

Essays on Zionism

FEATURING

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Foreword

This booklet of essays was first published in 2016 when We Believe in Israel together with the Zionist Federation launched our first Zionism Month.

Zionism Month is a month of positive promotional activity, timed to coincide with both the Gregorian and Jewish calendars' anniversaries of Israel's Declaration of Independence. Our objectives for the month are to re-establish the core arguments for Israel's legitimacy as a state and the core case for the Zionist project; to reinvigorate the conversation around, and engagement with Zionism; and for people to be able to talk about their identity and beliefs in a positive way.

This compilation of essays aims to do all that. They are authored by community leaders, academics, politicians, young professionals, Jews and non-Jews alike. What do they all have in common? Each author is a Zionist.

Zionists come from all walks of life, which is why this year we decided to republish the booklet with extra contributions and a new foreword. Anyone can be a Zionist. In fact, I don't see why anyone wouldn't support Zionism (unless you don't support any form of national self-determination and you believe in one global society without borders). But the word 'Zionist' has been hijacked. People use 'Zionist' as an insult, they misuse language and create incorrect associations with racism, Naziism, and Zionism as an all-powerful entity.

Zionism is the belief in and support of Jewish self-determination.

That is it.

Yes, there are different types of Zionism, but they are different means to the same end - a homeland for the Jewish people.

Zionism is not racist, it is all-encompassing. If you believe in the self-determination of one nation, why wouldn't you for another? Zionism is not mutually exclusive of Palestinian statehood, both can exist side-by-side. Zionists are not oppressive towards minorities - the State of Israel's Declaration of Independence codifies minority rights.

There is a problem in general of defining something incorrectly. Ascribing something or someone with inaccurate language is not just malicious but it actually hinders the conversation, and we go backwards.

When people use 'Zionist' as a derogatory term, comparing Zionism to Naziism or racism, one forgets the true meaning of all the words involved. It tries to redefine not only what Zionism is (the belief in the self-determination of the Jewish people) but also what Nazi Germany was and how the Nazis' victims suffered. It seeks to minimise that suffering.

But the world has become so obsessed with redefining Zionism as all-powerful and all-bad. People have forgotten or choose to forget the true meaning and its history. A Guardian article, in May 2021, *What we got wrong: the Guardian's worst errors of judgement over 200 years*, seeks to apologise for the paper's early support of Zionism:

When Arthur Balfour, then Britain's foreign secretary, promised 104 years ago to help establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, his words changed the world. The Guardian of 1917 supported, celebrated and could even be said to have helped facilitate the Balfour declaration. Scott was a supporter of Zionism and this blinded him to Palestinian rights. In 1917 he wrote a leader on the day the Balfour declaration was announced, in which he dismissed any other claim to the Holy Land, saying: "The existing Arab population of Palestine is small and at a low stage of civilisation." Whatever else can be said, Israel today is not the country the Guardian foresaw or would have wanted.

For a publication to come out with this is utterly astounding. The Balfour Declaration was a letter addressing the dream of the Jewish people for statehood. Antisemitism was rife for centuries, Jews had been persecuted for centuries, and the Jewish people wanted to be masters of their own destiny. As Theodore Herzl wrote so eloquently in *Der Judenstaat* 'The Jewish State'

"In vain are we 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. In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried down as strangers."

"everything tends, in fact, to one and the same conclusion, which is clearly enunciated in that classic Berlin phrase: "Juden Raus" (Out with the Jews)... Are we to 'get out' now and where to?"

Sadly, most Jewish people were unable to get out of Europe before the Holocaust to their own homeland.

To me, that is always what it circles back to. The absolute need for a Jewish state for Jewish people to be and feel protected so another genocide of that scale can never take place again.

Zionism is about hope. Israel is about hope. The national anthem 'Hatikva' is about hope. Zionism and Israel give the Jewish people hope about their future. A hope of survival, a hope of independence, a hope of freedom.

And Zionism is not only about hope for the Jewish nation, it is about hope for all of humanity.

