

Herzl's Dream Our Legacy

Special Edition in Honor of 125th Anniversary Celebration in Basel
with the World Zionist Organization



IsraelForever™

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HERZL'S DREAM

Why Zionism and Its Founder Are More Relevant Than Ever

By David Matlow

"Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start."

Not only good advice when Maria Von Trapp teaches do-re-mi. It is equally good advice - and especially important - when thinking about Israel, especially when the world demonizes it and questions its right to exist.

There are multiple possible beginnings to the history of modern Israel: the covenant made to Abraham or the exile after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD being possible starting points.

For me, the story begins with Theodor Herzl.

Herzl was born in Hungary in 1860 and died in Austria in 1904. Only the last eight of the forty four years of his life were dedicated to the cause of the Jewish people. However, the fruit of his dreaming, his vision, his effort and his sacrifice is the State of Israel.

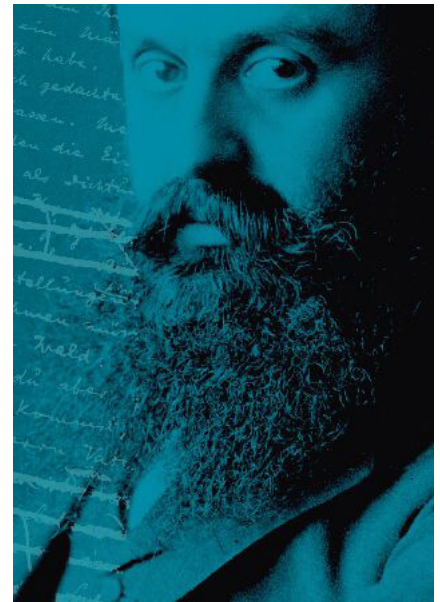
Herzl was fixated on the prevalence of anti-Semitism. He concluded that the Jews in Europe were not safe, and that they were living on borrowed time.

In 1902, Herzl wrote *Altneuland* (translated into Hebrew as *Tel Aviv*, the city being named after Herzl's book). In his book, a group of characters was talking about the anti-Semitism they were experiencing when one says: "I can see it coming, we shall all have to wear the yellow patch." Not even Herzl could have imagined the horror that was to follow for the Jews of Europe.

Herzl was right to be worried, but died too early to actualize his plan for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jews, which would be secured by international law. He envisioned receiving a charter from the Ottoman Empire, which was then the ruler of this land.

The Jewish state was not to be created against anybody's will, but with the full consent of those in authority. It was intended to solve the "Jewish problem" which was that wherever Jews live for a while, they succeed and then they are resented by the local population.

When Herzl died, the dream did not die with him. It was an idea that was bigger than one person.



Herzl's successors continued to meet, and plan, and prepare. International congresses were held, money was raised, land was bought, towns and villages were established and instruments of a state in formation were founded.

When Israel was established on May 14, 1948 it was the culmination of more than 50 years of effort. The proclamation of the new Jewish state of Israel was authorized by a resolution of the United Nations passed on November 29, 1947, effectively bringing to life the charter that Herzl envisioned.

Based on my experience in giving tours of my Herzl collection at exhibits across Canada, I believe that many people do not understand where Israel came from. They assume that the land was either conquered by a Jewish army, or gifted by the world due to the need to find a place for the displaced Jews of Europe following the Holocaust, or some combination of both - lending to the ongoing lie that Israel is built on "stolen" land which is simply, and historically, not true.

Most people do not understand that Israel was dreamed about and planned for many years preceding its creation, and that the vision of Zion had remained a part of Jewish life and identity through prayer and longing, finding voice throughout the generations by Menasseh ben Israel, Pinsker, Hess, Mohilever, Kalischer and the Chovevei Tzion groups of Eastern Europe that became active supporters of Herzl's practical implementation of this ancient dream of our people.

Most people do not understand that Herzl's vision for the creation of the Jewish state was peaceful, consensual and intended to be beneficial for all.

Most people forget that the dream of a Jewish state arose out of a concern that anti-Semitism would never go away, and that the Jews needed (and are entitled to) at least one place on this planet where they can feel safe, and be at home.

Herzl was right when he concluded that anti-Semitism would not go away. This summer we saw it bubble to the surface across the world. We saw blatant anti-Semitism both overt and more furtive in the form of the demonization of Israel by the press, governments and world bodies.

Herzl believed that the Jewish people were entitled to one place where we can build our own society, and show the world what we can do when our energies and creativity are set free. The innovations in science, technology, medicine and culture emanating from Israel demonstrate what we can do when we are allowed to.

Of course, Israel is not perfect and remains a work in process. That is where we come in.

Standing in Vienna in 1896 when Herzl first published his book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), the notion that such a country would come into being was the most preposterous, ridiculous and improbable idea imaginable. But Herzl's motto was "If you will it, it is no dream" and his dream was fulfilled.

I believe that Herzl's dream was fulfilled, but it has not been completed; that he intended the Jewish state to be safe, secure and living in peace.

After the ongoing attacks against Israel, the hateful riots evoking medieval Jew hatred, and years of having to defend our rights to our homeland, the notion of Israel living in peace may be considered to be preposterous, ridiculous and improbable.

However, Herzl showed us that the impossible can come true, and that if we want something badly enough, one day it will cease to be a dream.

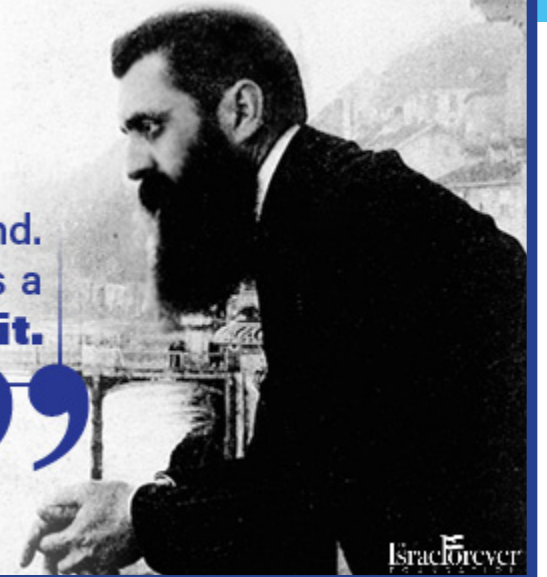
It is up to us to make that dream come true. Actualizing that dream will take the same amount of creativity, effort and energy that went into fulfilling the dream of a Jewish state.

***David Matlow** is the owner of the world's largest private collection of Herzl memorabilia and is the producer of **My Herzl**, a 52-minute documentary by Israeli film maker Eli Tal-El. A partner at Goodmans LLP in Toronto, David is a past chair of the Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto and a member of the board of directors of the Ontario Jewish Archives and the iCenter for Israel Education.*

“

It is true that we aspire to our ancient land.
But what we want in that ancient land is a
new blossoming of the Jewish spirit.

”



AN EXTRAORDINARY ZIONIST CONFERENCE. NEW YORK, 1942.

By Dr. Elana Yael Heideman

In today's charged societies, it is difficult to imagine organizations and parties divided on political lines joining forces. And yet, just as European Jewry was disappearing, American Zionist leaders initiated a groundbreaking effort to band together to shift the direction of action in the name of Jewish Nationalism.

With World War II and the Holocaust in full force in Europe, the World Zionist Congress had not met since the 21st gathering in Geneva in 1939, just 2 weeks days before the invasion of Poland by Germany. In response to the growing concern for the future of European Jewry, and the rise of Antisemitism in North America as well, American Zionist leaders convened the American Emergency Committee of Zionist Affairs and decided to hold an Extraordinary Zionist Conference in New York City on May 6-11, 1942.

In light of the dire circumstances and failing interest in Zionism among much of the Jewish world, activists and organizations - including the Zionist Organization of America, Hadassah, Mizrahi, and Poale Zion - came together to expand the halted discussion regarding the next steps toward the fulfillment of the Jewish nationalist dream.

However, with the British restricting immigration to Palestine under the 1939 White Paper, Hitler's regime continuing to gain power, and the divisive debate on nationalism as a legitimate expression, American Zionism was lacking support from Jews as well as other groups that had been supporting Jewish nationalism since before the Balfour Declaration.

Built on their shared interest in providing a safe haven for the persecuted, the leadership was determined to initiate, for the first time, cooperation with non-Zionist groups within the American Jewish community, as well as methods for obtaining a united representation of Jewry at a potential world peace conference.

The international representation as well as the presence of World Zionist figures such as Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization, David Ben-Gurion, then head of the Jewish Agency, and Nahum Goldmann gave the conference credibility as a substitute World Zionist Congress.

Held at the famed Biltmore Hotel, there were nearly 600 delegates from throughout the United States as well as 17 other countries who successfully adopted a series of eight resolutions that came to be known as the Biltmore Program.

This monumental conference was a game-changer in terms of American support of the Zionist dream. Rejecting any legitimacy of the White Paper, which limited and effectively nullified Jewish rights to immigration and settlement in Palestine, the Conference platform "urged that the

gates of Palestine be opened; that the Jewish Agency be vested with control of immigration into Palestine and with the necessary authority for upbuilding the country, including the development of its unoccupied and uncultivated lands; and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.”

Affirming the historical significance of each step toward statehood for the “fulfilment of the original purpose of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate which recognized the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine,” the Biltmore Declaration specifically proclaimed support for the founding a Jewish Commonwealth stating, “Then and only then will the age-old wrong to the Jewish people be righted.”

This statement was the first in which non-Zionist organizations joined with the Zionists to advocate the establishment of an independent Jewish state. Whereas the program was not universally approved when first introduced, virtually all Jewish organizations in America quickly came to support the Biltmore Program and it served as the unifying force for all those advocating a return of Jewish sovereignty to our ancestral homeland in Israel.

As a proud member organization of the American Zionist Movement, we honor the legacy of the Biltmore Conference in the spirit of Balfour as a stepping stone as well as the amazing contributions of diaspora Jewry to the development and continued success of Israel. We deeply understand the need to bring together all Jews under the banner of Ahavat Yisrael and to imbue Jewish life and identity with Ahavat Zion - it is indeed what Israel Forever is all about. And as we continue to battle among ourselves with regard to Israel's politics or prospects for peace, it is poignant for us to use this anniversary of the Biltmore Conference to remind ourselves that it IS possible to set aside our difference for the sake of the greater good.

Dr. Elana Yael Heideman, Executive Director of The Israel Forever Foundation, is a dynamic and passionate educator who works creatively and collaboratively in developing content and programming to deepen and activate the personal connection to Israel for Diaspora Jews. Elana's extensive experience in public speaking, educational consulting and analytic research and writing has served to advance her vision of Israel-inspired Jewish identity that incorporates the relevance of the Holocaust, Antisemitism and Zionism to contemporary issues faced throughout the Jewish world in a continuous effort to facilitate dialogue and build bridges between the past, present and future.

ODE TO THE ZIONIST CONGRESS

By Brett Kaufman

A multitude of life lessons can be taken away from Herzl's passion to rebuild the ancient homeland of the Jewish people.

Herzl did not possess superpowers, he was not a celebrity, rather he was another face in the crowd trying to figure out his purpose in life. He was an ordinary human who followed his passion.

He refused to be indifferent in the face of growing anti-Semitism in Europe, and he knew that he had to do something.

Lucky for us he did. Lucky for us that he understood that the Jewish people needed to re-birth a home of their own, lucky for us his vision drove him night and day, and most importantly, lucky for us that the work he began helped us Jews live once more in our ancient homeland.

What started with a pen, paper, and his voice has grown into the State of Israel. Without his vision and taking action, Israel would not be here today.

As we repeat his famous phrase, **"if you will it, it is no dream"** we are reminded that it is our job, as Jews who live in Israel and throughout the Diaspora, to work everyday to ensure that the dream, the vision, the passion, lives on forever.

Today, as the next generation becomes next in line to make our impact on the world, we must remember and learn from Herzl.

We must always remember that at any time we can make a difference.

Thank you for inspiring the Zionist movement that brought us back to our ancient homeland.

***Brett Kaufman** is a former intern for The Israel Forever Foundation and the Republican Jewish Coalition. More recently, he has worked for AIPAC, and now runs his own copywriting business.*

THE LEGACY OF THEODOR HERZL

By Michael Ignatieff

In the last nine years of Theodor Herzl's short life - he died at the age of 44 in 1904 - he created the Zionist movement and all of its basic institutions. The drama of these achievements was enhanced because he looked the part of an ancient king of Israel, and he played the role consciously, to extraordinary effect. Herzl's career as a Zionist leader tended to obscure, perhaps even from himself, the profound originality of his thinking.

Herzl invented an unprecedented use of anti-Semitism as a positive force in the battle for the equality of the Jews. He suggested that anti-Semitism was not only a problem to the Jews; it was also disturbing the stability of Europe.

Since Herzl was a rational man, he did not imagine that governments and societies had need of Jew-hatred to deflect angers against the ruling powers onto scapegoats. He was entirely unaware of the dark places in the human soul, in which hatred exists for no reason, only because some people need to hate others.

On the contrary, Herzl was sure that even anti-Semites were reasonable people who wanted order in their societies. Helping Jews to become normal people in a state of their own would remove the cause of anti- Semitic eruptions.

Thus, in Herzl's imagination, anti-Semitism became both the unifying factor of the Jewish community and the guarantor that the world would help Jews achieve their normalcy.

The Zionist state was not only a Jewish need; the powers of the world required a Jewish state in their own interests, because it would remove a major cause of tension in their societies.

The corollary of this assertion was a basic redefinition of the nature of Jewish solidarity.

Herzl was the first to declare, boldly and without apology, that Jews now shared not a faith, in which some did not believe, but a condition which affected them all, and that this condition was the lasting danger to people who were a minority everywhere.

The center of Jewish life became not the "problem of Judaism," how to cultivate the ancient faith in a secular age, but rather the "problem of the Jews." Therefore all Jews were constrained, regardless of what they thought, to join together to change their status. Even the Jewish state, the "cure" that Herzl proposed for this disease, would need no particular cultural content.

