. In February 1974, students of Zvi Yehuda Kook founded Gush Emunim—Bloc of the Faithful—a term one of them, Haim Drukman, suggested. He, along with Hanan Porat, Moshe Levinger, Yoel Bin-Nun, and others, hoped “to bring about a major spiritual awakening in the Jewish people for the sake of the full realization of the Zionist vision, in the knowledge that this vision’s source and goal in the Jewish heritage and in Judaism’s roots are the total redemption of both the Jewish people and the whole world.” The movement deteriorated in the 1980s, after Zvi Yehuda’s death, though its ideology remains influential. In speeches and publications, the organization’s leaders have rejected any peace plan involving withdrawal from the territories won in 1967.

Friends of Gush Emunim Newsletter (January 1978)

The hope for peace has captured the people of Israel of all ages. The people of Israel—its blessing is peace, the end of its prayers is for peace, and even upon leaving for battle it calls out to its enemies for peace.

But just because of our strong desire for peace, we need great strength of wisdom and courage not to mistake a deceitful peace for a real peace, a weak peace for a peace of honor and strength, a peace of crisis and retreat for a peace of renewal and creation. . . .

Our sages have said, “A bit of light pushes much of the darkness aside,” and we will proceed likewise. We will raise the light of revival; we will arouse the power of Israel through great public outcries of honor and strength; we will rejoice in the land with settlements and waves of immigration; we will, through education and information, open our eyes to see what is this peace we are yearning for, and what the difference is between true peace and a deceitful peace. Rav [Abraham Isaac] Kook of Blessed Memory, said, “The truth is not shy or cowardly.” We shall follow in his footsteps and not be deterred from stating loudly the truth of renaissance, even if it is not the kind of peace that can be attained from one day to the next, one that is all lies and illusion.

We believe that the people will yet awaken from the illusion of this imaginary peace and will strengthen itself in its onward struggle.

We pray that this awakening will not be accompanied by the sufferings of despair and as a result the hope for true peace, of strength, brotherhood, honor and light will not be lost.

God will grant His people strength!

God will bless His people with peace!

Come, let us go up and settle the land!

David Hartman (1931–2013)

Living in total exposure to integrate the moral seriousness of the prophet with the realism and political judgment of the statesman.

The traumatic months before the 1967 war, followed by Israel’s near-death experience in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, stirred long repressed feelings about the Holocaust. For many, Rabbi Emil Fackenheim’s 614th Commandment “Don’t let the Nazis win” soon became the most important commandment. David Hartman resisted a Holocaust-centered Jewish identity. To invigorate Israel and Judaism, he empha-

sized his teacher Joseph Soloveitchik's notion of uniting Jews thanks to the inspiring mission passed on at Sinai—not the horrors visited upon them at Auschwitz.

Born in Brooklyn in 1931, Hartman received ordination at Yeshiva University and served as a congregational rabbi in the Bronx before moving to Montreal. There, he completed a PhD in contemporary philosophy at McGill University, becoming a popular professor while leading a growing congregation. In 1971 he moved with his family to Israel, quipping that he finally took his own *aliyah* sermons seriously. Five years later, he established the Shalom Hartman Institute, a think tank working on reinvigorating Judaism and Zionism.

Hartman agreed with mainstream Orthodox thinkers that Israel's establishment had religious, even messianic, significance, triggering great debates with his occasional sparring partner, Yeshayahu Leibowitz. But rather than seeing the state as proving God's return to directing history after hiding during the Holocaust, Hartman embraced the religious opportunity Israel's establishment presented to the Jewish people. "Israel can be a profound instrument serving the renewal of Jewish spirituality," he explained, "because it forces individual Jews to become responsible for a total way of life in a land that anchors them to their biblical and talmudic historical roots." Hartman taught that the State of Israel is "the main catalyst to rethinking the meaning of God as the Lord of History. The future of Judaism depends on our ability to discover meaningful ways of relating to God's love and power in a world where history, and not only Torah, is not in heaven."