The Balfour Declaration was not a legally binding document, it was something to cling onto, a promise for the future. In fact, the British also promised the Arab population its own land. To say a supporter of Zionism is 'blinded' to Palestinian rights is just false. You can be Zionist and pro-Palestinian. Many are. It makes sense.

It is important to remember history, the history the Guardian wants to forget. Jewish people have been persecuted for centuries with the culmination being the Holocaust (after the Balfour Declaration) and the Jewish people needed a life-boat state. When the UN produced the Partition Plan, the Zionists said yes (they were happy to divide the land), the Arab population (and the Arab countries surrounding) said no; when Israel declared Independence, they ensured minority rights would be protected.

The Guardian is ready to erase Israel's and Zionism's history because 'Israel today is not the country the Guardian foresaw or would have wanted' but luckily the Guardian does not have the power to remove Israel from the world map. Luckily, the Guardian cannot wish the Jewish state away and remove the safety net of the Jewish people because it does not like it.

The further away we get from the Holocaust, the less urgent a Jewish state seems to some. We say "never again" and "lest we forget" because forgetting is dangerous. Erasing Jewish history, which the Guardian article tries to do, is erasing the urgent reasonings behind the creation of State of Israel. That is unforgivable..

Is the state of Israel (or any country) perfect? Is that a reason to slur all Zionists?

The beauty of Zionism is that it is not done yet. The need for Zionist ideals has not disappeared just because the State of Israel has been created. Zionism strives for betterhood, for unity, for freedom. There are problems, as with any State, but Zionism is not the problem. Zionism is the hope, Zionism is the dream.

Some of these thoughts are encompassed in the essays enclosed. All these essays aim to reclaim Zionism, to talk about it positively, and to share why Zionism is integral to the author's identity and why it should be integral to yours.

Zionism is not a dirty word; it is a badge one should wear with pride.

Rachel Kaye - Campaign Manager, We Believe in Israel



I am a passionate, life-long and devoted Zionist
Chief Rabbi Mirvis

"I am a passionate, life-long and devoted Zionist."

Every Jew should feel comfortable making such a declaration. Indeed, they should feel proud.

Yet, over the last decade or so, young people in particular, have found it increasingly difficult to openly identify with the term, and it's easy to see why. A Google search is immediately illustrative of the problem. Zionism is a 'Demonic Jewish Death Cult' says one result. It forms a 'Pyramid of Evil' alongside Nazism and Satanism, claims another.

Zionism is increasingly characterised as the very epitome of evil and barbarism – a notion which we have seen gradually, but consistently and shamefully reinforced in the international discourse.

When the writer, Gilad Atzmon, exclaimed that, "the time is ripe to cleanse British public life of Zionists and Jerusalemites," it probably had very little impact on the way that people understood the notion of Zionism in and of itself. And when George Galloway lost his Bradford West seat at the General Election and responded by lamenting that, "the venal, the vile, the racists and the Zionists will all be celebrating," most people ignored it. But, somehow, by the time that the judgement of the former Co-Chair of the Oxford University Labour Club was being called into question because of suggestions that he was a 'Zionist stooge' and may have 'Zionist sympathies', it had become normal for the term to be used as a direct insult. I invite you to go back through those examples and replace the word Zionist with the word Jew, Muslim or Catholic. This is a deep and visceral hatred. Taken in isolation, it is easy to dismiss each of the comments as the words of fringe activists, not to be taken seriously. However, over time, when taken together with countless other examples, they have formed a very real and damaging broader narrative, which has had a devastating impact. Good people are forced to ask the question: "what could be so horrific, so abhorrent about a philosophy or belief that would have people talk about it in this way?"

The trouble is that Zionism is now primarily being defined by those who are not themselves Zionists. It has nothing to do with Judaism, they say. It is a political movement which is murderous, colonialist and expansionist, they say.

I am a passionate, life-long and devoted Zionist - Chief Rabbi Mirvis

Well, let me tell you about my Zionism.