Herzl envisaged his state-to-be as a Western democracy, founded on advanced principles of social justice, in which the citizens would be free from all cultural and religious constraints. Herzl was proposing national politics and civic life, and not religious faith and study of the sacred texts, as the essential communal business of the Jewish people.

How well have Herzl's basic assertions stood up in the century since they were first published?

On anti-Semitism, Herzl was too much of an optimist. He even asserted in *The Jewish State* that the emancipation of the Jews was an irreversible fact of history - but the Nazis did reverse the equality that the Jews in Germany had held since the middle of the nineteenth century.

On the basis of Herzl's rationalist premises, without taking into account the demonic element in the soul of Jew-haters, he did not, and could not, predict the Holocaust. Still, he understood better than anyone before him that anti-Semitism was a world problem, and that the Jews could be secured against it only if the powers of the world took the lead in creating a solution.

He was undoubtedly right that the status of the Jews in the world would be transformed by the creation of a Jewish state. Jews would become not a people always in search of goodwill, but one that had some power in its own hands.

Herzl's assumption that, once a Jewish state is established, the Jews of the world would move there or assimilate has been disproved in the last fifty years. Indeed, the existence of the State of Israel has actually increased the dignity and the self-respect of the Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

They have not chosen between Herzl's alternatives - emigration or assimilation - to become "normal"; they have remained "abnormal" by continuing to be Jews all over the world.

And yet, without the success of Zionism in creating the state of Israel, the relations between Jews and non-Jews would not exist now, a century after he wrote *The Jewish State*, on a plane of unprecedented equality.

Herzl's assumption that the force of the Jewish religious and cultural tradition was essentially spent has not been borne out. Despite the great bloodletting in the Second World War, which destroyed the major centers of Jewish religious culture in all its varieties, the vitality of Judaism has been rising in recent decades. In the Israeli state and society, the traditionalist forces are acquiring ever greater power. The Zionist enterprise itself is now conceived by many in Israel, and by supporters abroad, in messianic terms, as the beginning of "the end of days" that had been predicted in the religious texts. And yet, Herzl's insistence that the Jewish state must be a secular democracy remains Israel's dominant commitment.

The central concern of the Jewish community is increasingly becoming, everywhere, not its "normalcy," or its equality, which were Herzl's dominant concerns, but its values. One suspects, on a close reading of all of Herzl's writing, and especially of his diaries in the last years of his life, that he was himself at the beginning of such a journey. Toward the end, he was much more aware of the continuing significance of Jewish faith and culture, and he was moving toward an emotional attachment to the history and the traditions of his people.

Like all great books, *The Jewish State* is not important because its program has been carried out as written, or because its premises have remained unchallenged. It is a classic because its author took a radically new approach to the relationship between Jews and the world. In this way, Herzl transformed the Jewish people.

Michael Ignatieff is a writer, teacher and former politician. He has written award-winning books, as well as worked as a television presenter and documentary filmmaker.



Israel is a paragon of civil liberties, an amazing country filled with scientific and technological achievement, and a country that endeavors to spread good through out the world.

The only Jewish state is the realization of the Dream of Redemption for the Jewish people and the fulfillment of the Emancipation embedded within the Zionist Dream.

Bobby Brown



“It is no accident that so many Jews are economists fighting poverty, or doctors fighting disease, or lawyers fighting injustice, in all cases refusing to see these things as inevitable. It is no accident that after the Holocaust Jews did not call it Al-Naqba, nursing resentment and revenge, but instead turned to the future, building a nation whose national anthem is Hatikvah, ‘the hope’. It is no accident that Judaism has been opposed by every empire that sought to deny people the freedom to be equal-but-different. **It is no accident that Israel is still today the only free society in the Middle East.**”

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

ZIONISM & ISRAEL AS THE NATION-STATE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Cutting Through the Confusion by Going Back to Basics

A Resource by The Israel Forever Foundation

THE PROBLEM

The debates surrounding Zionism, Israel, and the legitimacy of a Nation State for the Jewish People seem never ending. The foundations on which the Jewish State was founded are constantly being questioned – both by the anti-Israel movement as well as within the Jewish world.

Is Zionism racism? Is the word “Zionist” an insult?

More and more people seem to think so. Social media’s magnification of individual voices has blurred the lines between what were until very recently extremist views one would not publicly express and narrative that is being expressed on college campuses, political pulpits and even mainstream media. Are we equipped to answer these accusations? Do we want to? How can we prepare the next generations to handle what is coming?

In a time of pluralism and globalism, is the Jewish State legitimate?

The legitimacy of the Jewish State has been questioned since (before) her establishment. The recent passing of Israel’s Nation State Law has been the impetus for renewed questioning. Many in the Jewish world have felt uneasy about the law, fearing it undermines the inherent pluralism of the Jewish State. What is the balance between Jewish Nationalism, Israel as a homeland for the Jewish People and Israel as a modern, liberal and pluralist country? What are the concerns? How should they be addressed?

Confusion within the Jewish world

We know that antisemitism is on the rise. Or is it anti-Zionism? Is there a difference between the two? At a time when our community is bombarded with questions and accusations from the outside, it is highly problematic to find ourselves confused and divided from within. How can we respond to accusations if we do not know the answers ourselves? How can we face hatred and prejudice from without when it is so difficult to find the things around which we can unite and agree?

THE SOLUTION

In this we attempt to cut through the confusion by leaving aside political commentary and analysis and going back to the basic concepts around which the Jewish world could always find agreement - Zionism and Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People.

Israel's Declaration of Independence

"The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books."

In Hebrew there is no word for indigenous however, the description that opens the Declaration of Independence is the definition of indigeneity: the land in which a nation was born, the place where that nation first formed their culture, built spiritual, cultural and political institutions.

Israel is the land in which the Jewish people were sovereign and the place from which, as a Nation, the Jewish People influenced the world (through the ideas laid out in the Bible).

Indigeneity is the strongest claim any People can have to any specific land: this specific piece of land and no other is the ancestral homeland of my People. While lacking the word for indigenous in Hebrew it was clear that the writers of Israel's Declaration of Independence had clear understanding of the meaning and the power of this concept.

"After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom."

This second paragraph reinforces the first with the explanation that the Jewish People were forcibly removed from their ancestral homeland and did not leave or abandon the land from their own free will. Despite centuries of exile, the Jewish People never gave up the hope to return and regain sovereignty in their ancestral homeland. This is an extraordinary and unparalleled testament to the deep connection of a People to the land.

"Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, defiant returnees, and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood."

This paragraph takes Jewish hope to the realm of practicality: ***Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment***, impelled by Jewish history in the land and the connection that was continued in exile through hope and prayer, Jews ***strove in every successive generation to***

reestablish themselves in their ancient homeland. Jews not only retained esoteric hope but took action, in every generation, to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. **In recent decades** (prior to the Declaration of Independence) Jews returned **in their masses**. Following this is a description mirroring the first paragraph of the document and elaborating the revival of the Jewish People in their indigenous land – reviving the language in which their original culture was articulated, building thriving communities, taking custodianship of the land (making the desert bloom), controlling their own economy and culture.

Here, for the first time, the document refers to “all the country’s inhabitants” – in other words, the Jews and non-Jews (Arabs). This was written after the Arab massacres of their Jewish neighbors:

- In 1920 a number of settlements in the Galilee were attacked (among them Tel Hai where Trumpeldor and seven others were murdered) and in Jerusalem. Some 30 Jews were murdered and hundreds injured.
- In 1921 Jews were attacked in Tel Aviv, Petach Tikva, and Mikveh Yisrael and other communities, dozens were murdered and many more injured.
- In August of 1929 Jews in Jerusalem were attacked and entire neighborhoods were destroyed. In Hebron 69 Jews were massacred, many others were severely injured and the community was wiped out. Jews were also attacked in Haifa, Tel Aviv, Gaza, Ramleh, Akko, Beit Shean and more.
- The great Arab revolt of 1936-1939 in which 630 Jews were murdered and some 2000 were injured. At first Jews hoped that if they kept their heads down, the violence would subside. Then Orde Wingate decided to help the Jews, teaching them self-defense tactics which changed the balance of power (and have since become fundamental elements of the IDF’s doctrine).

It is within this context that the Declaration of Independence explains that the Jewish community while **loving peace knows how to defend itself** and **will bring the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants**.

“In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodore Herzl, the First Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country.

This right was recognized in the Balfour Declaration of the 2nd November, 1917, and re-affirmed in the Mandate of the League of Nations which, in particular, gave international sanction to the historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home.”

Here the document moves from the explanation of indigenous rights to the discussion of Jewish rights under international law – from the first Zionist Congress, to the Balfour Declaration, its reaffirmation by the League of Nations which recognized the **historic connection between the**

Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home.

"The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people - the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the community of nations."

The Holocaust as an example, not a reason – in this paragraph the Declaration mentions the Holocaust, explaining that this is a clear demonstration of the need to ***solve the problem of homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State***. It is important to note that the Holocaust is not brought as a reason or justification for the establishment of Israel but as *an example of what can happen when the Jewish People have no Israel* and are not seen by the community of nations as equal and with full privileges.

"Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, continued to migrate to Eretz-Israel, undaunted by difficulties, restrictions and dangers, and never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland."

Here too is an example - also after the Holocaust, survivors and other Jews continued to make aliyah ***undaunted by difficulties*** and ***never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland***. It was not because of the Holocaust survivors that the State of Israel was established but they, whose dignity had been stripped from them, joined those already struggling to establish a life of Jewish freedom and were followed by additional Jews who all came together in their ***national homeland***.

"In the Second World War, the Jewish community of this country contributed its full share to the struggle of the freedom- and peace-loving nations against the forces of Nazi wickedness and, by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations."

This paragraph is an interesting assertion of rights of Israel's Jewish community, not because they are freely given (as one might expect) but as something *earned* due to behaving like other ***peace-loving nations*** and through ***the blood of its soldiers***.

"On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were

necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable."

The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel but this was not something the nations swooped in and did for the Jewish People; ***the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution*** – which they did. Was the statement of legal fact, that the ***recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable***, a premonition of future questions regarding the legitimacy of the Jewish State?

"This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State."

The right to be ***master of your own fate*** is a ***natural right***. The Jewish People, ***like all other nations***, have the right to ***their own sovereign State***.

"Accordingly we, members of the People's Council, representatives of the Jewish Community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist Movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel."

In accordance with all the reasons given above, ***by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly***, on the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz Israel the representatives of the Jewish Community of Israel (not the Jewish world community) and of the Zionist Movement (the National Movement for Jewish self-determination) declared ***the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel***. This was an important determination that the Jewish historic name of the land would be the name by which the new State would be called.

"We declare that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708 (15th May, 1948), until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the State in accordance with the Constitution which shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the 1st October 1948, the People's Council shall act as a Provisional Council of State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall be the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, to be called 'Israel'."

The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

Here the document declares the State of Israel open to immigration of all Jews, the basis for what is now called the "Law of Return".

While the document clearly discusses Jewish rights, it is important that here, we see for the second time, mention of "all inhabitants." The addition of these two little words explains a crucial concept - the Jewish People are recognized as indigenous and have the rights of an indigenous people returning to their ancestral homeland. The other inhabitants, while not indigenous, are recognized as having rights due to their residence within the land and thus, in accordance with the visions of the prophets of Israel who described what the Jewish State needs to look like, and in accordance to ***the principles of the Charter of the United Nations*** the State of Israel will provide for the benefit of all, not just the Jews but for Jews and Arabs alike: ***the development of the country, freedom, justice and peace, complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions.***

These rights were later established in Israeli law but it is important to note that those were a realization of this declaration which was based on the ancient visions of what a Jewish State needs to be.

"The State of Israel is prepared to cooperate with the agencies and representatives of the United Nations in implementing the resolution of the General Assembly of the 29th November, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the economic union of the whole of Eretz-Israel.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to receive the State of Israel into the community of nations."

The declaration expresses the willingness of the new State to cooperate with international bodies and requests that the United Nations assist the Jewish People and ***receive the State of Israel into the community of nations.***

“We appeal - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.”

Here, for the first time, the Arab inhabitants of Israel are addressed directly, in the context of the previous pogroms against the Jews of Israel and the winds of war that were recognized by the declarers - with the request to ***preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.***

“We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.”

The declaration does not stop with the Arab inhabitants of Israel but extends a hand of peace to all neighboring Arab countries and an offer of collaboration – that they assist with the settling Jews in the sovereign Jewish State (a request that includes the Jews living at the time in Arab lands) and a promise that the State of Israel will ***do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.***

“We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel.”

The last request is to Jews around the world to assist with ***the tasks of immigration and upbuilding*** and stand by the Jews of Israel in ***the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel.***

“Placing our trust in the Almighty [the first and only time God is mentioned in the document], we affix our signatures to this proclamation at this session of the provisional Council of State, on the soil of the Homeland, in the city of Tel-Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the 5th day of Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948).”

David Ben-Gurion

<i>Daniel Auster</i>	<i>Meir Wilner-Kovner</i>	<i>Golda Myerson</i>	<i>Felix Rosenblueth</i>
<i>Mordekhai Bentov</i>	<i>Zerach Wahrhaftig</i>	<i>Nachum Nir</i>	<i>David Remez</i>
<i>Yitzchak Ben Zvi</i>	<i>Herzl Vardi</i>	<i>Zvi Segal</i>	<i>Berl Repetur</i>
<i>Eliyahu Berligne</i>	<i>Rachel Cohen</i>	<i>Rabbi Yehuda Leib</i>	<i>Mordekhai Shattner</i>
<i>Fritz Bernstein</i>	<i>Rabbi Kalman Kahana</i>	<i>Hacohen Fishman</i>	<i>Ben Zion Sternberg</i>
<i>Rabbi Wolf Gold</i>	<i>Saadia Kobashi</i>	<i>David Zvi Pinkas</i>	<i>Bekhor Shitreet</i>
<i>Meir Grabovsky</i>	<i>Rabbi Yitzchak Meir</i>	<i>Aharon Zisling</i>	<i>Moshe Shapira</i>
<i>Yitzchak Gruenbaum</i>	<i>Levin Meir</i>	<i>Moshe Kolodny</i>	<i>Moshe Shertok</i>
<i>Dr. Abraham Granovsky</i>	<i>David Loewenstein</i>	<i>Eliezer Kaplan</i>	
<i>Eliyahu Dobkin</i>	<i>Zvi Luria</i>	<i>Abraham Katznelson</i>	

“The Jews who will it shall achieve their State. We shall live at last as free men on our own soil, and in our own homes peacefully die.