Auschwitz or Sinai (1982)

One of the fundamental issues facing the new spirit of maturity in Israel is: Should Auschwitz or Sinai be the orienting category shaping our understanding of the rebirth of the State of Israel? . . .

Israel is not only a response to modern antisemitism, but is above all a modern expression of the eternal Sinai covenant that has shaped Jewish consciousness throughout the millennia. It was not Hitler who brought us back to Zion, but rather belief in the eternal validity of the

Sinai covenant. . . . It is dangerous to our growth as a healthy people if the memory of Auschwitz becomes a substitute for Sinai.

The model of Sinai awakens the Jewish people to the awesome responsibility of becoming a holy people. At Sinai, we discover the absolute demand of God; we discover who we are by what we do. Sinai calls us to action, to moral awakening, to living constantly with challenges of building a moral and just society which mirrors the kingdom of God in history. Sinai creates humility and openness to the demands of self-transcendence. In this respect, it is the antithesis of the moral narcissism that can result from suffering and from viewing oneself as a victim. . . .

Sinai requires that the Jew believe in the possibility of integrating the moral seriousness of the prophet with the realism and political judgment of the statesman. Politics and morality were united when Israel was born as a nation at Sinai. Sinai prohibits the Jewish people from ever abandoning the effort of creating a shared moral language with the nations of the world.

The rebirth of Israel can be viewed as a return to the fullness of the Sinai covenant—to Judaism as a way of life. The moral and spiritual aspirations of the Jewish tradition were not meant to be realized in Sabbath sermons or by messianic dreamers who wait passively on the margins of society for redemption to break miraculously into history. Torah study is not a substitute for actual life, nor are prayer and the synagogue escapes from the ambiguities and complexities of political life.

The Jewish world will have to learn that the synagogue is no longer the exclusive defining framework for Jewish communal life. Moral seriousness and political maturity and wisdom must come to our nation if we are to be judged by the way we struggle to integrate the Sinai covenant with the complexities of political realities. . . .

We will mourn forever because of the memory of Auschwitz. We will build a healthy new society because of the memory of Sinai.

The Third Jewish Commonwealth (1985)

When Jews live in their own environment and are responsible for the unfolding of the spirit of Judaism in a total society, they must also link their covenantal religious identity to the mitzvot, commandments, through which they share in the universal struggle to uphold human dignity. The

normalization of the Jewish people brought about by Zionism makes possible a new appreciation of the mitzvot, whereby the social, ethical, and political attain their full covenantal place. In the messianic society, a total way of life and the society's entire social and economic structure have to mirror God's covenantal judgment. When that is so, the social, moral, and political status of the society becomes a religious issue. The Sabbath in a messianic society is not only the Sabbath of the seven-day week but also the Sabbatical and Jubilee years. The egalitarian spirit of the laws of those years should move the society and its political leaders to a concern with greater degrees of social and economic equality. How the laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years can be expressed in a modern economic system is a serious hal'akhic question that many have tried to answer in different ways. One thing, however, is clear. Something radical will happen to Judaism when we are challenged to have our economic and social order mirror the Sabbath's celebration of the world as a creation and of human beings as creatures and not absolute masters over nature or other human beings. . . .

The rebirth of Israel marks the repudiation of the hal'akhic ghetto as the means for guarding Jewish survival in history. Israel not only argues against the ghettoization of Judaism, but is also a rejection of the mistaken universalism that characterized the assimilationist tendencies that affected many Jews as a result of the breakdown of the ghetto. The birth of the third Jewish commonwealth teaches all of Jewry that being rooted in a particular history and tradition need not be antithetical to involvement and concern with the larger issues affecting the human world. . . .

Commission on the Philosophy of Conservative Judaism (1985–88)

Israel should reflect the highest religious and moral values of Judaism and be saturated with Jewish living to the fullest extent possible in a free society.