In Jewish tradition, Zion, another name for Jerusalem, is at the centre of our universe. It is the one single place in the world which, since the dawn of time, has been the physical focus of our prayers, our dreams and our aspirations. The Jewish population living there has grown and shrunk as crusades, expulsions and pogroms dispersed us, but it was never erased. As European Jewry became subjected to particularly brutal oppression in the 19th and 20th Centuries, migration to, and settlement in, the land of our ancestors increased dramatically. Over time, as the right to self-determination was popularised as an accepted principle around the world, Jews too dared to dream about the realisation of this age-old yearning. This very idea, after millennia of persecution and dispossession, enchanted and empowered generations of Jews in the modern world. That dream became known as Zionism and it remains alive and well today. It is a beautiful and noble idea which exists independently of conflict with the Palestinians and of the policies of any Israeli Government.

Of course, there are Jews who declare a love for 'Zion' in their prayers every day, who publicly disassociate themselves from the idea that it should become an 'ism' in a pre-messianic era. But that indicates a difference in approach rather than a difference of principle - that the land of Israel plays a major role in Jewish theology, and the land of Israel is central to our Jewish identity.

That is why it is so deeply disturbing to hear how it is possible on some campuses for students to be vilified and attacked for expressing their own deeply rooted and sincerely held sense of Zionism. In a recent letter to Jewish students, the newly elected NUS President, Malia Boattia, made the following extraordinary claims: "I want to be clear that for me to take issue with Zionist politics, is not me taking issue with being Jewish. In fact Zionist politics are held by people from a variety of different backgrounds and faiths, as are anti-Zionist politics. It is a political argument, not one of faith."

This provides a perfect case study of the way that a minority of people on the hard left of British politics are seeking to redefine Zionism so that it becomes separate from Judaism as a faith. In doing so, they find a secondary outlet for peddling many of the classic antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories, by applying them to Zionists. The horrific slur known as the blood libel, that Jews murdered non-Jewish babies in order to make use of their blood, for example, is modernised to stories about Israel murdering Palestinians in order to harvest their organs. Allegations of Jewish control of the media or of political parties become allegations of Zionist control and influence.

Throughout history there are examples of people who have sought to distort and demonise Jews and Judaism in order to cultivate ill-will and prejudice against us. Today, we find people seeking to distort and demonise the beauty of Zionism in order to delegitimise the State of Israel.

My message is a simple one. Be proud.

Be proud of every part of your Jewishness, including that integral part of Judaism which we call Zionism.

I am a passionate, life-long and devoted Zionist - Chief Rabbi Mirvis

When you hear someone describing Zionism as being purely political, oppressive or even racist, be proud that you know better. Be proud of the realisation of a two thousand year old dream to live freely in the land of Israel. Be proud that despite every challenge and every attack, the flame of successful self-determination still burns ever more brightly.

Let no-one tell you that, just because there are a small number of Jews who criticise Israel and even some who do not believe in its very right to exist, Zionism can somehow be separated from Judaism. By any measure, they are the exceptions that prove the rule.

Stand tall. Learn all that there is to learn about the history of the Jewish people and how Zionism developed. Tell people about your Zionism. Remind them about the remarkable achievements of the young State of Israel, which have been achieved despite the existential threat that often hangs over it.

Raise your heads and raise your voices; always be proud of the wonderful blessing that is the State of Israel.

Chief Rabbi Mirvis is the current Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. Chief Rabbi Mirvis was installed on 1 September 2013. He has previously Chief Rabbi of Ireland, and President of the Irish Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ).



Understanding Zionism

Colin Shindler

It is often stated that there is an ongoing delegitimisation of Israel. What is rarely mentioned is that there has been a parallel delegitimisation of Zionism – an ideological demonisation by those who are often ignorant of its history and evolution. Such ignorance is the underpinning which allows legitimate criticism to occasionally tip over into reactionary racist stereotypes.

