

עין לציון

Ayin L'Tziyon:

Looking Towards Zion

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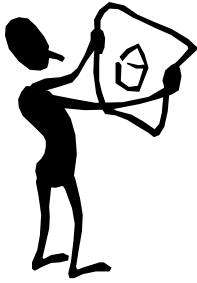


United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism | Department of Youth Activities

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Getting from there to here



In North America there is often talk of "patriotism," especially during big election years. A patriot is someone who loves his country, and will defend it fiercely when challenged. While patriotism is about internalized ideas and beliefs, it also often involves specific actions - from tangible ones such as voting to more ritualistic ones like singing the National Anthem.

What if you are part of a people with a long history and tradition, but without a home, wandering around the world for 2000 years? Can one be patriotic in the absence of a country to be patriotic about?

After centuries of hoping and praying for a return to Eretz Yisrael, many Jews in 19th century Europe were ready for a change. They were tired of being a homeless nation within a nation.

Some decided it was time to abandon the idea of a Jewish homeland - France, England, Germany, or the United States would be the homeland of the Jews who lived there.

Others, however, took the opposite track, deciding that it was time to take the hopes and prayers of countless generations and turn them into action - it was time to go back and reclaim the land of our ancestors. **Zionism** was an ideology the likes of which the world had never experienced before in which a people with a common history, but spread to the four corners of the Earth, banded together and said with one clear voice: "it is time for us to go home."

In The Beginning...

In order to form an understanding of what Medinat Yisrael is all about, it is essential to look at the beliefs and history that took us from a single family of nomads 4000 years ago to the nation we have become today.

TEXT 1

לְבִי בְּמִזְרַח וְאָנֹכִי בְּסוֹף מַעֲרָב My heart is in the East and I am at the edge of the West

אֵיךְ אֶטְעַמָּה אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲכַל וְאֵיךְ יִעָרֵב How can I savor my food? How can it be sweet to me?

אֵיכָה אֲשַׁלֵּם נְדָרֵי וְאִסְרֵי, בְּעוֹד How can I deliver on my vows and promises, while

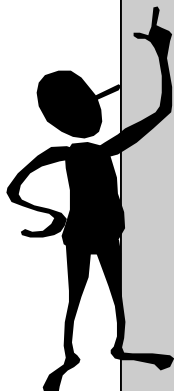
צִיּוֹן בְּחֻבַּל אֱדוֹם וְאֲנִי בְּכַבְּל עֲרָב Zion is bound by Edom (Rome), and I in Arab chains?

יִקַּל בְּעֵינַי עֲזוֹב כָּל טוֹב סְפָרַד, כְּמוֹ In my eyes, it would be easy to leave all the good things in Spain –

יִקַּר בְּעֵינַי רְאוֹת עֲפָרוֹת דְּבִיר נַחְרָב. Seeing how precious it would be in my eyes to behold the dust of the desolate sanctuary.

by Yehuda HaLevi (c. 1080-1142). Translation adapted from <http://www.angelfire.com/ct/halevi>

Part Two—Modern Zionism



Activity: Zionism Is...

Before we learn about some of our early Zionists, let's take a moment to define Zionism. To me Zionism is:

I am a Zionist because

God Helps Those...

By the mid 1800s, the Jews of Europe began to be known to many as a “Nation within a nation.” Even those Jews who gave up all of their Judaism and became secularized as much as possible had to face mistrust from the non-Jewish community. Jewish leaders and thinkers constantly dealt with a conflict between being a patriotic Frenchman, for example, while still maintaining a strong Jewish identity. Modern Zionism was born from this conflict.

There were three streams of thought that all developed together in the 1800s, and all converged to eventually help lead to the creation of Medinat Yisrael. These three different streams, each its own brand of Zionism, can be identified as Political, Cultural, and Religious.