The world will be liberated by our freedom, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness.

And whatever we attempt there for our own benefit will resound mightily and beneficially to the good of all mankind.”

Theodor Herzl, father of modern Zionism



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Focus on the Nation State Law

The Israeli Declaration of Independence stated that a formal constitution will be formulated and adopted no later than 1 October 1948. The deadline stated in the declaration of independence proved unrealistic in light of the war between the new state and its Arab neighbors.

The Basic Laws of Israel are the constitutional laws of the State of Israel, intended to be draft chapters of a future constitution and act as a de facto constitution until that time. Basic Laws can only be changed by a supermajority vote in the Knesset (with varying requirements for different Basic Laws and sections). Many of these laws are based on the individual liberties that were outlined in the Israeli Declaration of Independence.

The Basic Law: Human dignity and liberty, protecting the freedom and equal rights of Israeli enjoys super-legal status, giving the Supreme Court the authority to disqualify any law contradicting it, as well as protection from Emergency Regulations.

While the status, importance and legitimacy of the Jewish State clearly defined in Israel's Declaration of Independence, until very recently, there was no law to safeguard the rights of the State of Israel as a Jewish State. In cases of legal questions, Israeli courts could not bring into consideration the importance of protecting the future of the Jewish State because there was no law on which to base such rulings. In order to amend this imbalance, a new Basic Law was passed: Israel - The nation state of the Jewish people.

The new law sparked an uproar, mostly within the Jewish world. The question is, why? Is there something wrong with the law? In order to address these questions, we must first examine the content of the law. It is short and written in very clear language.

The following is the full content of the Basic Law:

1. The State of Israel

- a) Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people in which the State of Israel was established.***
- b) The state of Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, in which it fulfills its natural, religious, and historic right to self-determination.***
- c) The fulfillment of the right of national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.***

This point defines Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People in which the Zionist movement, the national movement of the Jewish people that supports the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in the ancestral land of the Jews, has been fulfilled. By extension, the right of self determination as a nation within the Jewish Nation State is unique to the Jewish People.

Is there anything wrong with these statements? Are they any different from what is written in Israel's Declaration of Independence which clearly defines Israel as the Jewish State, Jewish rights to the land as those of the indigenous people and the rights of other inhabitants as being the same individual rights as any other Israeli citizen?

2. National symbols of the State of Israel

- a) The name of the state is Israel.**
- b) The flag of the state is white, two blue stripes near the edges, and a blue Star of David in the center.**
- c) The symbol of the state is the Menorah with seven branches, olive leaves on each side, and the word Israel at the bottom.**
- d) The national anthem of the state is "Hatikvah"**
- e) [Further] details concerning the issue of state symbols will be determined by law.**

Is there anything wrong with these statements defining that the current symbols of the Jewish State are the legal symbols of the Jewish State?

3. [The] unified and complete [city of] Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.

This a reference to and reinforcement of the Basic Law: Jerusalem, the Capital of Israel (passed in 1980) which defined the status of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and secure its integrity and unity. It determines that Jerusalem is the seat of the President of the State, the Knesset, the Government and the Supreme Court. The law also deals with the status of the holy sites, secures the rights of people of all religions, and states that Jerusalem shall be given special priority in the activities of the authorities of the State so as to further its development in economic and other matters.

4. The Language of the State of Israel

- a) Hebrew is the language of the state.**
- b) The Arabic language has a special status in the state; the regulation of the Arab language in state institutions or when facing them will be regulated by law.**
- c) This clause does not change the status given to the Arabic language before the basic law was created.**

Hebrew is the language of the Jewish State. Is there anything wrong with that?

Up until this law it was customary to make sure, particularly in official documentation and state institutions that Arabic would appear alongside Hebrew. For those who know neither language,

English usually appears as well. For convenience many times there are also other languages such as Russian and Amharic. Now the law defines Arabic as having special status, particularly in regard to language in state institutions and not to change (demote) what was customary before the law. This is actually an improvement in status as it makes what was customary but not mandatory, part of the law.

5. *The state will be open to Jewish immigration and to the gathering of the exiled.*

This is the legal version of the statement in the Declaration of Independence with almost the exact same wording: *The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles*. Adding this to the Basic Law is a reinforcement of Israel's Law of Return (passed in 1950).

6. *The Diaspora*

a) *The state will labor to ensure the safety of sons of the Jewish people and its citizens who are in trouble and captivity due to their Jewishness or their citizenship.*

b) *The state will act to preserve the cultural, historical and religious legacy of the Jewish people among the Jewish diaspora.*

This clause defines the relationship of the Jewish State with the Diaspora:

The State of Israel will labor to protect anyone in trouble or in captivity due to their Jewishness or Israeli citizenship – including Jews who are not Israeli, sons of Jews (not necessarily Jewish according to Halacha) and non-Jewish citizens of Israel. This set of values and feeling of responsibility has led the decision-making process of the Jewish State from its inception to this day in regard to rescuing Jews in trouble anywhere in the world as well as paying the same regard and effort to assist all Israelis in trouble, whether they are Jewish or not.

The State will act to preserve Jewish legacy among the Jewish diaspora. This is a paradigm shift from the request in the Declaration of Independence asking diaspora Jews to assist the newly born State of Israel.

7. *The state views Jewish settlement as a national value and will labor to encourage and promote its establishment and development.*

This clause is the one that certain groups objected to but is it really any different from what is stated in the Declaration of Independence? Or the ideals of the Zionist movement? Or that of any newly founded nation state?

If the clause denied the right of non-Jewish settlement for Israel's non-Jewish citizens that would certainly be problematic however that is not the case.

8. The Hebrew calendar is the official calendar of the state and alongside it the secular calendar will serve as an official calendar. The usage of the Hebrew calendar and of the secular calendar will be determined by law.

This is the current custom of the country, now made law.

9. National Holidays

a) Independence Day is the official holiday of the state.

b) The Memorial Day for those who fell in the wars of Israel and the Memorial Day for the Holocaust and Heroism are official memorial days of the state.

This clause defines Israel's Independence Day and Memorial Days as National holidays (as opposed to religious holidays). This has ramifications in regard to employer obligations to employees.

10. Saturday and the Jewish Holidays are the official days of rest in the state. Those who are not Jewish have the right to honor their days of rest and their holidays. Details concerning these matters will be determined by law.

Whereas the previous clause deals with national holidays, this deals with religious holidays. In continuation of what appears in Israel's Declaration of Independence the law determines that while the official holidays and rest day of the Jewish State are the days noted in the Jewish tradition, non-Jews have the right to honor their holidays and rest day. This can become a little complicated as Muslims, Christians (and people of other faiths) have different holidays and rest days, for example Muslims rest on Friday while Jews on Saturday and Christians on Sunday. Honoring the different holidays and rest days, including making it possible for employees to take vacations and receive full benefits, is already the custom of the land. Now it is reinforced by this law.

11. This Basic Law may not be altered except by a Basic Law that gained the approval of the majority of the Knesset members.

Like other Basic Laws, this law is harder (but not impossible) to overturn or change than regular laws.

Points of Clarification

Much has been written about Israel's Nation State Law. Examination of the concerns raised leads one to discover that the objections are not to the actual content of the law but rather questions about what does not appear in the law:

1. "Why does the basic law not mention, as the Declaration of Independence does, equality for all citizens?"

When one understands the Israeli system of Basic Laws and notes the content of the new law, this question becomes moot.

Equality for all citizens is already enshrined in previous Basic Laws, the new law does not overturn or cancel previous laws, it only provides a legal basis upon which it is possible the needs and rights of individual citizens with the needs and rights of Israel as the Jewish Nation State.

In addition, the new law reinforces the rights of minorities within the framework of the Jewish State regarding language and freedom of religion (which also affects freedom of employment).

2. "Why is it necessary to create this law when all these points can be understood from the Declaration of Independence?"

All the points in the law are elements lifted directly from Israel's Declaration of Independence however a declaration is just that – a declaration, not a law. Although these points are understood, it is necessary to give the court system laws on which they can base their decisions. Before this new law, there was no legal basis on which the courts could rule when questions regarding symbols of the state, holidays, language etc. arose.

3. What about Israel's non-Jewish citizens who are objecting to this law?

Israel takes the rights of her non-Jewish citizens very seriously and has done so since the establishment of the State. It is important to examine the concerns raised and address each and every one of them – with the understanding that there are different groups making different objections. Each must be addressed separately and not lumped together as if they were the same people raising the same issues. The Israeli government is in the process of doing exactly this.

Some issues are easier than others to address:

- Some object to Israel as the Jewish Nation State, refusing to recognize Israel as the ancestral homeland of the Jewish People. These are the people who demonstrated in Rabin Square with PLO flags shouting "In blood and with fire we will free Palestine."
- Others object to the fact that the Nation State Law does not legalize the status of minority groups in Israel. While previous laws define the rights of all individuals,

including minorities, there is no law defining the status of minorities as groups. This does not indicate a problem with the existing laws but does suggest that it might be necessary to pass an additional law defining the status of minorities as groups.

- Druze and Bedouin who feel that the law drives a wedge between them and the State of Israel. This is a sentiment that must be taken seriously. Those of the Arab population (such as most Druze and some Bedouin) who have chosen to ally themselves with the Jewish State are people who we do not want to alienate.

Close examination of their objections uncovers that their complaints are not really about the law itself but about what does not appear in the law. A large portion of the objectors in this group used the discussion of the law to raise issues of inequality in day-to-day life Israel that need to be addressed in order to create a better society but do not actually have anything to do with the law or any other laws being broken, rather societal issues and some government bureaucracy that if amended would make it easier for minorities to better integrate in the general population. Others were asking for their minority status as a group to be addressed in law, which as previously stated, is not an indication of a defect in this law but that it is worth considering creating a new law for that purpose.

The same values of human rights and self-determination at the heart of progressive causes also underlie Zionism: the movement for one of the world's historically oppressed minorities to achieve self-determination through the creation of a Jewish State. It is simply the belief that the Jewish people - the first and most enduring persecuted community - are entitled to equality and human dignity.



FOR CONSIDERATION: Is Israel a democratic secular state or a Jewish state?

Israel is a democracy where all citizens (of age) can elect and be elected, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion.

Israel protects freedom of press and expression and in it's parliament one can find members who justify terrorism as means of resistance to Israeli occupation on the one hand, and members who support an annexation of Judea and Samaria to create a Jewish state from the Jordan river to the sea on the other.

The spectrum of political movements that are not considered illegal is very broad, and you can find socialists, libertarians, messianic ultra-nationalist settlers groups, Palestinian nationalists and even some moderates.

Discrimination in the workplace on ethnic, religious, gender, sexual orientation grounds is illegal.

Israel is Jewish as it considers itself the homeland of the Jewish people, much like Germany is the homeland of the Germans and Latvia is the homeland of the Latvian people. In practice it means three main things:

- 1) Jews (but not others) can become citizens of the state upon request. This is similar to the law in many nation states.
- 2) There is emphasis on Jewish culture and identity in the state's cultural institutions.
- 3) Weddings and divorces are controlled by rabbinical institutions. More precisely, for each religious group, the state only recognizes the religious institutions of that group as the ones who can declare or annul marriage. So there is no secular/civil marriage option, unless you are defined "religionless".

This last point might partially answer your question of whether Israel is a secular state. For the most part it is, and it was created by secular people, many of them atheists. Most institutions are secular, as is the criminal law. However, religious courts can determine on family law, as can civil courts. Each religious groups has its own courts.

Some notes on para-legal discrimination:

- There is some employment discrimination, as Jewish employers are less likely to hire Arab candidates. It still happens both because of stereotypes (which is illegal but hard to prove), and in some industries because of the lack of military service by most Arabs in Israel. On the other hand, there is affirmative action in government jobs and universities.

- Arabs are discriminated in allocation of land, partially as a result of historical institutions predating the establishment of the state partially because of unofficial discrimination by the ministry of housing and other government bodies.
- Nonetheless, despite making about 20% of the Israeli population, Arabs own more private lands than Jews, as most Jews live on government owned land.

Regarding the popular claims that Israel is an apartheid state or democracy for Jews alone: Arabs in Israel enjoy more democratic rights than in any Arab country in the world. There are things to improve, and most of them will be solved once a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is achieved.

CHALLENGES:

Israel's identity is examined by those living outside of Israel in accordance with the following premise:

- Israel's character has significant influence on how "Judaism" is regarded around the world by Jews and non-Jews. For example, it is likely to affect the degree of the young generation's devotion to its Jewish identity, and at the same time is likely to affect attitudes of non-Jews toward the Diaspora Jews who live among them.
- Diaspora Jews are members of a minority group in their home countries; in Israel, Jews are the majority. This distinction is relevant to the great importance that Diaspora Jews attach to minority rights in Israel and to human rights in general.

The debate over Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state showed that Diaspora Jews have a variety of expectations of Israel, including:

- That Israel be pluralistic;
- That Israel strive for a reality in which it does not rule over the Palestinians;
- That Israel put an end to the Orthodox monopoly over Jewish life and give equal standing to all Jewish streams;
- That Israel avoid imposing religious norms on its mostly secular civil society;
- That Israel prevent dissipation of its Jewish character by strengthening its citizens' knowledge of Jewish history, traditions, and values.