Of American Jewry's three major denominations, the Conservative movement has consistently seen itself as the most Zionist. Many Orthodox rabbis disliked Zionism's secularism. Many Reform rabbis once

disdained Zionism's particularism. Conservative Jews traditionally loved Zionism's expansiveness as a grand Jewish peoplehood project. In 1973 the newly appointed Jewish Theological Seminary chancellor, the historian Gerson D. Cohen, emphasized Israel's unique role in uniting Jews worldwide as they hadn't been united in millennia through this notion of *am*, people.

Twelve years later, Cohen helped establish a Commission on the Philosophy of Conservative Judaism, charged with developing an official statement articulating Conservative Judaism's philosophy. Chaired by Rabbi Robert Gordis and involving leaders from all of the Conservative movement's institutional arms, the commission issued the Conservative platform, *Emet V'Emunah*, (Truth and faith) after meeting regularly for three years, in 1988. The forty-six-page Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism began with "God in the World," ended with "Living a Life of Torah," and within the middle section, "The Jewish People," articulated a nuanced, profound Zionist vision.

In discussing Israel, the statement demonstrated how central Zionist ideas were to the movement—and how vexing the state could be. Conservative leaders rejoiced "in the existence of *Medinat Yisra'el* (the State of Israel) in *Eretz Yisra'el* (the Land of Israel) with its capital of Jerusalem, the Holy City, the City of Peace. . . . We consider it to be a miracle, reflecting Divine Providence in human affairs." Yet the manifesto, excerpted here, condemned the religious coercion of Israel's Orthodox monopoly and affirmed the spiritual and ideological significance of the Diaspora where the overwhelming majority of Conservative Jews live.

Emet V'Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism (1988)

The State of Israel . . . is and ought to be a democratic state that safeguards freedom of thought and action for all of its citizens. On the other hand, it is and ought to be a distinctively Jewish state, fostering Jewish religious and cultural values. . . .

The Jewish religion as reflected in the Jewish way of life constitutes the most significant factor that identifies, distinguishes, unites, and preserves the Jewish people. Consequently, we believe that the State of Israel must encourage Jewish patterns of life in all of the agencies of the state and its political subdivisions. . . . Israel should reflect the highest religious and moral values of Judaism and be saturated with Jewish living to the fullest extent possible in a free society. Hence, we welcome the reality that Shabbat, Yom Tov, kashrut, and other mitzvot are officially upheld by the civilian and military organs of the state, and that the Jewish calendar is in general use. Even in secular schools, classical Jewish sources such as Bible and rabbinic literature are taught, and Jewish observances are at least acknowledged.

While we strongly endorse the need to maintain the Jewish character and ambience of the State of Israel, we regard it as an overriding moral principle that neither the state nor its political subdivisions or agencies employ coercion in the area of religious belief and practice. . . .

The Conservative movement has not always agreed with Israel's positions on domestic and foreign affairs. We have often suffered from discriminatory policies, but we remain firm and loving supporters of the State of Israel economically, politically, and morally. . . .

Israel and the Diaspora enjoy different advantages while facing unique challenges. Only in Israel may a Jew lead an all-encompassing Jewish life. There, Shabbat, Yom Tov, and kashrut are officially observed in varied degrees by the civilian organs of state and by the military; there Hebrew is the nation's language and the Bible is studied in every school. Paradoxically, the very ease with which Jewish identity may be expressed in the Jewish state may give the false impression that religion is not needed in Israel for Jewish survival as it is in the Diaspora. We do not believe that Jewish identity can be replaced by Israeli identity or the ability to speak Hebrew. We are convinced that Jewish religion is essential as a source of ethical and moral values.

Both the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry have roles to fill; each can and must aid and enrich the other in every possible way; each needs the other. It is our fervent hope that Zion will indeed be the center of Torah and Jerusalem a beacon lighting the way for the Jewish people and for humanity.