Political Zionism

The political Zionists saw a Jewish homeland as a place where the Jewish people could take their place among the nations of Europe. They believed that only by establishing a

political entity run by Jews could we ever be completely emancipated. Political Zionists saw a Jewish state as a place that would be just like every other secular, European state, except that it would be set aside for Jews. Theodore Herzl was the key figure in Political Zionism

Theodore (Binyamin Ze'ev) Herzl
(1860-1904)

Political Zionism

Viennese journalist and founder of modern political Zionism

Herzl was the first to call for immediate political action to create a safe haven for the Jewish people in their own homeland. He convened the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897, chaired the first six Zionist congresses and spent much of his time in his remaining years meeting with world leaders, both Jewish and non-Jewish, trying to enlist financial and political support for his dream of a Jewish state.

Famous phrase: “If you will it, it is no dream”

Theodore Herzl

We are as different as any nation is different from another. We must now create the condition to become a nation like the nations of Europe. This means that the Jews must reclaim their ancient land, to gradually leave the places of dispersion and re-congregate in the homeland and, of great importance, to make certain and in advance, that the world recognizes their legal right to do so...

I consider the Jewish question neither a social nor a religious one, even though it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question, and to solve it we must first of all establish it as an international political problem to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of

When have you felt conflicted with the notion of dual identity as a Jewish North American?

Can you think of examples when your religious and national identities have been in conflict? (i.e. basketball tryouts on Yom Kippur)

How did political Zionism aim to fix these issues?

What did Herzl mean when he said that he wanted the Jews to “gradually leave the places of dispersion and reconstitute in the homeland?” Did he expect every Jew to move to the Jewish homeland?



In 1947, the “civilized nations of the world in council,” the newly formed United Nations, voted that a Jewish state be established where Israel stands today. Do you think, as Herzl seemed to, that a Jewish state has to have the approval of the world political community?

Leo Pinsker (1821-1891)

Political Zionism

Pinsker believed that the Jewish problem could be resolved if the Jews attained equal rights. As a professional physician, Pinsker preferred a medical term, “Judeophobia,” to a recently introduced “anti-Semitism”. His analysis of the roots of this ancient hatred led him to call for the establishment of a Jewish National Homeland, either in Palestine or elsewhere. Eventually Pinsker came to agree that hatred of Jews was rooted in the fact that they were foreigners everywhere except their original homeland, the Land of Israel. He became one of the founders and a chairman of the Hovevei Zion movement.

Leo Pinsker

One of the other major thinkers of political Zionism who pre-dated Herzl was Leo Pinsker. Pinsker was a physician, a Zionist pioneer and activist, and the founder and leader of the Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) movement.

The Jews are not a living Nation; they are everywhere aliens; therefore they are despised. The civil and political emancipation of the Jews is not sufficient to raise them in the estimation of the peoples. The proper and the only remedy would be the creation of a Jewish nationality, of a people living on its own soil, the auto-emancipation of the Jews; their emancipation as a nation among nations by the acquisition of a home of their own...The present movement is more favorable than any other for realizing the plan here unfolded...A way must be opened for the national regeneration of the Jews by a congress of Jewish notables.

From Auto-Emancipation, by Leo Pinsker, 1882



What is Pinsker’s reasoning for why the Jews need a land?

Many people feel that we are more accepted today than the emancipated Jews of Europe were 100 years ago. What examples can you think of which would confirm or dispute this assumption?

Do you feel this need to “emancipate” yourself as a Jew?

Activity: My Zionist Identity

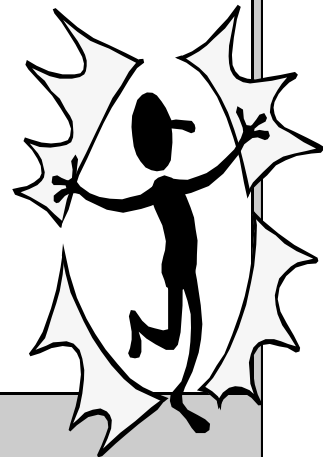
Based on what you read about Political, Cultural and Religious Zionism on the previous pages, define each type of Zionism and decide which one appeals most to you.