In the year 1897-8 several movements were founded which offered a path to the Jewish future. One was the Bund – Jewish socialists which believed in national-cultural autonomy in the territories where Jews were concentrated in Eastern Europe. Another was the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), a faction of which evolved into the Bolsheviks. They believed that the Jews should assimilate and would disappear over time. Finally there was the World Zionist Organisation, established by Theodor Herzl in Basel. Nearly half a century later, the vast majority of the Bundists were cast into Hitler's ovens. The old Bolsheviks disappeared into the Gulag or met their executioners in the dungeons of the Lubyanka. Only Zionism survived the ravages of the twentieth century to found a state of the Jews, a Hebrew republic in the Land of Israel, in 1948.

Herzl, himself was a member of the Viennese bourgeoisie and was soon challenged in his interpretation of Zionism by advocates of socialist Zionism such as Nachman Syrkin and Ber Borokhov. Like David Ben Gurion who arrived in Palestine in 1906, they regarded themselves as the Zionist wing of the international socialist movement. Indeed Ben Gurion had been arrested several times during the Russian revolution of 1905, the year before his departure.

As indicated in his early writings, Lenin had little knowledge of the existence of such Marxist-Zionists and was surrounded by assimilated and acculturated Jews, estranged from the Jewish masses of the Russian empire. Moreover Lenin was more interested in outmanoeuvring the Bund whom he perceived as an obstacle to moulding the RSDLP in his image. In this maze of ideological mirrors, Lenin's passing attack on Zionism was submerged in his ongoing assault on the anti-Zionist Bund.

With the success of the October Revolution in 1917, many former Zionists turned to the hereand-now of Communism – and denounced former comrades. The head of the Yevseksia, the Jewish section of the Communist party, Semyon Diamanstein, was a lapsed Lubavicher hassid. In addition many assimilated Jews, Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Sverdlov, Radek,

Understanding Zionism - Colin Shindler

were leading Bolsheviks. Regardless of their understanding of Jewishness, so many were murdered in the Stalinist purges.

The October Revolution occurred within a few days of the Balfour Declaration which promised the Jews a home - not a state - in Palestine. These two events symbolised two streams within Jewish tradition - particularism and universalism - which would guide the Jews down the twentieth century. The particularists viewed the possibility of a state of the Jews with favour. The universalists understood the October revolution as the dawn of humanity - all would lose the chains of servitude and antisemitism would be eradicated forever. For those on the Left caught in between, those who regarded themselves as Zionists, there was opprobrium from both camps of Jews. It is the reason today why anti-Zionist Jews attack 'liberal Zionists,' and why right wing Zionists label critics of Netanyahu's government as 'self-hating' Jews.

Stalin's last years were marked by a McCarthyist policy - an anti-Soviet Zionist conspiracy - which mirrored the 'Reds under the Beds' fear in the United States. Many Communist Jews believed that the execution of the Jewish writers, the Slansky trial of leading Jewish communists in Prague and the Doctors' Plot to murder the leaders of the Kremlin was no more than Zionist propaganda. Such true believers explained away each and every act of antisemitism - and then in many cases the scales dropped from their eyes in the revelations after Stalin's demise.

Today many on the Israeli far Right believe that anti-Zionism is always antisemitic. Many on the British far Left concur that anti-Zionism is never antisemitic, but merely a crafty diversion away from criticism of Israeli government policies. The reality is that it is often on the spectrum in between, depending on the context and language used.

There is also a diminishing generational gap within the British Left. Many from the Old Left fought Mosely in the East End, bore witness to the extermination of the Jews in the Holocaust and greeted the rise of Israel in 1948. Whereas Israel was seen as moving towards socialism, the Arab world instead had embraced nationalism. Aneurin Bevan, leader of the Labour Left and founder of the National Health Service was highly critical of the military regime that had overthrown the monarchy in Egypt.

In an article in August 1956, Bevan wrote:

If a social movement elects to take the path of revolution, it must pursue it to the end and the end is a complete transformation of society accompanied by a transference of power from the old to the new social forces. Judged by this criterion, the movement first led by General Neguib and then by Nasser has not as yet added up to a social revolution or anything like it.