Richard Hirsch (b. 1926)

The testing grounds for keeping the covenant between God and God's people.

Israel's founding challenged Reform as much as Orthodox theology. Although by 1948, the Reform movement had largely come to accept Zionism, still the destruction of European Jewry and the establishment of the Jewish state demanded a more thorough embrace—and spiritual reckoning.

One of the major catalysts in what he called “Zionizing” Reform Jewry was Rabbi Richard Hirsch. Born in Cleveland in 1926, ordained by Hebrew Union College, he founded the Reform movement's Religious Action Center in Washington DC in 1962. After an intense decade of social activism that included lending his offices to Martin Luther King Jr., when the reverend was in town, Hirsch moved to Jerusalem in 1973. There, he built the ideological and institutional infrastructure of Reform Zionism, helping to establish the World Union for Progressive Judaism's headquarters in Jerusalem, to create the Association of Reform Zionists of America, and to found two Reform movement kibbutzim (Yahel in 1976 and Lotan in 1983).

As a Religious Zionist attuned to the Jewish and Zionist imperative *Na'aseh v' nishma*, “We will do and we will listen,” Hirsch said that in establishing the Reform seminary's magnificent campus overlooking Jerusalem's Old City, the movement was marrying history. In 2000 he articulated Reform Jewry's “Declaration of Interdependence”: “of people and faith, of Jewish tradition and contemporary needs, of the universal and the particular, of Israel and the Diaspora, of each Jew with all Jews.”

Toward a Theology of Reform Zionism (2000)

The establishment, protection, and development of the State of Israel are integral premises of Progressive Jewish belief. . . . In making this statement, it is essential to delineate between two distinct realities, at times

conflicting and at times confusing. The first reality: the State of Israel is a state like all other states. As a modern political movement, Zionism parallels the other movements of national renaissance that sprouted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To be sure, the Jewish people's political claim to national independence was reinforced by a moral appeal to the world's conscience following the Holocaust. However, to the extent that the Jewish state is one among many states, it is to be judged by the same criteria of international law and democratic values as all other states. . . .

The second reality: the State of Israel represents the return to the Land of Israel and the restoration of the Jewish people's sovereignty. As such, its very establishment fulfills sanctified religious aspirations, even as its continued existence attests to profound religious convictions. These aspirations and convictions are rooted in the Jewish concept of the covenant between God and Israel. The covenant is the central theme of the Bible, indeed of all Jewish history. God and the Jewish people have made an eternal pact that obligates the people to serve God by preserving distinctive patterns of life, worship, and morality. This eternal covenant between God and the people of Israel is inseparable from the Land of Israel. . . .

In the Diaspora, Jewish life is voluntary. A person is free to decide on Jewish identity and the extent of participation in, and support of, the Jewish community. In Israel, Jewish identity is compulsory. By virtue of living in a Jewish state, the individual Jew is obligated to identify as a Jew, pay taxes to the Jewish state, and fight in the army to defend the Jewish state. In the Diaspora, Jewish activity is confined to what is defined as the private sector: the home, the synagogue, the Jewish community. Judaism is a private experience observed in life-cycle events, the Sabbath and holidays. . . . In Israel, the Jews are not afforded the luxury of selecting favorite issues and noble causes. All issues are Jewish and all are denominated as Jewish, both by those who live in the state and by those who live outside it. Both the private and the public sectors are Jewish. Indeed, everything is Jewish: from economy to culture, politics, the army, and the character of society. In the Diaspora, Jews tend to distinguish between universal and particular concerns. In Israel, every issue is both universal and particular. It is impossible to separate between humanness and Jewishness. . . .

The State of Israel is the testing grounds for keeping the covenant between God and God's people. How do Jews as a people create a just society when they are given responsibility? How do Jews use political power? How do Jews apply Jewish values in everyday conditions of a Jewish society? How do Jews relate to issues of poverty, unemployment, health care, and the aged? How does a Jewish government relate to a host of other issues that affect every society? . . .