Since democratic values are considered "Jewish values" by a large percentage of the Jewish world, "actions that erode Israel's democratic values are seen as detrimental to Judaism and to the definition of Israel as a Jewish state."

Criticism on aspects of Israel's conduct in Jewish matters is often based on arguments rooted in democratic values, just as criticism of aspects of Israel's conduct in the democratic field are often based on arguments rooted in Jewish values.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- What importance do you feel the opinions of Diaspora Jews who do not live with the uniqueness of Israeli social dynamics, conflicts, who do not serve in the army or pay taxes, matter to Israel and her lawmakers, or by the Israeli society as a whole?
- To what extent must those living outside of Israel examine and develop their opinions with regard to the practical dilemmas Israel faces that characterize life in a "Jewish and democratic state?"
- The regional reality does not grant Israel immunity from criticism. Should Jews in the Diaspora recognize the difficulties and constraints Israel faces given the regional hostility and security threats when expressing criticism?
- How important is the fact that Israel's neighbors do not adhere to principles of democracy and human rights, as justification for lowering the high values bar Israel is expected to maintain?
- If Israel was not a liberal democracy, would its attractiveness to many Diaspora Jews erode? In this regard, is Israel held to a different standard than other countries in the world? Why or why not?
- Israel has preserved a democratic, multi-party framework and a free and open society. Yet Israel has been pressured and maligned by foreign and domestic pressures more powerfully than other countries. Despite all its flaws, it is in Israel that free political discourse is maintained. What accounts for this difference?

IsraelForever

**"Israel belongs to all Jews,
and not just to those who
live there at the moment.
In fact, Israel belongs to all
Jews past, present, and
future, no matter where they
lived, live, or will live."**

Varda Epstein

ZIONISM & JUDAISM IN CONVERSATION

In Conversation with Yossi Klein Halevi

There is no Israel without Judaism, and no Judaism without Israel, and at the heart of Israel is Jerusalem, or Zion. Our return to Zion is like the final piece in the puzzle and a new one all at once.

Who is Yossi Klein Halevi?

Author, theologian, historian and educator Yossi Klein Halevi has become well known for his powerful books that shed light on different elements of Jewish identity and history. In an interview with the Times of Israel, [Halevi shares anecdotes of wisdom and insight](#) drawn from his years of experience, pain, and memory as an observant Jew who deeply holds on to hope in his heart for peace.

INTRODUCTION

The world generally doesn't understand the relationship in Judaism between the religion, culture, peoplehood, land, and national sovereignty. The elements that we take for granted in our identity are almost entirely misunderstood in a gentile world where Jews are often stereotyped or discredited, rather than as a people with a religious identity, which is how identified Jews have traditionally seen themselves. Assimilated Jews, however, waver on the edge of identity conflicts.

There are various theories that have evolved, separating Zionism and Judaism as opposing elements. Let us discuss these theories, as well as some lies and distortions.

Read the distortion, exaggeration and lie listed below: Why is this a distortion/exaggeration? What is true/untrue about these statements?

DISTORTION

Zionism creates an alternative to the traditional Jewish identity defined by a relationship with Torah and its commandments. Since Zionism began to take root at the turn of the 20th century, most rabbinic authorities have seen it as a dangerous tool to tear the Jews away from their tradition. They believe that Jewish unity must be articulated around the Torah, rather than the Israeli flag. Zionism and the state of Israel have indeed transformed what it means to be a Jew: from a community bound together by a commitment to the Torah into an ethnic nation committed to a state. This continues to be the main reason for the enduring Judaic opposition to Zionism.

EXAGGERATION

Zionism has been a rebellion against Diaspora Judaism and its cult of submission, humility and appeasement. It has been a valiant attempt to transform the humble Jew relying on divine providence into a intrepid Hebrew relying on his own power. Zionists are the ones who have disdained 2000 years of Jewish experience and if at all, this term may be more applicable to them than to their opponents.

Yakov Rabkin, Israeli Canadian anti-Zionist professor

LIE

Zionism and Judaism are diametrically opposed because the State of Israel does not reflect Jewish values.

As stated in IfNotNow's manifesto (on their website): "As we were dehumanized by the oppression we faced, we are now dehumanized by that which we are inflicting. Our elders told many of us that because of our history, we should oppose oppression in all the places it lives, whether it preys upon us or others...Today, the Jewish community is faced with a choice. Will we choose a Judaism that supports freedom and dignity for all Israelis and Palestinians, or will we let the leadership of the establishment define our tradition as incompatible with our values?"

Ultra-Orthodox groups often protest against the State of Israel as being incompatible with a true Torah lifestyle. In March 2014, a mass prayer rally was held in New York City to request Divine intervention against the increased drafting of religious men to the IDF:

"Torah study is what has provided Israel with its security" and the draft of yeshiva (religious) students "was a plot to destroy traditional Judaism."(to JPost)

"The Israeli government is looking to destroy religious society and make the country into a secular melting pot." (to VosIzNeias, a religious news blog)

COMPARE

The following statement is by Yehoshua Klein Halevi:

Moses took us out of Egypt and led us to the land known as Canaan, where we had originally come from 210 years prior to our enslavement. Joshua, Moses' protégée, led us further into Canaan after Moses' death. THAT IS the beginning of Zionism: The return to Zion and Jerusalem is Zionism.

To those of you that believe Zionism began in 1948 with the state of Israel....think again, because this "Old.... New idea" of 1948 was the continuation of Zionism. We came home to Zion. You see you cannot separate Judaism from Zionism because Judaism is Zionism is Israel.

DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Consider each of the following statements. Do you agree/disagree with them? Come up with several points to refute and to support each statement (if possible to do both). If you can, grab a friend and each take up a position. You can also run this as an activity with your family, community, or youth group.

DISCUSS AND DEBATE:

The notion that Judaism is more than a religion is a revelation to Muslims. That a Jew can be an atheist seems to Muslims inconceivable. If you're a Muslim, or for that matter a Christian, you can't be an atheist. So Judaism works differently than the other monotheistic faiths, because of the foundational identity of peoplehood. This lack of understanding of Jewish identity has direct bearing on the Muslim rejection of the legitimacy of Israel, the expression of the Jewish people's national aspirations.

DISCUSS AND DEBATE:

We do ourselves and our cause a terrible disservice by misrepresenting modern Israel as a story founded in European Jewry and the Holocaust; in fact Zionism patently failed to save European Jewry. What we should be internalizing, and explaining to others, is the unique fulfillment of what HaLevi calls the "Zionism of longing" — the half-forgotten story of how we managed to preserve the centrality of the land of Israel in Jewish consciousness, in every corner of the globe where Jews lived for thousands of years. It's one of the most astonishing stories in human history.

DISCUSS AND DEBATE:

The wound of the Second Intifada wasn't just that we endured the worst wave of terrorism in our history, but that the terrorism followed two Israeli offers for Palestinian statehood. Its impact on my generation of Israelis was similar to the impact of 1947-48 on the founding generation of Israelis: It convinced us that there was no possibility for finding partners for borders among the current Palestinian leadership.

DISCUSS AND DEBATE:

We defend our story to the whole world, but we don't bother explaining ourselves to our neighbors. We are accused of occupying the Palestinians, while their national movement doesn't accept our right to exist. We're rightly outraged by the daily attacks on our history and legitimacy that fill the Palestinian media and the Arab world's media. But we've never tried to tell them our story.

DISCUSS AND DEBATE:

The elements of our identity that we take for granted are exactly what we need to explain to others about ourselves: Who are we? What is our relationship to this land? What does it mean that we maintained a kind of vicarious indigenesness with this land through 2,000 years of exile? What is Zionism? What is the relationship between Zionism and Judaism? Why are we the only people in history that managed, after thousands of years, to return to its land? In short: What is our story? And for me, the essence of Judaism is its story. I would define the Jews as a story we tell ourselves about who we think we are.

DISCUSS AND DEBATE:

What is happening to us in the twenty-first century is that the Jewish story of the twentieth century is being turned into its opposite – not a story of courage and faith and persistence but of evil. More than 70 years of siege and delegitimization against Israel. Zionism's great and irreversible achievement is to have re-indigenized the Jewish people in this land.

Additional Discussion Questions

- In your own words describe the connection between Judaism and Zionism as you see it. If someone asked you to explain Zionism, what would you say?
- What is a dream, personal or communal, that you have had for a long time?
- Why do you think the Jewish people kept the dream of returning to Israel alive for 2,000 years?
- Do you think it is important to share the historical background of the Jewish people's ties to Israel?
- What do you want others to know about the connection between Zionism and Judaism?
- Do you think it would help people understand the role of Israel in the lives of the Jewish people if they understand the history?
- When thinking about Israel, what makes you most proud?

FOCSANI CONGRESS OF 1882: ADVANCING JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN OUR ANCESTRAL HOME

By Dr. Elana Yael Heideman

From the heart of Romania, in 1882, the first central committee for the settlement of the Land of Israel and Syria was established.

Few have heard of the Focșani Conference which was the essential launching point for Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) to begin to transform the ancestral dream into action. But it was Romanian Jewry who first established the active associations to settle the Land of Israel by founding the Central Committee of the Society for the Colonization of Eretz Yisrael and by dispatching representatives to Eretz Israel to purchase land. In defiance of the Jew-hatred of their generation, these spirited Jews were heavily inspired by the Hovevei Zion movement which, by the end of 1881, had more than 30 chapters throughout Romania alone.

The convention named "Unions for the Agricultural Settlement of Israel" was held on January 11, and determined that the most efficient way for the solution of the Jewish problem in Romania would be immigration to Palestine and agricultural colonization. The congress set forth the organization of group aliyah via passenger ships that would eventually set sail from Galați harbor.

Held 16 years before the First Zionist Congress in Basel 1897, the congress, held in the Jewish Boys' School in Focsani, was attended by 51 delegates, representing 32 organizations, two press editors, three newspaper reporters. This article, dated 11 January 2018, says:

Zionism was born this week, 135 years ago, in a provincial town in Romania.

On January 11, 1882, delegates from across the land arrived in Focșani for the first conference of activists promoting Jewish resettlement of the historical land of Israel.

The event had an enormous influence on Romanian Jews, and its proceedings also became known outside the borders of Romania. This was the first-ever convention that addressed the rights of the Jewish people to settle and develop their ancestral homeland.

In two waves of immigration - in 1880 and 1890 respectively those seeking to escape the deteriorating situation for Jews in Russia found an avenue for their hopes for freedom. The first wave was inspired by a dream, the second pushed forward by Jews being pushed out of business and trade, ostracized by the public especially in Moscow which was effectively cleansed of Jews for a period of time, and as a result of the official recognition of the Lovers of Zion, Hovevei Tzion, as a legitimate nationalist movement for Jewish self-determination by the Russian government in 1890.

Most are unaware of what became known as The First Aliyah, and most contemporary knowledge of the influx of Jews arriving to Palestine, Eretz Yisrael is related to the Aliyah Bet. But it was these first emigrants that laid the cornerstone for Jewish settlement in Israel - back in a time when "settlement" was the accurate term for the pioneering development of life and community building in the land.

Having come from Odessa, the Carpathian mountains, and the scattered shtetls of Galicia, the Jews arriving were met with conditions they had never experienced: desert heat, malaria-ridden swamplands, and severe financial challenges. They learned farming by working the land, and through actively building their own knowledge base on how to make the desert bloom - a first era of the innovation nation. When JNF was founded in 1901 at the 5th Zionist Congress, the vision of these same early settlers was given a huge leap forward by the influx of support - both financial and spiritual - toward the fostering of new Jewish life in the homeland.

From the words of one of the first arrivals, Vladimir (Ze'ev) Dubnow, to his brother, the historian Simon Dubnow, in October 1882: "The ultimate goal ... is, in time, to take over the Land of Israel and to restore to the Jews the political independence they have been deprived of for these two thousand years The Jews will yet arise and, arms in hand (if need be), declare that they are the masters of their ancient homeland."

These young pioneers succeeded in creating several settlements whose names are famous today as major towns in the modern state of Israel: Rishon LeZion, Rosh Pinna, Zikhron Ya'akov, Gedera Petach Tikva, Neve Tzedek and Neve Shalom - the first neighborhoods of what would become known as Tel Aviv that was officially founded only after the Second Aliyah in the early 1900s. In all the years since then, and particularly after the establishment of the State of Israel, the aliyah of Romanian Jewry has made an enormous contribution to the establishment and consolidation of the State of Israel as a modern state, with impressive achievements in technology, medicine, culture, and art.

Many of the BILU as these first olim were known - Beit Yisrael Lechu U'nelcha, House of Israel arise and we will go - returned to their countries of origin when faced with the incredible hardships of building Israel, but the legacy of their determination remains an inspiration to us all.

Dr. Elana Yael Heideman, Executive Director of The Israel Forever Foundation, is a dynamic and passionate educator who works creatively and collaboratively in developing content and programming to deepen and activate the personal connection to Israel for Diaspora Jews. Elana's extensive experience in public speaking, educational consulting and analytic research and writing has served to advance her vision of Israel-inspired Jewish identity that incorporates the relevance of the Holocaust, Antisemitism and Zionism to contemporary issues faced throughout the Jewish world in a continuous effort to facilitate dialogue and build bridges between the past, present and future.

ZIONISM AS JUDAISM

By Robert Wolfe

There exist innumerable definitions of Zionism. The one I prefer is: **Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people.** The question I want to raise here is: what is the relationship of Zionism to Judaism? Some see Zionism as an outgrowth of Judaism, others as its antithesis. In my view, Zionism is Judaism.

Judaism is of course a relatively modern concept. Traditionally there was no such thing as Judaism but only the religion of the Jews. There was no need to speak of an "Orthodox" version of this religion because there was only one version, handed down from one generation to another by the rabbis. Only after the emergence of the "Reform" movement in the early 19th century of the Christian era did it become necessary to define what was "Orthodox" and what was not. And once people began to argue over the real nature of the religion of the Jews, Judaism was born.