Bevan accused Nasser of "stirring the pot of nationalist passions" to the detriment of bettering the lot of the Egyptian people.

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Bevan died in 1960 and joined the pantheon of socialist heroes, adored by the British Left, but significantly his pro-Zionist views were airbrushed out of existence. The succeeding New Left of the 1960s was characterised not by the fight against fascism, but by the epoch of decolonisation, the shedding of empire. For them, Zionism was perceived as a colonial movement, controlled by imperialism and dedicated to the expulsion of a colonised indigenous people. Yet this was a cropping of the historical picture.

For example, whereas the British who arrived in Australia decimated the aborigines with guns and disease, the Zionists in contrast came with hoes and pitchforks to cultivate land outside Arab population areas and to build new cities such as Tel Aviv.

The nascent Palestinian national movement was easier to identify with in the age of Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh. Complexity and context were conveniently ignored. All this was before the settlement drive on the West Bank following the victory of the Six Day war in 1967.

The establishment of settlements in the conquered territories allowed anti-Zionists to blur the distinction between returning to 1967 or to 1948, between vacating the West Bank and eliminating the state of Israel. It obscured the difference between those who wished to give back the West Bank to the Palestinian Arabs so that they could build their own state and those who believed that the Jews had no right to any part of historic Palestine and should leave. It was the difference between a two-state solution and a Greater Palestine.

Many on the British Left are unable to answer the question 'Do the Jews have a right to national self-determination?' To answer positively would mean that the recent mentors of the British Left had been wrong. To answer negatively would mean that the establishment of two states, Israel and Palestine, should be replaced by a solitary state whereby all its citizens would freely vote according to their needs and not according to their ethnic origin. This would be a state with a majority of Arab voters - and political reality does not always obey political theory.

Ben Gurion believed that Zionism essentially achieved its goal in 1948 in establishing the state. By the 1960s, Ben Gurion was proclaiming that 'the title of Zionist now embraces entirely different things among which there is no connection and to speak of Zionism per se has no real meaning'. He instead viewed the Jewish Diaspora as a hinterland to garner political and financial support for Israel. Zionism became pro-Israelism. A Zionist, once someone who emigrated to Israel, now became someone who might emigrate to Israel.

While Zionism certainly completed its revolutionary phase in 1948, does it have meaning today in its post-revolutionary phase? The ingathering of the exiles was always a staggered process. Has it been completed? After all, French Jews have settled in increasing numbers in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo killings and the Bataclan massacre.

Zionism originally meant not only the creation of a state with a Jewish majority, but also the forging of a new society, substantially different from the societies which the Zionists had left. Israel resembles the economic pattern of Western Europe today, with a plethora of millionaires and a gap between the haves and have-nots. Is not the task for Zionists today to turn Israel into Zion?

Understanding Zionism - Colin Shindler

Zionism should not be left to the breastbeaters and to those who wrap themselves in the flag. Neither should there be a studied silence when the question of Zionism is raised in Leftist polite company. To do so, in one sense, is a betrayal of recent history and a kowtowing to the purveyors of ignorance.

Students today are at the forefront of this ideological battle. Quoting clichés and slogans is an emotional reaction and not an intellectual one. Self-education is perhaps the only way forward - to understand yourself and to understand the meaning of Israel.