POLITICAL

MY ZIONIST IDENTITY

CULTURAL

RELIGIOUS



Is Zionism Racism?

Looking at the UN Resolution

In 1975, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution, supported by Arab, African and Soviet states, asserting that **Zionism is racism**. Logically, this declaration nullified the UN resolutions that had brought about the creation of the State of Israel, and formally, denied the right of self-determination to the Jewish people.



Excerpts from the resolution

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, RECALLING its resolution 1904 (XVIII) of 20 November 1963, proclaiming the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination...its expression of alarm at "the manifestations of racial discrimination still in evidence in some areas in the world, some of which are imposed by certain Governments by means of legislative, administrative or other measures",

RECALLING ALSO that, in its resolution 3151 G (XXVIII) of 14 December 1953, the General Assembly condemned...the unholy alliance between South African racism and Zionism, ... promulgated the principle that "international co-operation and peace require the achievement of national liberation and independence, the elimination of colonialism and neo-colonialism, foreign occupation, Zionism, apartheid and racial discrimination in all its forms, as well as the recognition of the dignity of peoples and their right to self-determination",

Do you notice a contradiction here? On the one hand, the resolution is declaring 'Zionism as racism.' On the other hand, they are asserting the "dignity of a peoples and their right to self determination." By proclaiming Zionism- the principle of self determination of the Jewish people- as racism, they are denying the right of the Jewish people the same right they recognize for all others! Why have different rules and standards applied to Jews throughout history?

TAKING NOTE ALSO of resolution 77 (XII) adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its twelfth ordinary session, held at Kampala from 28 July to 1 August 1975, which considered "that the racist regime in occupied Palestine and the racist regime in Zimbabwe and South racist structure and being organically linked in their policy aimed at repression of the dignity and integrity of the human being"

TAKING NOTE ALSO of the Political Declaration and Strategy to Strengthen International Peace and Security and to Intensify Solidarity and Mutual Assistance among Non-Aligned Countries, adopted at the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries held at Lima from 25 to 30 August 1975, which most severely condemned Zionism as a threat to world peace and security and called upon all countries to oppose this racist and imperialist ideology,

DETERMINES that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.

The resolution passed 72 to 35 with 32 abstentions.

Jews around the world reacted in uproar, influencing Jewish leaders and Jewish Israelis to reconsider the U.N. as being a moral governing body. It gave Jews and Israeli leaders the feeling that Israel was completely surrounded by enemies and could never expect any support from the international community, reminiscent of German propaganda prior to World War II.



In 1991, following the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa and of the former Soviet Bloc, and against the background of the war against Saddam Hussein, this resolution was repealed. However, the same sentiment surfaced again at the Durban conference in South Africa in the summer of 2001.

Israel: A Look from the Diaspora

Activity: Where do you fit in?

WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?

What role do YOU think Jews in North America should play regarding Israel?
Should Jews in North America stick their noses into Israeli policies?

“Israelis don’t like it when American Jews express their opinions about Israel. American Jews don’t live in Israel, don’t serve in the army, don’t like with the consequences of political decisions. Therefore, the argument goes, they have no right to make their voices heard in the Israeli decision making process”

STRONGLY
AGREE

1

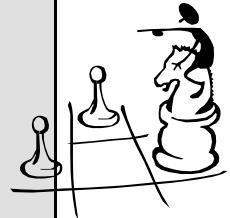
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3

4

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

5



“We live in a time when American Jews are becoming increasingly alienated from Israel. Research by American-Israeli sociologist Steven M. Cohen and others has shown that American Jews are less attached to Israel than they were a generation ago, and **that young American Jews are the least attached of all**”

STRONGLY
AGREE

1

2

3

4

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

5

“You American Jews are Israel’s informal Ambassadors; your job is to support and defend it against detractors...”