Today we have Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism, Humanist Judaism and who knows what else. The only point on which all these versions of Judaism agree so far as I am aware is that it is a good idea to celebrate the Jewish holidays. Humanist Judaism regards the concept of God as unnecessary, while Reconstructionist Judaism treats it as a metaphor for something or other. Conservative Judaism is generally supportive of the nation of Israel, while most of the other versions tend to the critical side. Orthodox Judaism equates virtue with performance of the mitzvot, while most of the others equate it with conformity to some kind of philosophic or ethical ideal.

In short, defining Judaism based on the doctrines of the Judaists is a hopeless task. I would propose a different method, which is to define Judaism based on the religion of the Jews.

Anyone who has studied this religion in any depth can have no doubt as to what it was all about. It was about the expectation that if the Jews performed the mitzvot correctly, the Messiah would come and restore the Jews to the land of their birth. This was the faith which sustained the Jewish people during the long centuries of exile, segregation and persecution. If there was a difference among Jews, it was between those who passively awaited the coming of the Messiah and those who sought to "force the end" by actions intended to bring about the ingathering of the exiles even without divine intervention.

From the 13th century onwards, those who sought to “force the end” were identified with the teachings of Kabbalah. And central to Kabbalah was a text known as the “Zohar”, which taught that only in the land of Israel could the religion of the Jews reach its full stature. Starting in the late 15th century in connection with the expulsion from Spain and Portugal and the rise of the Ottoman empire, literally tens of thousands of Kabbalists, most of them Sephardim, did in fact settle in the land of Israel in the “four holy cities” of Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias and Hebron. These Kabbalists were Zionists in all but name, and their Zionism was a direct expression of the religion of the Jews as they understood it.

However, the Zionist movement which actually succeeded in bringing about the ingathering of the exiles and the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel was predominantly secular in character. Why was this? It was because the religious Zionists could not free themselves from the belief in miracles.

The Kabbalists who settled in the land of Israel continued to await the coming of the Messiah once they were there. They failed to develop a realistic program for cultivating the land or defending themselves against Arab aggression because they expected God and the Messiah to solve these problems for them.

The only form of Zionism that could actually succeed was one which had entirely abandoned the expectation of miracles and relied solely on its own strength and capabilities.

But the goals of the secular Zionists were at heart no different from those of the religious Zionists. Those goals were to create a Jewish state and society in the land of Israel that would serve both to rehabilitate the Jewish people and act as a light unto the nations. This was the program of the “Zohar” no less than it was the program of Ben Gurion, and Ben Gurion repeatedly described this program as “Messianic” in his writings and speeches.

Orthodox Judaism today also claims to perpetuate the Messianic tradition, but this claim has become highly suspect. Most Hasidim, who constitute the dominant element among Orthodox Jews today, regard the state of Israel as an illegitimate entity precisely because it was not brought into being by miracles. They say that they are still awaiting the coming of the Messiah and in the meanwhile claim to owe no real allegiance to the state of Israel. In short, their Messianism has no practical result, while the secular Messianism which did have a practical result they scorn and disdain.

Most of the other Judaists have explicitly repudiated the Messianic tradition. In particular, Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism and Humanist Judaism all say that they do not believe in the coming of the Messiah and do not regard the birth of the state of Israel as the culmination of Jewish history. They say that the true mission of the Jews is to spread some kind of vague philosophic ideal of goodness and mercy around the world.

This doctrine does not have much in common with the religion of the Jews from which secular Zionism emerged. It must be Judaism, since they call it that, but it is a Judaism which faces an uncertain future since it does not greatly differ from many other religious and philosophic teachings.

Properly understood, Judaism is first and foremost Judah-ism. The word Judaism is derived from the word Judah, which is the English form of the Hebrew name "Yehudah".

Judah was originally the name of one of the Hebrew tribes, and because it was the tribe of David, Judah became the name of the Hebrew kingdom which David founded. In other words, Judah in ancient times was not the name of a religion but of a nation state. This nation state occupied approximately the same territory as the modern nation of Israel, and its people spoke the same language as modern Israelis, namely Hebrew.

The people of Judah also had a religion, but this religion is not perpetuated by any modern version of Judaism since it was centered around the Temple in Jerusalem, which no longer exists, and required animal sacrifice, a ritual which is no longer practiced.

What remains of Judah today is above all the ideal of a sovereign nation state on the territory of the land of Israel belonging to the Nation of Israel, and this ideal is embodied in Zionism to a far greater extent than it is in any modern version of Judaism that is actually called by that name.

What would it take for Zionism to be recognized as authentic Judaism? It would take weekly "services" such as are associated with all the other forms of Judaism.

And what would be the content of these "services"? Worship of God for making Zionism possible? Hardly. Zionism from the start even in its religious guise was based on the concept of "forcing the end", not waiting for God but relying on our own powers and ability.

God in any case is not necessary to Judaism as has been demonstrated by Reconstructionist and Humanist Judaism. What is necessary is an ethical ideal, and this is the missing component in the contemporary Zionist movement.

Zionist culture is rich in ethical teachings, but there is no single, agreed upon exposition of Zionist ideals that could be used as a basis for conducting weekly gatherings. Yet there is a real need for such gatherings, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, as a way of inspiring Jews everywhere with a spirit of dedication to the Zionist movement.

The following statement of the Zionist ideal by Yigal Alon provides a good example of the type of formulation that could provide a solid basis for weekly educational and inspirational gatherings of a Zionist Judaism:

WHAT IS ZIONISM?

Zionism is the modern expression of the ancient Jewish heritage.

Zionism is the national liberation movement of a people exiled from its historic homeland and dispersed among the nations of the world.

Zionism is the redemption of an ancient nation from a tragic lot and the redemption of a land neglected for centuries.

Zionism is the revival of an ancient language and culture, in which the vision of universal peace has been a central theme.

Zionism is the embodiment of a unique pioneering spirit, of the dignity of labour, and of enduring human values.

Zionism is creating a society, however imperfect it may still be, which tries to implement the highest ideals of democracy - political social and cultural - for all the inhabitants of Israel, irrespective of religious belief, race or sex.

Zionism is, in sum, the constant and unrelenting effort to realize the national and universal vision of the prophets of Israel.

I am sure that other formulations along similar lines could also be found. I propose a wide ranging discussion of Zionist ideals with a view to developing a movement for the creation of a Zionist Judaism.

Robert Wolfe is a historian and scholar that has studied, taught and written about history for 50 years. For the past 35 years, his focus has been on the specific issue of the role of the Jewish people in world history. He has written five books and a number of articles bearing on this topic. Gradually he was drawn to Zionism, and in 2001 he and his wife Linda made aliyah to Israel.

THERE IS NO ZIONISM WITHOUT JERUSALEM

By Ilana Brown

Jerusalem is part of the Jewish people in the same way that the heart is part of the human body. It is not merely an organ that keeps the body functioning. Without it there would be no life.

The last line of the Passover Seder calls for ***"Next Year in Jerusalem!"*** Before the groom breaks the glass at his wedding he says ***"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem..."***

When Jews pray, they face Jerusalem.

Ethiopian Israelis chose Jerusalem Day to commemorate the Ethiopians who died on the long trek to Israel.

The song "Jerusalem of Gold" is recognized the world over.

The national anthem of Israel concludes with the line ***"To be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem."*** Both with religious and secular associations, the list goes on and on.

The State of Israel passed a law in 1980 declaring that ***"Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel."*** While not internationally recognized as such, until the law is changed, Jerusalem is the complete and united capital of the sovereign State of Israel.

Lt.-Gen. Mordechai "Motta" Gur, commander of the force in the Old City, a secular, native-born Jerusalemite, declared ***"The Temple Mount is in our hands! I repeat, the Temple Mount is in our hands!"*** He did not say "The Old City" or "The Jewish Quarter." Rather, his Jewish heart told him that the important thing was the Temple Mount; the Temple Mount was in our hands.

By law, by religion, by emotion, Jerusalem is the center, the core, the heart of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

Along with the idea of two states for two peoples, we are asked to consider Jerusalem as the shared capital for these two states. We are told that holding Arab-majority neighborhoods in east Jerusalem as jailers is morally abhorrent. We are told that misguided Zionism has turned us into overlords. It might be suggested that Jerusalem was divided from 1948-1967 and it did not destroy the State of Israel or substantially damage the Jewish people around the world.

From the year 70 CE, when Jerusalem fell to the Romans, until 1967, the city was not under Jewish control. And yet, Jews around the world continued to yearn for Jerusalem – not for Tiberias, not for Safed, not for Hebron.

In 1948, when the Jewish state was established and immediately plunged into a war, the infant state was not able to hold Jerusalem. But still the people yearned for Jerusalem. And finally, when

the paratroopers entered the Old City on June 7, 1967, religious and secular alike were awed by their achievement.

When a people fulfill a dream, a 1,900-year-old dream, how does that people abandon it and give it to someone else? How does one give up even part of that dream?

Zionism tells us that we have a legitimate right to have a state in our historic homeland. The heart of our homeland is Jerusalem. We need not apologize for advocating for our right to the Zionist dream, nor for fulfilling that dream.

Just try to imagine a Jewish homeland in Uganda, or in Alaska, or in Madagascar. Why does a Jewish homeland anywhere else seem hollow and empty? The answer is Jerusalem.

Ilana Brown immigrated to Israel from the US in 2002 and has spent most of her career in Israel working for the Menachem Begin Heritage Center, Jerusalem. She also works with Im Tirtzu, Ilana handling communications in English and development as well as external relations.



"Moses took us out of Egypt and led us to the land known as Canaan, where we had originally come from 210 years prior to our enslavement. Joshua, Moses' protégée, led us further into Canaan after Moses' death. THAT IS the beginning of Zionism: The return to Zion and Jerusalem is Zionism.

To those of you that believe Zionism began in 1948 with the state of Israel.... think again, because this "Old.... New idea" of 1948 was the continuation of Zionism. We came home to Zion. You see you cannot separate Judaism from Zionism because Judaism is Zionism is Israel."



Israel Forever

Here, in the Land of Israel, we returned and built a nation. Here, in the Land of Israel, we established a State. The Land of the Prophets, which bequeathed to the world the values of morality, law and justice, was after two thousand years restored to its lawful owner - the members of the Jewish People. On its Land, we have built an exceptional national Home and State.

Yitzhak Rabin

RABIN SQUARE
Tel Aviv, Israel

Ran Harari DCEP SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rabin_Square.jpg

MY HERZL YOUTH ESSAY COMPETITION

The My Herzl Youth Essay competition, organized by The Israel Forever Foundation, aims to showcase the relevance of Herzl as a visionary Jewish leader in modern times. This international essay competition focuses on the legacy of Herzl as envisioned by today's Jewish youth and the leaders of the next generation.

The following young voices were selected for their ability to best capture the spirit of Herzl. We invite you to read and be inspired by the perspectives of these future leaders.

MY HERZL, MY JUDAISM, MY GENERATION

By Raya T.

MyHerzl Youth Essay Competition Winner

There's a wonderful story told about the great Yiddish writer, Isaac Bashevis Singer, a Nobel prize laureate who was asked how he felt about winning the Nobel prize for writing in Yiddish, then considered a dying language. Singer cleverly responded, "there's a long way between dying and dead."

As it turns out, Singer was right, Yiddish is being revived worldwide. If Yiddish can be revitalized, we must have faith that some of the biggest challenges facing Jewish people in the 21st century can also be resolved.

Among the main issues that the Jewish people face is the imminent threat to Jewish youth in four areas:

- A shocking 60% of American youth from intermarried homes do not identify as Jews (intermarriage now comprises 70% of Jewish marriages!).
- Another alarming concern is that 50% of American Jewish youth under 35 would not view the destruction of Israel as a personal tragedy.
- A further related area requiring our urgent attention is the growing divide between Jews in the Diaspora and Israel, that may threaten the survival of the Jewish people.
- And finally, with each new generation, we see an alarming lack of Jewish literacy.

I hope to offer some possible solutions to these critical challenges.

There may be many images of Theodor Herzl in existence, but one that hasn't been publicly viewed is the most treasured picture in my family collection. It is a picture taken in Munich at the wedding celebration of my late Bubby and Zayda, both Holocaust survivors. They are seated at their wedding surrounded by friends—who, like them, are Holocaust survivors. Immediately behind them, is a large picture of Herzl, positioned very prominently.

The picture was taken a month before the declaration of the state of Israel in 1948. The symbolism of the Herzl picture is not lost to those at the 'chasenah,' Yiddish for 'wedding.' To my grandparents and survivors, Herzl was a hero to our people. They understood the deep significance of a homeland for Jews. As Professor Irwin Cotler, so aptly said, "It's not that the Holocaust gave rise to Israel, but had there been an Israel, there never would have been a Holocaust."

After my Bubby Ruchala was liberated from Dachau in May of 1945, the very first thing she bought was a camera. While her family's pictures had vanished forever like millions of others, through pictures she would rebuild her family's life with the customs, traditions, and culture that had existed for thousands of years.

Similarly, I know what it's like to be robbed of family heritage and a past—to have no pictures or documents that record history. I never knew my birth family and my identity remains a mystery. I was born in China, during the one child policy, where families were allowed to have only one child. As most families chose to keep their sons, millions of girls were killed or aborted in what's been called a 'gendercide.' In an attempt to save me, my birth family released me to an orphanage. My fate was to be adopted as a baby into a Canadian Jewish family.

I understand deeply what it means to be a survivor of genocide, having the scars of two genocides in my history—two heritages to commemorate and also to celebrate.

I identify as Jewish and Chinese. I treasure both of these identities which have enriched my life. Exposed to both of my mother tongues, I adore my 'mamalushens,' Yiddish and Mandarin. I've grown up eating kugel, kreplach, and kneidlach, with chopsticks.

I know what happens when people are stripped of their rights. I have witnessed complicity where millions perished, as the world remained largely silent. As Elie Wiesel said, "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim."