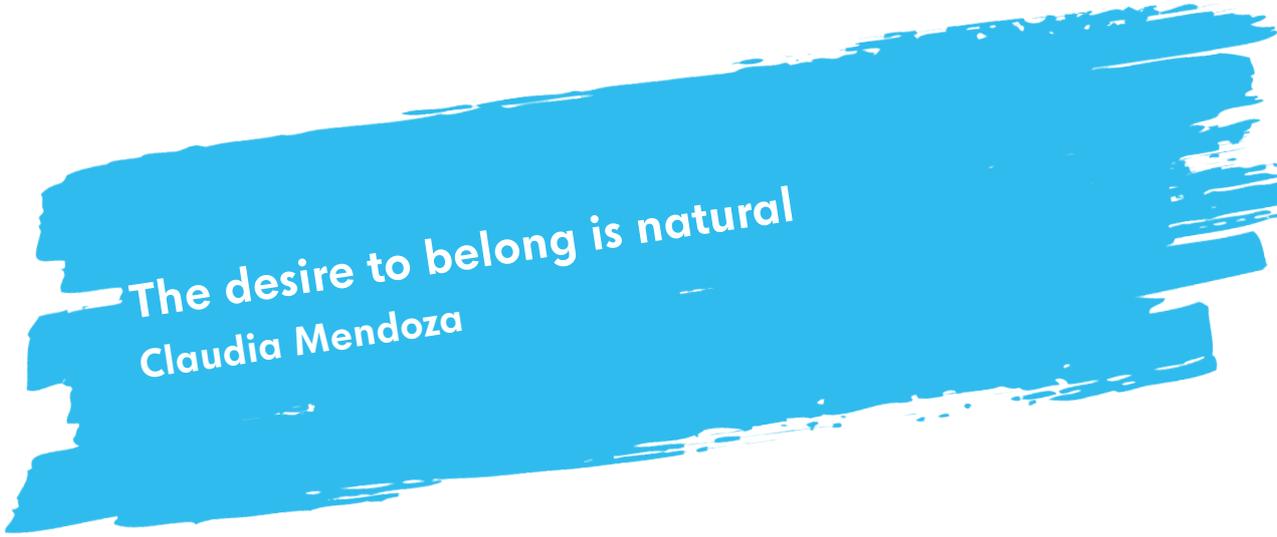
Zionism is not wrong, it is different. And such difference cannot be accommodated by either Marxist or post-colonial theory. As the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, commented:

Knowledge is power.

Information is liberating.

Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family

*Colin Shindler is an emeritus professor at SOAS, University of London. His most recent book is *The Rise of the Israeli Right: From Odessa to Hebron*, published by Cambridge University Press.*



The desire to belong is natural

Claudia Mendoza

During lockdown, I discovered my seven-year-old daughter's passion for history. It was only when we started reading about the World Wars in her encyclopaedia that I realised I had not given much thought to age appropriateness and Holocaust education. Do I read the paragraph which says how the leader of Germany wanted to kill all the Jews or do I airbrush it out until she is older? The look of horror on her face when I did made me wish I'd waited.

I recounted this episode to a friend, and it turned into a discussion about Israel, the Holocaust, Zionism and nationalism. I was questioned as to whether I would be a Zionist if it were not for the Holocaust. I had never been asked that before, but I did not hesitate to respond – of course! I am a Zionist because I believe in nationhood, and Jews as a people should be no exception to that. The Holocaust was a catalyst for a movement already underway.

When I am asked to list the biggest challenges facing the Jewish community, one of the issues which is repeatedly raised is the perceived dwindling of support for Israel amongst the younger generation.

It is clear that the further away we get from the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, the harder it is for successive generations to feel the sense of urgency for Jewish sovereignty. This is not about unconditional support for Israel. People will of course criticise Israel for policies which do not align with their own values, especially as the issue of Palestinian statehood remains unresolved. This is not just legitimate, but healthy. This is about support, or lack thereof, for the very concept of Israel.

This can be seen when the Canadian actor Seth Rogen said in a podcast that Israel “seems an antiquated thought process” and that “if it is for truly the preservation of Jewish people, it makes no sense”. His argument being that concentrating people in one volatile space to keep them safe is illogical.

If you see Israel through the lens of the Holocaust – as a refuge rather than as a homeland for the Jewish people – this chimes. As most diaspora Jews live in countries with good rule of law and the freedom to be openly Jewish, this can be seen as an achievement of sorts. The threat of antisemitism is real, but Jews are living in the golden era. Indeed, when threats to survival diminish, people prioritise freedom over security and this is part of the reason Jews are more

The desire to belong is natural - Claudia Mendoza

ambivalent towards Zionism or Jewish nationalism. Israel “makes no sense”.