STRONGLY
AGREE

1

2

3

4

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

5

“This passion and deep commitment...were characterized by vociferous debate...Passionate debate goes hand in hand with deep commitment. If American Jews don’t feel strongly connected to Israel in the 21st century, then we, as a global Jewish people are in serious trouble, therefore, we need passionate American Jewish debate about Israel”

STRONGLY
AGREE

1

2

3

4

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

5

“Without change, American Jewry will continue to grow increasingly distant from Israel. The only way to stop this is to encourage American Jews to feel that they are stakeholders in the big issues.”

STRONGLY
AGREE

1

2

3

4

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

5

“American Jews should be encouraged to stick their noses into Israeli policies...because if they stick their noses in, there’s a lot more chance that their hearts will follow.

STRONGLY
AGREE

1

2

3

4

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

5

(Excerpted from “Americans Should Stick Their Noses In” by Alex Sinclair, *Jerusalem Report*, 2007, Used with author’s permission)

Does Israel need Us?

Do you define yourself as a North American Jew? A Jewish American? A Jewish Canadian?

How do you reconcile your dual identity? Do you think Israelis struggle with dual identity or is being Israeli being Jewish?

Answer the following: I would define myself as: _____



As North Americans, is the Jewish state or homeland just in our imaginations- that we “dream of Zion” by living elsewhere? What exactly do we mean when we say ‘next year in Jerusalem?’ at the Passover Seder?



A.B. Yehoshua Lights a Fire

On the evening of May 1, 2006, A.B. Yehoshua, a prominent Israeli novelist addressed a primarily American audience of top Jewish scholars, leaders and academics at the American Jewish Committee Centennial Symposium. “AJC’s Centennial Annual Meeting” in Washington opened with a four-part symposium in which prominent Jewish intellectuals addressed the challenges of the Jewish future as well as the meaning of Jewish spirituality, community, and continuity. The first panel was held at the Library of Congress on the evening of May 1, 2006, and included a discussion with top Jewish academics, and A.B. Yehoshua addressing the question, ‘What Will Become of the Jewish People?’ Yehoshua’s candor shocked the audience:

A.B. Yehoshua is 5th generation native born Israeli (Sabra), a well known Israeli novelist, essayist, and playwright. He is nicknamed "Boolie" in Israel and has won both the Bialik Prize and the Israeli Prize for literature. His novels include: *The Lover*, *a Late Divorce*, *The Liberated Bride* and *A Woman in Jerusalem*.

Excerpts from: A.B. Yehoshua Controversy, An Israel-Diaspora Dialogue on Jewishness, Israeliness, and Identity. *Dorothy and Julius Koppelman Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, American Jewish Committee. The Great Debate*: A.B. Yehoshua sparks an international dialogue on the Israel-Diaspora relationship, AJC Centennial Symposium, [excerpts of Foreword by Leon Wieseltier of The New Republic, Ambassador Alfred H. Moses, chair of the ACJ Centennial Committee and Dr. Steven Bayme, Director, Koppelman Institute, AJC] Used with Permission, AJC. A video of the entire dialogue is available at the AJC website at ajcarchive.org - type in Centennial Symposium and look for the videos for May 1, 2006.

The unfeasibility of dual loyalty:

I am what I am. I have a country. I have a language. I have a people. I have a framework. I have a reality...I have a clear identity. I don't see the "other." Who is the "other" that I have to be like him? It's your problem. It's not my problem... have to say to you, I very welcome your [Cynthia Ozick's] dual loyalty, but I ... don't get it.... I would like that you would have one loyalty, in Israel, and participate. The fact that Israel is in your mind, that doesn't help me.

Does it help Israelis to know we are thinking of them and engage in Israel related dialogue consistently?

Why is it that North American Jews seem to visibly support Israel more during times of stability and turn away during times of struggle?