Herzl remains a heroic example of defiance and resistance. Herzl was not defined exclusively by the anti-Semitism of his world, but how he, as a Jew, could counter it. In other words, he was not defined by what had been done to Jews. What became far more significant was what Jews had to do for themselves. In the spirit of Herzl, we must present not as victims of our times, but as activists. Instead of focusing on how anti-Semitism or the Palestinian conflict might be impacting us, we must also consider what we are in danger of doing to ourselves.

We face an urgent crisis among today's young Jews. When asked if the destruction of Israel would be a personal tragedy, an astounding 50% of Jewish Americans under 35 said it would not.

How are we addressing this crisis of Jewish youth who are becoming more alienated and disengaged from their Jewish identities? We need to be reimagining Jewishness so it's relevant to younger generations. We need to strike a balance between pluralism, inclusivity, and tradition.

At my shul (Congregation Habonim in Toronto), for instance, I am invited to give congregational sermons for the High Holidays, I sing the liturgy and read from the Torah, and contribute to our shul's social justice events. As a recipient of The Bronfman Fellowship, I joined 50 Israelis and Americans to explore Jewish history and culture which further evolved my Jewish identity. At both Habonim and The Bronfman Fellowship, you're accepted if you have a meaningful connection to being Jewish and want to sustain it. Other shuls and programs are moving in this direction, but not nearly enough of them and not nearly fast enough.

A shocking 60% of the kids from the many intermarriages don't identify as Jewish. When kids from intermarriages don't identify as Jewish, it's likely because they're excluded from the Jewish community and they have been deprived of Jewish literacy.

These kids are not leaving Judaism. They haven't been exposed to it or studied it and it's unfair to them. They don't even know what they're losing. It's not that these kids have left Judaism, it's that Judaism has left them.

And that leads to the obvious question. What does being Jewish even mean? Being Jewish is not necessarily about faith or belief in God. We Jews are a people and a nation, with our own languages and culture, including a system of belief and law rooted in universal justice. Being Jewish is characterized by argument, objection and opposition – all in the name of striving for justice. Jewish progress has always been fueled by tradition, criticism, and innovation. Judaism needs to evolve and be exciting or else it becomes irrelevant. Those who practice it should view it as a privilege, not a burden.

The staggering number of youth who are apathetic towards their Jewish identity must be addressed urgently. The time to reverse this trend is now.

We've done a great job of connecting to the past and honouring the Shoah and that's meaningful. But if we don't connect to the future, the future will disappear as well. Let's take the past and make sure it ends up being transmitted to the future in a way young people can relate to.

Including the voices of youth in this year's World Zionist Congress is an inspired step in the right direction. Moving forward, when you're making your communal decisions, whatever they're about, whatever direction you're going in, whatever program, whatever initiative you're involved in, the question should be: How is it going to connect to young people? Ask yourself, does this include and respond to young peoples' needs? That's what you need to do—otherwise, you're going to lose us, the future of the Jewish people.

One of the most critical issues facing the Jewish people is the loss of our Jewish youth. 50% of kids don't care if Israel is destroyed. Our first line of defence must be Jewish literacy. Apathy is the symptom, but illiteracy is the cause. We cannot expect Jewish youth to care about something they know virtually nothing about. The calls for Israel's disappearance or non-importance, particularly among some of our own youth, must be resisted.

What is at stake in Israel is not just the Jewish state but the future of the Jewish people. The question becomes, can the Jews survive without a state of Israel? As we are besieged by anti-Semitism globally, both from the right and the left, and face our own inner weakness, dare we think that we are immune to another Shoah? The state of Israel is critical to our survival as a people. Israel may seem invincible but Jewish history has shown us how fragile our freedom has always been.

"Zionism has both united and divided the Jewish people in a way that no other movement ever has and that as we all have seen is uniquely true of the relationship between American Jews and Israel," as author Daniel Gordis writes. I ask: what are some of the causes of the rift between Jews in Israel and the Diaspora, and how can the rift be healed? With respect to the Diaspora, I speak specifically about America, as it is home to the largest Jewish community.

Many Jews, particularly in the Diaspora, feel shame, humiliation and embarrassment because of the Israeli-Palestinian tensions. This rift is especially prominent among youth. But as Gordis suggests, "The real issue that divides the world's two largest Jewish communities is not what Israel does but what Israel is. The essential issue is that at their cores, Israel and America are exceedingly different, founded with different purposes. They believe in and promote very different kinds of democracies with very different values."

Having a history of anti-Semitism, persecution, and genocide, Israel was created to offer freedom and sanctuary to the Jewish people. Herzl intended for Israel to be a national home to the Jews. The American vision was to welcome people of all backgrounds.

The fundamental differences between America and Israel are hardly ever raised in discussions about the two communities. The failure to address these core differences camouflages some of the urgent issues confronting the two communities, elevating the tensions between them. Each of us must define what it means to be a Jew and their understanding of Israel's purpose. However, to have these conversations, we need to enrich our Jewish literacy—an understanding of history and culture.

"The sad reality is that the wealthiest and most politically involved, culturally invested and secularly educated Diaspora community in the entire history of Jewish people is also, by far, the least Jewishly literate community ever created by Jewish people," says Gordis.

The decline of Jewish literacy is also a widespread phenomenon in Israel. Consider that 50% of Israeli school kids don't know who Herzl is. This is from a study conducted about 10 years ago with no updated statistics available.

We can't possibly have productive discourse without Jewish literacy—an understanding of Jewish history, culture, and beyond. Traditionally, what has defined and preserved Jewish culture is a healthy dose of discourse, disagreement and criticism.

Let's face it, a Jew without questions—what kind of a Jew would that be? Questioning is the very fabric of what's kept us going as a people. It's one of the reasons we're still very much around today.

Jews have thrived on the cultivation of ideas and disagreement. Now, more than ever, we need to engage in the discourse of why the Jews need a state and what we are prepared to do to preserve it. We need to discuss our differing opinions without completely disposing of Zionism.

Some Israelis may question why Diaspora Jews should be involved in the transformation of Israel. Simply put, without Diaspora Jews there might never have been an Israel. Israel came about because Jews from the Diaspora, like Herzl, had a vision and were inspired to create the state. Similarly, today, Diaspora Jews may have the capability to help recreate the state. In the spirit of Herzl, we need to be inclusive of all voices moving forward.

Just as the Diaspora needs Israel, Israel needs the Diaspora. Much more than military and political support is at stake here. The Diaspora offers profound cultural, moral, and intellectual contributions.

I would like to offer some possible solutions to address the issues surrounding our Jewish youth.

A) Focus your efforts on Jewish youth.

To you, our leaders, and perhaps today's prophets, I ask you to consider: are we doing enough to appreciate, value and invest in my generation, and those that follow? If you don't take action, if you do not reach out to us, and include us and connect to us and make being Jewish meaningful to us, you will lose us, the future of the Jewish people. And if that were to happen, then we must face that Hitler did win the war.

B) Teach Jewish youth that it's a privilege and joy to be Jewish, not a burden to feel guilty about.

Encouraging families to adopt rituals at home may be the most powerful conduit to preserving Jewish identity. Shabbat dinners, baking rugalach, singing Jewish music and laughing at Isaac Bashevis Singer's tales of Chelm—finding an organic way of including joy, wonder, and beauty of our world culture. What has preserved the Jewish people for thousands of years is our traditions, customs, rituals. So many young people today are deprived of our ancestral heritage and Jewish literacy. We need to reverse this trend urgently.

C) Create or improve exciting learning opportunities - with both Jewish and Israel content - that inspire youth and encourage them to question.

Research reveals that Jewish camps and Israel experiences are more successful than synagogues and day schools at keeping non-Orthodox Jews Jewish. Examples of such opportunities include The Bronfman Fellowship, Birthright, March of the Living, Masa, and Jewish Service in Israel.

D) Connect Diaspora youth with Israeli youth to create personal relationships that supersede political ideologies.

Diaspora and Israeli Jews need to be connected, particularly when they're young—or else, how can we understand each other's Jewish identities, differences and most importantly, care about each other? Support Diaspora students to continue their studies in Israel, in the hopes of exposing them to Israelis and their culture.

Herzl was a man of action—he overcame the disbeliefs of so many to create the foundation for the eventual Jewish state.

Herzl was a dreamer but also a man of deeds. And today, we need more than dreams. We must take action, following Herzl's mantra: "If you will it, it is not a dream."

My dream is for a more inclusive, more relevant, more exciting, more inspiring Jewish community. That is my dream and I hope you can join me in realizing this dream.

Leshana Habaah Beyerushalayim. Next year in Jerusalem. The age-old prayer—a plea for freedom and hope. Yes, let us pray for next year in Jerusalem, but to you, the delegates of World Zionist Congress, I say let us make it THIS year in Jerusalem.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHOAH MEMORY TO HERZL'S LEGACY

By Yedidya F.

The Holocaust. The Shoah. Just mentioning those words is guaranteed to send a shiver down any Jew's spine.

The atrocities and despicable acts committed by the Nazis over 70 years ago still haunt us to this day. But although all these animalistic crimes will never be forgotten, the Shoah did leave in its wake three crucial benefits which must not be ignored. The first: to enlighten the world on how heinous it is to allow the degradation of people to take place without putting an end to it. Second, the Shoah showed the importance of having faith, even when all seems lost. And last of all, the establishment of the State of Israel, the fulfilment of Theodor Herzl's dreams and the dreams of Jews throughout the globe.

Between 1933-1945, world leaders and the media turned a blind eye to the extermination of the Jewish people. When the camps were finally liberated, the barbaric acts were revealed to the world, sending it into a state of shock. No one could believe that fellow humans could be treated like filth. That the notion 'to love your fellow as yourself' was abandoned in favour of cruelty and arrogance. This spurred compassion for the Jewish people. For the first time in hundreds of years, aiding the Jewish people became somewhat of a priority.

It started slowly at first, refugee camps here and there, but eventually immigration quotas were loosened in areas like the United States, allowing Holocaust survivors a chance at a new life. The United Nations, formed in 1945, strove "To maintain international peace and security" and this laid the foundation for a reformed world built on love, not hatred. The Nuremberg Trials were held in 1945-1946, shedding further light onto the horrors of the Holocaust.

The German government in 1953 began to reimburse Jews for the terror and trauma their people had caused the nation, despite knowing that the wound would never fully heal. All these actions were the start of restoring the Jewish people's confidence in humanity, after humanity had no confidence in the Jews.

Herzl's view that anti-Semitism was a not only a threat to the Jewish people but rather a threat to the world itself was being realised at last, over 40 years since his death. Herzl's belief in the good of the gentile nations even after all they had done to the Jewish people since its inception demonstrates the value in always looking for the best in others. Even when it looked like that there was no redemption for the other nations, by them taking a stand, acknowledging that Jews are not an inferior people and in fact an asset to society itself - only then could the State of Israel be established and the Jewish nation become united once again.

One of the most provocative questions to the Jewish mind even today, is “Where was God in the Holocaust?” How come He let six million Jews perish without seemingly any intervention? Is this the “עַם סְגוּלָה” “treasured people” (*Devarim 7:6*) of God? What if the question was inverted and instead worded “Where was man in the Holocaust?”; “Where was empathy and respect for fellow humans?”

There is a famous story about a Holocaust survivor and a siddur, which answers this question beautifully. This Holocaust survivor, named Simon Wiesenthal, was visited after the war by Rabbi Silver, who was seeking to comfort survivors of the war. The Rabbi invited the man to a special service with many others like Wiesenthal, however, he declined. Wiesenthal elaborated on his reasoning.

He told Rabbi Silver that during the Shoah, there was a religious man who smuggled a siddur into the camps and was ‘renting out’ a few minutes with it to fellow Jews in exchange for their precious bread. As a result of the sheer quantity of food which this Jew received, he died, because his body was just unable to cope with such an influx of nourishment. Which is why Wiesenthal concluded that after witnessing this immoral act he could no longer associate himself with any form of praying.

Rabbi Silver solaced Wiesenthal and explained to him that he should not focus on the man who deprived his comrades of their food. Rather, focus on the dozens of Jews who sacrificed their treasured food just to have a brief moment with the *siddur*!

Wiesenthal went to services the very next day.

This story shows the extent to which Jews went in order to be closer to Hashem. Their willingness to retain their faith even when God was the most obscured demonstrates that Hashem was and is constantly amidst us. Rewarding those who sacrifice themselves with life and those who take the lives of others with death.

The fact that even after the Shoah, the Jewish people had the impulse to move forward, look past the parlous state of the world and unite together for a common cause – to create a Jewish home – is a testament to Herzl’s resilient mindset to never abandon hope. Just as Herzl persisted with his idea for a Jewish state for the better of the Jewish people, so too the post-war Jews persisted with their dream of having “ארץ ישראל לעם ישראל” (“The land of Israel for the people of Israel”) for the better of the Jewish people.

Just as Herzl looked past the differences in each individual Jew and unified them into “עַם אֶחָד עִם לֵב אֶחָד” (“One nation with one heart”) so did the Jews of 1945 set aside their dissimilarities and come together as one. And, just as Herzl’s memory lives on today, empowering us, so too do the memories of the victims of the Holocaust live on inside of us today, fuelling us with passion to be the best possible person we can, because they did not have the chance to.

By far, the biggest post-Holocaust blessing to the Jewish people was founding the State of Israel just three years after the Jews were finally free. Having a Jewish homeland after over 2000 years in exile was the penultimate realisation of Herzl's wish and the Jewish nation's. For the Jews, it was not only the gravity of having a land to themselves, it was also the connection to that land and its inherent holiness which made returning to Israel even more momentous.

But this was not the first time the Jewish people felt this way. To fully comprehend the enormity of returning to the Holy Land, it is incumbent upon us to explore a parallel situation in which the Jews were also saved from a genocide and brought to the land of Israel.