Nationalism, in an era of globalisation is seen as parochial, regressive, and embarrassing and Jews have come to associate it - often with good cause - negatively.

The horrors of the Second World War understandably make Jews uncomfortable about nationalism and today's populists are once again scapegoating Jews and lacing their narratives with antisemitism, sometimes overtly. The rootless cosmopolitans versus the loyal nationalists. The Jew versus the patriot.

Indeed, there is a common-sense reason for Jews' liberalism - when Jews were emancipated they understood that they needed to live in societies where everyone was emancipated because if others were not free, they were not free. Everyone or no one. But liberalism and nationalism are not mutually exclusive. Zionism and nationalism are not at odds with liberalism even if it sometimes appears that way.

The desire to belong is a fundamental human motivation and national attachment is part of that. In Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and The Last Man*, he claimed that the victory made over communism would be a permanent state for the whole of humanity. What he did not foresee - and now concedes - is that people want more than peace and prosperity. They want to belong.

By holding those who crave belonging in contempt, we unleash the backlash of the rise of populist movements. Far too often, this is at Jews' expense. We should celebrate those who hold state, tribe and community dear. This has always been the Jewish story and the reason for our survival and flourishing.

I celebrate my freedom to be Jewish in a country I love, but I do not take it for granted because I know my history and I do not assume that the status quo is immovable. Society changes but progress is not always linear. Our hard fought for freedoms will always need protecting and Israel will always be needed, as a safe haven, but also as a homeland for the Jews.

Claudia Mendoza is the Co Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Leadership Council

What is Zionism? A view from the Left

Eric Lee

"Zionism" has become a toxic word on the Left -- in Britain and elsewhere.

In 2016, journalist and author Jonathan Freedland was asked about this. He quoted the Israeli writer Amos Oz who said that "Zionist" was like a family name. There always needs to be a first name, such as "Religious Zionist" or "Socialist Zionist". But Freedland himself, when asked, said he'd rather not use the label "Zionist" to describe his own views, as it would just cause confusion.

There are really two approaches to dealing with political labels that become toxic. One is to accept reality and abandon them. The other is to be defiant and embrace them.

And there are consequences in the real world to choosing one or another of those options. For example, a generation ago, right-wing politicians in America would label every attempt at social reform, no matter how modest, as "socialism". (They still do, but with less success.) As the Cold War raged, the word "socialist" had become toxic. We on the American Left would argue that by openly calling ourselves "socialists" we were giving breathing space to liberals, and changing the political discourse in the country. Little did we realize that within a few years, an openly socialist politician would be a serious contender for the American Presidency.

And yet there are terms we've been forced to abandon. Most leftists I know don't call themselves "communists", for example. While we can all claim to embrace the ideas expounded by Marx in the Communist Manifesto, most of us accept that it would cause more confusion than it's worth to try to claim the word for ourselves. Even some left groups which are happy to count themselves as followers of Lenin hesitate to use the "Communist" label.

But this is not the case with the word Zionist. As Freedland and most others would agree, a Zionist is a person who supports the Jewish people's right to a national homeland.

When I suggested this in an article for British leftist newspaper, the organisation's response was to say that my definition was too broad. Zionists were not those who support self-determination for the Jews, they argued. Everyone supports that.

What is Zionism? A view from the Left - Eric Lee

But I disagree. Not everyone supports that. Increasingly, people who are critical of Israel have moved away from support for a two-state solution and embrace the Hamas program: one state in Palestine. This is exemplified in Britain by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) which refuse to say whether they support a two-state or one-state solution (where no Israel exists). Their historic logo shows a map of all of Palestine, including Israel, and they continue to sell in their online shop t-shirts and greeting cards with the whole map of Israel, implying they want a Palestinian state "from the river to the sea." The PSC is the largest and most significant pro-Palestinian organization in the UK, and it has not recognised the right of the Jewish people to their own homeland side by side with the Palestinians.

This is not the view held by the Palestinians themselves. The Palestine Liberation Organisation, under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, accepted the existence of the state of Israel back in 1988. The Oslo Accords just a few years later confirmed that.