In sum, how do Jews keep the covenant in the open, visible, volatile crucible called the State of Israel? . . .

The State of Israel is the Jewish people's symbol of hope in its own future and in the future of all humankind. It . . . will always be confronted by the tension between the holy and the secular, the potential and the actual, the vision and the reality.

Ovadia Yosef (1920–2013)

Atchalta d'geula: The beginning of the redemption.

Given the intense traditionalism of most Sephardic Jews who moved to Israel, many considered them “born Zionists.” So, perhaps, was the great hero of *Mizrahi* Jewry, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. Born in Iraq in 1920, he moved with his family to Mandatory Palestine in 1924. From 1973 to 1983 he served as Sephardic chief rabbi but was most influential as the spiritual leader of the Shas Party and the iconic leader of the *Mizrahi* community. His attempt to align Ashkenazic and Sephardic customs in Israel—guided by the medieval rabbi from Safed Joseph Caro—expressed Religious Zionism at its most unifying and constructive. When he died in 2013, supporters claimed that 850,000 people came to his funeral, which would make it the largest gathering in modern Israeli history.

Yosef agreed with Religious Zionists like Abraham Isaac Kook that Zionism was the *atchalta d'geula*, the beginning of the redemption. He did not go as far as others who, already tasting salvation, called Israel the first flowering of our redemption. Still, teaching that living

in the Land of Israel fulfilled the ultimate commandment, Yosef was frustrated that Jews now remained in exile voluntarily.

Simultaneously, however, contrary to his hardliner image—and placing him to the left of many Ashkenazi rabbis—Yosef was willing to consider relinquishing territories if it preserved Israeli lives, invoking the religious imperative *piku'ah nefesh*—to save lives above all.

When secular Jews frustrated by the Shas party's ultra-Orthodoxy disparaged Yosef as “anti-Zionist,” he bristled. He approved Shas's membership in the World Zionist Organization in 2010, creating the first ultra-Orthodox Zionist party. “It is a lie . . . a term which they have concocted themselves,” he responded. “I served for ten years as a Chief Rabbi—a key public position in the State of Israel. . . . We pray for Zion, for Jerusalem and its inhabitants, for Israel and the Rabbis and their students. . . . By our understanding, a Zionist is a person who loves Zion and practices the commandment of settling the land. Whenever I am overseas I encourage *aliyah*. In what way are they more Zionist? . . .”

Oral Torah 14 (1979)

The primacy of the commandment to live in *Eretz Yisra'el* according to our sages:

I begin by emphasizing the rabbis' teachings about the primary importance of living in the Land of Israel, about the land's holiness, and about the magnitude of the mitzvah, the commandment, to live in the land. . . .

The Sages even said: A person should always dwell in *Eretz Yisra'el*. Even if living in a city inhabited mostly by Jews, he should not dwell outside the land. Anyone dwelling in *Eretz Yisra'el* is like one who has a God, for Leviticus teaches: “I give you this land of Canaan so that I can be your God. And anyone who dwells outside the Land is like one who has no God. . . .”

The value of saving a life *piku'ah nefesh*: We learn that if doctors disagree about a sick person fasting on Yom Kippur, even a hint of danger compels the person to eat. Even if only two say the person must eat and one hundred say the person doesn't need to eat, we ease the restrictions

to preserve life. Because we give the benefit of the doubt, the two witnesses can outweigh one hundred if it comes to preserving life.

So Jewish law is clear here. If some security experts say this is not a matter of preserving life, but others say not returning territories risks war and could endanger lives, because we give the benefit of the doubt . . . territories should be returned to avoid the risk of death from the danger of war.

The overall conclusion, beyond any doubt, emerges. . . . If there is a chance of a genuine peace between us and our Arab neighbors by returning territories, because nothing is more important than preserving life, the territories must be returned.