The Exodus from Egypt. One of, if not the most, influential events in the history of our nation. For 210 years the Jewish people were oppressed, discriminated and tortured in order to greater develop the monopoly of Egypt. Yet, as bad as the Egyptians were, with their idols and immorality, the Jews were so assimilated that they were almost on the same level of impurity as them. They were so assimilated, that the sages teach that if Hashem would have intervened even one moment later, then the Jews would have been unable to be redeemed.

And when they were finally saved, it was not instant either. It took ten plagues, the splitting of the sea and 40 years in the desert until the Israelites actually entered Eretz Israel. Clearly, the Jewish people had to learn to not only break free from physical labour, but also from the mentality of being a slave: to be in control of one's life, to view oneself as worthwhile and, crucially - to raise a family with these newly-acquired Jewish principles in mind.

Furthermore, the Jews' many years in the desert, where they were guided by Hashem himself and Moses – brought about a new challenge: when the Israelites did ultimately reach the land, it was a struggle for them to become accustomed to living a life of having to sustain oneself.

In our times, God did not perform any miracles akin to the miracles of Egypt and did not send the greatest prophet of history to guide us to Israel - it was up to us to manage that. Why was this? Why could our generation not receive the same treatment as the Israelites?

The answer, I believe, is that because the generation of Egypt did not have a voice, did not have the כוח (strength), the אומץ (courage) to live a life without God being openly by their side. How could they? The Israelites knew nothing different, that was how they grew up.

In contrast, the Jews of the last few hundred years had found these virtues and could already cope with being in charge of their fate. The generation of the 20th century did not have Moses, Aaron and Joshua. They had Herzl, Ben Gurion and Moshe Dayan. Despite not being on the same spiritual level as Moses, Aaron and Joshua, the leaders of our time were perfect because they had the passion to work with the world to solve the growing dilemma of the lack of homeland for the Jews.

In addition, we as a nation have realised that the best way to evolve our nation is to come together as one. **It is no small feat that despite the political or social issues we have with each other when it comes to the safety of the State of Israel, people set aside their qualms and help in whatever way they can.** Whether it be through donating to soldiers, volunteering time to fight or just spreading awareness about the conflict, Israelis always put Israel first, over themselves.

This concept is precisely what Theodore Herzl preached over 100 years ago. In order to cure anti-Semitism throughout the world, the only solution was to have a Jewish State; and to keep that dream alive the country would need to be protected at all costs. And this would be executed similarly to how Herzl gained recognition for the importance of his precepts. Just as Herzl gathered Jews to vouch for a land of their own when they were in strife, similarly, the Jews in Israel gather together when they are in strife in order to retain their home.

All these factors contribute to illustrate just how much the Shoah has had an impact on the realisation of Herzl's values and ideologies in the present age. It began with how the Holocaust shaped the way the world saw the Jews: no longer as scapegoats, but as a nation filled with humans equal to the rest of society.

This perception then expanded to not only viewing Jews as people with rights, but also as role models for the world, since in spite of them facing a mass genocide, the Jewish people remained steadfast in their beliefs and in maintaining hope for a better future. This future was realised at last on May 5th 1948 when the State of Israel was formed after the wake of Shoah - a miraculous achievement - which was the ultimate goal of the Zionist movement led by Theodore Herzl.

Like a phoenix, the State of Israel was born amidst the ashes and has soared to great heights to fulfill its goal of being a 'light unto the nations.' And like a phoenix, even when Israel falls, it always has the capacity to return to its former glory. As Israel continues to overcome more hurdles on its path to success, it is pivotal to acknowledge the countless people, such as the 'Father of Zionism,' who have poured their soul into allowing our country to exist and to be a safe haven for Jews across the globe.

IF YOU ARE IT, THEN BE IT

by Eitan P.

From my years at a Jewish elementary school and Jewish overnight camp I had heard about Theodor Herzl but knew little about him, so when I learned about this contest I decided to actually read *The Jewish State*. I was immediately shocked by two things. First, how timely it still is. The Europe of the 1890s he describes seems frighteningly similar to 2020 America, and the “Jewish Question,” as he called it, seems as alive as ever. And second, its insights into my own life as a Jew living in America, into my own Jewish “journey” of identity and identification, made it personal. And so I had to write.

1. THE JEWISH QUESTION

For Herzl, the “Jewish Question” was, “Can Jews live as Jews in Europe?” Could Jews practice Judaism while also having equal rights and physical safety? Could Jews identify as Jews and still fit in with the majority of non-Jews around them? There had been an entire century of “emancipation,” which meant that officially Jews were equal citizens to everyone else. For some Jews, this was an opportunity to assimilate into European society, intermarry, be successful, live well. But assimilation, Herzl thought, could not succeed in the end.

It wouldn’t work because what makes assimilation possible, he wrote, is the social and economic success of Jews in European society, but then that very same success creates an antisemitic backlash which prevents assimilation. Indeed, he saw firsthand the 19th-century rise of antisemitism throughout Europe. When he heard the spectators shouting “Death to the Jews!” during the Dreyfuss Affair he knew that the answer to the “Jewish Question” was, simply, no. Jews could not live as Jews in Europe. A few decades later the Holocaust tragically proved him right.

The only solution to the Jewish Question, he felt, was for Jews to leave Europe— and with this, Zionism, and ultimately the State of Israel, were born.

But while Herzl was right about the fate of Jews in Europe, he got something very wrong too. He believed the establishment of Israel would end antisemitism. It hasn’t, not in Europe and not even in America. And he never dreamed that Israel itself would simply become the target of antisemitism.

America, especially, was supposed to be different. It was supposed to be the “Golden Land,” like Europe, only after successful emancipation. Within a couple of generations Jews here became really free, really equal, and successful in many fields.

But recent years have seen an explosion of antisemitism here. Right-wing White Supremacists rally against the Jews. African-American leaders like Louis Farrakhan spew hatred against Jews. Extreme left-wing activists spout similar hatred against Israel on college campuses.

And there has been so much serious violence just in the past year: shootings in Pittsburgh, San Diego, New Jersey, a mass stabbing with a machete at a Chanukah party in Monsey, daily attacks on Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn. I've read stories where students call for the death of Israel on campuses. Can the Dreyfus mobs, shouting "Death to the Jews!", be far behind? My father showed me the picture of Herzl on the balcony over the river before the First Zionist Congress. I imagine him standing on a balcony overlooking any of these scenes in America, and wonder what he would think.

So the Jewish Question is alive and well, in a new form: Can Jews live as Jews in 2020 America? As a fourteen-year-old entering high school, and soon college, reading Herzl has terrified me.

2. MY QUESTION

For most of my life I have lived in a comfortable space, straddling my Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. I went to a Jewish school and celebrated my holidays, but also participated in many non-Jewish activities (such as sports). I wasn't different because I was Jewish, I was different in ways that every individual is different. My modern Hebrew name was just another "unusual name" like so many others. I felt safe and accepted in both these worlds.

But things began to change when I entered a non-Jewish middle school. Leaving the protective Jewish bubble of elementary school I suddenly became aware of what being a minority really meant. And I had to start figuring out who I was, who I wanted to be, was even comfortable with being, standing out from everyone around me. Was being a Jew in this environment even possible, for me? I faced hard decisions about wearing a kippah, going to school events or socializing on Friday nights. Correcting people's pronunciation of my Hebrew name took on a new feeling, as it was now identified as Jewish.

In this environment my differences even with my Jewish friends were magnified. I became aware that my definition of being Jewish didn't line up with those of some of my peers, and I was clashing with friends who had Jewish ancestry but no real Jewish identity. I became suddenly aware of how sheltered I had been in my Jewish environment, where I never had pushback talking about Israel or antisemitism, where I didn't have to explain why a conversation about the Holocaust was personal.

These questions have gripped me throughout the past year. In January 2019 I had my Bar Mitzvah. In March I performed a spoken word poem about Jewish identity called "What Kind of Jew Are You?" I spent two summer months at a Jewish sleep-away camp, and in September I started wearing a kippah publicly. As these things happened, I started to notice that people

changed how they looked at me, even how they treated me. There was no question that some people were uncomfortable with my spoken word poem, and with my kippah, with my “coming out” as a Jew. This included my Jewish friends too, if not even more so. I had hit a nerve.

There were people who had never particularly identified as Jewish before who suddenly started speaking “as a Jew” to argue with me over what it meant to be Jewish—for me. One thing I found most interesting was how people lost patience for the topic of antisemitism. They would try to change the topic or broaden it to a conversation about all minorities and prejudice. I experienced more pushback on what counted as antisemitism, and whether or not I was being “over-sensitive” when the issue came up. People rolled their eyes at me, seemed upset with me, I felt, simply because I was openly—and unapologetically—identifying as a Jew. And these were my friends.

Reading Herzl as I thought about this contest, it suddenly hit me that when I was asking, “What kind of Jew are you?” in my spoken word poem, I was really asking what kind of Jew did I want to be. I was asking this question as a Jew living in an America that is largely non-Jewish, in an environment that seems to be becoming more and more “upset” with Jews and the Jewish state.

Herzl’s question, the “Jewish Question,” I realize now, is my question. Only now it seems even harder. Herzl’s answer, the Jewish state, already exists, but antisemitism is alive and well and often aims at Israel.

3. IF YOU ARE IT, THEN BE IT

I don’t know how to stop antisemitism. A lot of smart people have been trying to do that for a long time. As I was writing this essay there was a huge rally in New York against antisemitism. I thought it was exciting and important but will it suddenly make people stop hating Jews and Israel? I don’t know how to stop antisemitism but I still have to figure out how I should live as a Jew in 2020 America.

Is Herzl’s answer for Europe, the answer for America today? Namely, leave? Perhaps, in an ideal world, we American Jews would all move to Israel—our protective bubble. I can definitely understand why certain individuals make aliyah, Israel is like no other place for Jews. It is the only place in the world where Jews can fully live as Jews. I visited when I was very small, and half my family is there—I already imagine that I might make *aliyah* someday. This response is a good response for many people.

But is this a realistic goal for everyone? Israel is a foreign country to most American Jews, and it isn’t so simple just to move and leave family, friends, and jobs behind, and start over. And for many American Jews, their American identity is too strong to give up. Convincing a large number of American Jews to make *aliyah* is just not likely to happen.

But I also think there are deeper reasons this answer is not a good answer for here. If we care about preserving Jewish identity and care about Israel, then we need Jews in America to help keep America as an ally and supporter of Israel. If we all leave, then the antisemites can take over easily. Additionally, to have all the Jews in the world move into one tiny country the size of New Jersey is a real safety issue. One nuclear bomb would wipe us all out. This may sound dramatic but after the Holocaust we have to think this way. Even now, as I write this essay the news is filled with Iran threatening to attack Israel.

Finally, this answer is really a “defeat.” It suggests Americans and Jews can’t mix, so we run away. This strikes me as giving up on the dream of America, which is really a good dream. Historically, minorities that overcame discrimination always did it by equalizing themselves in the eyes of the majority, and the Jews should aim for the same. Not give up, but instead increase our pride in our Jewish identity.

It’s not only where you live, it’s how you live as a Jew. One way to increase pride might be to become more religious. Judaism is a beautiful religion, a way of life, and is definitely an important source of identity and pride. There was just a big “*siyum*” in New Jersey celebrating the end of the Talmud cycle that brought 90,000 Orthodox Jews together.

While my family belongs to an Orthodox shul, our level of observance is not itself Orthodox. But still, looking at pictures of that event I could really feel the identity and the pride, so much that I even subscribed to a Daf Yomi newsletter. I am not sure if I would ever become fully Orthodox myself, but I so appreciate the many people who are. I am still trying to become comfortable wearing my kippah in public, but I am in awe of those who are open and proud Jews who are not afraid to “look like” Jews.

But just like there are huge obstacles to Jewish Americans all moving to Israel, so too it is unrealistic that a large number of American Jews will become Orthodox, or even just “more religious.” People can’t just change their belief systems, and ways of life, so easily. I recently heard a podcast about how, generation by generation, Americans are getting less religious, Jews and non-Jews.

For most of the kids I know, religion seems old-fashioned and even silly. Of course most American Jews belong to the other denominations of Judaism, and they can find identity and pride there too. I am still learning about religion but many people I know from those denominations seem to identify more as Americans than as Jews. And according to this podcast they are becoming less and less religious too. So religion can’t quite be the answer.

So is there a way to live as a Jew, and as an American, in the right balance? Clearly, this means standing up for and being proud of one’s Jewishness, but what exactly does that mean? If we can’t all make aliyah and we can’t all become more Orthodox, what is the answer? As I mentioned, there was just a big rally in New York against antisemitism. Obviously that is good, and it was good that a few days before, an editorial in the New York Times urged people to participate in it. But then the Times chose to highlight as its top comment on the editorial, as a “Times Pick,” the following comment:

Stamping out antisemitism is definitely a good idea. Attempting to stamp out criticism of Israel is definitely a bad idea, and could well lead to more antisemitism. Be VERY VERY CAREFUL not to allow any part of this march to be seen as a pro-Israel demonstration. Israeli flags or blue and white banners will do much more harm than good.

As I thought about why this comment bothered me I realized what the answer to my question, my Jewish Question, should be.

Be careful NOT to support the Jewish State, as a Jew? This demand implies that Jews shouldn't support the Jewish State. That Jews who do support it are not welcome in this space. That if you want our support against antisemitism, then you have to be the kind of Jew we want you to be.

But to tell Jews protesting antisemitism that support for Israel may increase antisemitism is to tell Jews they should shut up and become invisible because otherwise people will hate them more. To tell Jewish people protesting antisemitism that they should not show support for Israel is to tell Jewish people to have no pride in themselves or their identity. But that is the very opposite of standing up and being proud of one's identity.

And so being a Jew, a proud Jew, should mean showing your support of Israel. And if the dream of America is to be a place where people are proud of their identities, then being a proud American Jew should mean being proud of supporting Israel. This means connecting to Israel, learning about and visiting Israel, meeting Israelis, but most of all, not being scared to talk about Israel.

The beginning of the answer, in other words, is not to hide. The beginning of the answer is to defend our identity by wearing it proudly. It is to show those who warn us about "how" to be Jewish if we want to be accepted that we decide how to be Jewish. I don't know how to stop antisemitism but I do know that the start is to proudly, unapologetically, bravely, live as an "out" Jew in America—and that that includes standing up for Israel.

If you are it, Herzl might remind us today, then be it.

THE 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSAL GOAL FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE

By Ethan K

Herzl's dream was fulfilled but not completed - what is the 21st century universal goal for the Jewish people?

As a 16-year-old Jewish teen born and raised in the U.S., my ideas of Zionism, my love for Israel and what this means in the context of Herzl's dream and "unfinished dream" is a seemingly herculean matter of reflection. My background, which informs my thoughts and opinions, must first be outlined.

Both my grandfathers are Israeli. My father's father was born in Mandate Palestine in 1945 in Givatayim. His father emigrated legally into Palestine, prior to the White Paper, in the 1930s, an ardent Zionist with HaShomer Hatza'ir, leaving behind his poor and religious family in their small shtetl west of Lodz, Poland.

He fought in the Palmach, where his main responsibility was hiding smuggled weapons. My father's grandmother also an ardent Zionist with HaShomer Hatza'ir, bribed her way into Palestine, departing Minsk, Belarus, and a life of wealth and comfort. When I look back on why they both came alone to the Land of Israel, before Hitler, I am amazed and admire them for leaving all they had known all because of the Zionist idea. What an enormously powerful idea it must be.

In stark contrast, my mother's father was born in Kazakhstan in 1944, after his parents somehow survived Hitler by fleeing from Chelm, Poland several years earlier. They returned to Europe in 1945 only to find themselves herded into a displaced persons camp in Austria where my mother's father lived till the age of 5.

His identification card pathetically labeled his nationality as "No State", prior to being brought to Israel as a post-war refugee in 1949. He then lived a few years in a tent city before finally growing up in Yavne'el. His family was the beneficiary of the State of Israel's *raison d'être*, the "ingathering of the exiles", the main reason Ben-Gurion gave for Israel's founding and rebirth.

Both my grandfathers served in the IDF. Both emigrated to the U.S. in the 1960s after the army for purely economic reasons. My mother's father was a paratrooper and returned to Israel briefly in 1973 to defend Israel, fighting in the Sinai.

I have both Ashkenasi and Sephardic heritage. My bar mitzvah was done at the Western Wall. My parents are both proud American Jews who raised me to be a proud Jew and ardent supporter of Israel. In my high school in Scottsdale, Arizona I am one of very few Jews, though I have become "the Jew" and source of information on Judaism and Israel to my friends and even faculty.

I have vocally defended Israel and Judaism on numerous occasions against a particular anti-Semitic student who spreads Hamas propaganda among her friends, over social media, and even writing essays against Israel. As such, I see this essay as my chance to increase the love for Israel in young Jews of my generation.

It's ironic that Herzl's foundational realization about the status of Jews in late 19th century Europe persists today in the US, in other global Jewish communities and even in Israel itself. Herzl acknowledged in his book *Der Judenstaat* that he was not inventing a new idea. His idea of creating an independent Jewish entity by Jews and for Jews, was an old idea. But the disturbing realization that moved him was anti-Semitism, all around him, in seemingly modern "educated Europe" of Germany, France, and Austria.

Herzl read anti-Semitic writings by popular German and French authors and witnessed the disgraceful trial of the Jewish French army officer Alfred Dreyfuss, falsely accused of being a German traitor. Why, Herzl asked, was it that one hundred years after Emancipation, social integration, and abandoning religious practices that anti-Semitism did not disappear with Jewish assimilation but was heightened and even more ferocious? He concluded that we Jews are a people, a nation. He stated that we as Jews have:

"...honestly endeavored everywhere to merge ourselves into the social life of surrounding communities and to preserve the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so. In vain we are loyal patriots, our loyalty in some places running to extremes; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow-citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native land in science and art, or her wealth by trade and commerce...It is useless, therefore for us to be loyalists...If we could only be left in peace...But I think we shall not be left in peace"
(*The Jewish State*, p.76)

This eerie prediction both presages the destruction of European Jewry, including many of my grandparents' aunts, uncles, and cousins, but describes the plight, yes, plight of American Jews today. Herzl's realization of the Jews' position in exile, also aptly sums up the "problem" with Jews in the United States. In no other land in the history of the world have the Jews achieved such integration, education, influence and apparent acceptance. The intermarriage rate alone, being above 50% itself, is proof. Then why would anti-Semitism be on the rise in the U.S. if we are so integrated? Herzl warns:

"Where Jews now feel comfortable [my opinion] will be violently disputed by them. My happier co-religionists will not believe me till Jew-baiting teaches them the truth, for the longer anti-Semitism lies in abeyance the more fiercely it will break out". (ibid p.78)

Herzl's solution of Zionism to save Jews from anti-Semitism was as relevant to 19th century Europe as it is today in the U.S. Despite our broad acceptance and the existence of Israel, anti-Semitism in the U.S. is worse than ever. Why?

The answer is given to us by the rabbis of the Mishnaic period in the Haggadah:

"אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותנו"

"...but in every generation, they rise against us to annihilate us..."

Zionism, and its fruit, the modern State of Israel, has not really solved the scourge of anti-Semitism. The clever wordplay of modern anti-Semites, no matter where they exist, have skillfully transformed the object of their hatred, the Jews, towards Israel instead, cloaking it as "anti-Zionism" but very much still Jew hatred, now 21st century-style. Israel, they say, is "illegal", "racist", an "occupier", instead of the old "Christ killer", "money lender", "internationalist", or "communist". Same hatred, different century.

The BDS movement itself is the immoral outgrowth of this hatred. In fact, Israel's existence itself is blamed for this anti-Semitism. "If only the Jew were less Jewish" was the anti-Semitic refrain for 1900 years. Now it's "if only Israel would do [fill in the blank]" from the finger wagging chorus of anti-Semites like Jeremy Corbyn, Federica Mogherini, Omar Barghouti, UN Durban conference, and more.

Worse, the anti-Semites that want to outright murder Jews, from Fatah, to Hezbollah to Hamas, train their children in their schools and summer camps how and where to stab Jews, and pay the rewards of martyrdom to the families of murderers of Jews. Herzl could not have conceived of this horror. How could it be that the strong modern Jews Herzl dreamed of, Israel, are even more hated than the hook-nosed, hunched-over, weakling Jews of Dark Ages' Europe? Wasn't Zionism supposed to end anti-Semitism?

The constant and never-ending yearning for acceptance by the Jews in their lands stands diametrically against the idea of Zionism and Herzl knew this. Jews constantly embrace foreign savior-concepts like Socialism in Russia or Reformed Judaism in Western Europe and the US to mass integrate, to escape "Jewish particularism", to become like everyone else, in effect to escape Judaism itself. These movements promised the end of anti-Semitism at the price of loss of our peoplehood.

However, the price was paid in massive loss of life to communism, the reaction to communism (Nazism), and massive loss of Jews to intermarriage in Europe and the US. However, I believe there is an even worse manifestation of what happens to Jews when they reside among anti-Semites.

This is a nightmare Herzl did not imagine, that is, Jews becoming themselves enemies of their own people. This is no better illustrated by virulently anti-Zionist "Jewish" groups like If Not Now, and Jewish Voices for Peace, who actively work for Israel's destruction, and give aid, comfort and cover to Israel's enemies. The anti-Semitism of these Jews in some ways is more dangerous than that of non-Jews since it creates confusion, division, apathy and antipathy towards our own people. This "internal anti-Semitism" rots the bonds of our people from within.

The fragility of the Jewish nation was felt firsthand by the generation of 1948. But many in our generation not only take Israel for granted but create moral equivalency between Israel and its neighboring enemies. The radical anti-Zionist Jews have internalized the anti-Semitic attitudes of our enemies. Senator Daniel Moynihan taught that morality is not subjective, so when the enemy wishes to murder you and your children in their beds, build tunnels under schools, fire rockets, promote stabbing sprees, idolize suicide bombers, it is terrorism and not "freedom fighting". "Jewish" support for these murderers is beyond destructive.

This raises tough questions: How can Zionism overcome this and fulfill Herzl's dream? Where does Zionism come from and why should we care?

The name Zion is mentioned 154 times in the Hebrew Bible. The name Jerusalem is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible 626 times. Jerusalem, by contrast, is mentioned zero times in the Koran. Jerusalem, Zion, has always been a Jewish concept, a Jewish city, and was never the capital of any other people over the thousands of years since its founding by King David in 1000 BCE.

The prophet Isaiah foretold destruction and also the redemption of the Jewish people from Zion and to Zion. Zionism is a direct outgrowth of Judaism, not the replacement of it. The return to Zion, as Herzl's said, is an old idea. Zechariah the prophet said, it is G-d who first returns to Jerusalem, and only then can it be built up, in Chapter 1: כה אמר ה' צבקות קנאתי לירושלים קנאה גדולה. Does this make G-d then the First Zionist? Should we try to see G-d's desire fulfilled through Herzl himself?

Despite much early vocal religious resistance to secular Zionism, the early halutzim were fulfilling the mitzvah of living in Israel. It was only when attacked by outside invaders that the Jews prevailed in a defensive war. In this manner, modern secular Zionism led to the re-establishment of our sovereignty in the Land of Israel, following halacha cited by Ramban and avoiding the Talmudic prohibition of storming the land from the outside.

This makes Zionism halachically kosher. But at the same time, it is the social and political way we as Jews must perpetuate our history, our religion and our heritage to the next generation. Temple-centered Judaism dominated for approximately 1000 years. Piety within the structure of Talmudic Judaism then carried us through the next 1900 years of wilderness. Now we are participants in a new era of Judaism with Zionism as the banner.

Judaism gives Zionism its foundation and justification. That's why anti-Semites despise Zionism and Israel. Dare I say Herzl was wrong to think Zionism would end anti-Semitism? Without Judaism there is no Zionism. Without Zionism there is no Israel. Anti-Semites realize this and strive to separate Jews from our religion. The anti-Zionist messaging in our modern age is disguised as BDS and universal social justice which are anti-Semitic to their core.

Without Zionism and Israel to be the beacon, pride, and future of the Jews, the global Jewish communities have no anchor. Zionism and Israel are now more than ever needed by this generation of Jews to fight anti-Semitism in their local communities, around the world, and to fight the lies of BDS that poisons the minds of this generation. This is the next step in Herzl's dream, the continued battle for maintaining Zionism and Israel. As such, Herzl's dream is more the natural continuation of Jewish national pride, not the invention of something new.

We young Jews must defend our inheritance and "never forget" the sacrifices of those that have fallen in all of Israel's wars, the Holocaust, the pogroms, the expulsions, the book burnings, the mass conversions. Modern Israel is Part 2 of Herzl's Zionism, for the continuity of the Jewish people. Jews have always fought to defend Jerusalem, Zion, during the times of the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Greeks, against the Romans twice, in 1948, and finally in 1967. These ancient and modern Jewish fighters are an enormous source of Jewish pride for me. This pride must be shared and supported openly and courageously.

More positively, I also see Zionism as having forever broken the superficial Jewish caste system of religious vs. secular, of Ashkenasi vs. Sephardi vs. Mizrahi vs. Ethiopian, and has drawn the Jews back into a unifying entity. Our generation must keep this unifying Jewish mass merger going to fulfill Part 2 of Herzl's dream, and promote Zionism as the glue. Whether in ancient or modern times, the unity of the Jewish people has rarely been more evident or dedicated to one goal, finally realized in 1948.

Israel has become a dominant global force in military and security, medicine, agriculture, science, and water technology. Israel has its own colorful modern Hebrew language, with award-winning Netflix series, music, art, and sports figures. It drills its own natural gas. It hosts international conferences. It has become a separate and self-sustaining social entity, a miracle success story that is admired and emulated by many, and the object of jealousy by others. Zionism made that all happen.

In conclusion, Zionism is divinely inspired, but manifests through the hands of Jews who cling to their pride of peoplehood, and fight for their history. Zionism is distilled from Judaism, and Israel is proof of G-d's Will in our modern age. Just as the Jewish people were self-scolding for violating G-d's law and bore the burden of persecution and exile for centuries, so too we must recognize the merit of G-d granting us the miracle of overcoming our enemies and causing our people to thrive.

The lesson of Herzl's dream is that anti-Semitism is our constant adversary and we must treat Zionism as both a cherished blessing and a tool to repel our enemies and prevent self-loathing. Herzl's 21st century, unfinished dream is to re-invigorate the love of Zionism and Israel to avoid reverting to the vulnerable state we Jews embodied for centuries.

Though every Jew around the world cannot live in Israel, every Jew around the world can love and support Israel and be its champion. I am Herzl's legacy. Like him I am a proud Jew living outside the Land, who may one day live there, but a Jew who loves his people, supports the idea of Israel, elevates Zionism, and fights against anti-Semitism.

Our generation must adopt Herzl's Jewish pride and pragmatism about the world we inhabit. If we Jews don't do it, who will? But if I do, I know many will follow.



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Where the Jewish Past
Meets the Jewish Future

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ABOUT ISRAEL FOREVER

Israel Forever is a nonpartisan, nondenominational Jewish engagement organization that develops and promotes informal learning and activism resources to celebrate, strengthen and mobilize our connection as the nation of Israel.

Israel Forever addresses the problem of the increasing disconnect between Jews and our national destiny by providing learning and empowerment tools. We provide content that can be used in a myriad of settings and audiences, of all ages, for use to engage directly with family, friends, community members on issues we ourselves are trying to reflect on and learn from.

Israel Forever is the foundation for Jewish Nationhood. Declare your pride as a Virtual Citizen of Israel and be inspired, engaged and connected every day!



None of the politics. All of the pride.