But on the British Left, at least, support for Hamas and its vision of a Jew-free Palestine, has grown. And it has grown in spite of the fact that Hamas, like Hezbollah, is a fascist organisation that has nothing in common with the secular left in the UK and elsewhere.

Write an article, as I have recently done, with the phrase "proud to be a Zionist" in the title, and brace yourself for a tsunami of attacks. My article has been widely circulated among Israel-hating activists and organisations, posted on obscure pro-Palestinian websites in different countries, in an attempt to "expose" me as a Zionist. (The fact that I wrote the article and published it in a left newspaper should have provided a hint that perhaps I wasn't exactly hiding my views.)

I believe that one could be a Zionist and oppose the current right-wing government in Israel. One could be a Zionist and support an independent Palestinian state, side by the side with Israel. One could oppose the occupation in all its ugliness and still be a Zionist.

In fact, one could even argue that if you really believe the Jewish people need a state of their own, and want it to survive, you must also support reaching an agreement with the Palestinians to share the land which both peoples claim. There is no other future for the Jewish state that I can imagine. As a Zionist, I therefore support genuine peace and reconciliation between the two peoples – and a two-state solution to bring an end to the conflict.

I am happy to embrace the label "socialist Zionist" and the tradition that represents. The kibbutz movement, of which I was proud to be a part for nearly two decades, was a model democratic socialist society, possibly the most important experiment in workers' self-management ever carried out. And even if most kibbutz members eventually chose to "reform" the kibbutz out of existence, I would still argue that it was an experiment which did not fail.

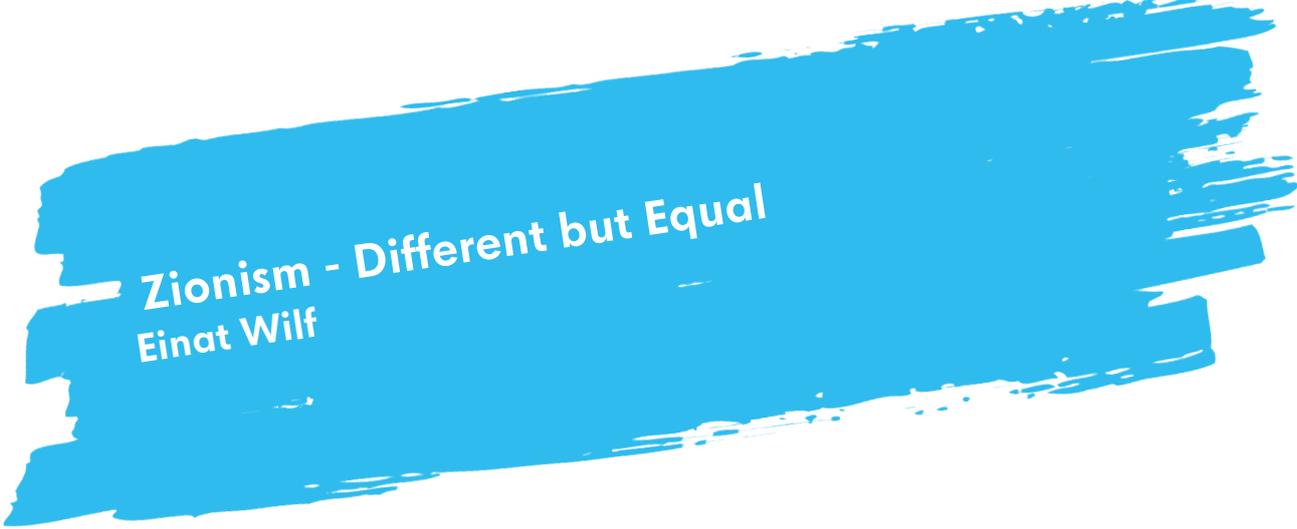
I also think there's reason to be proud of the political struggle by left Zionists, including a party I was a member of, the United Workers Party (Mapam). While I do not agree with everything in Mapam's history (it's pro-Stalinist past was something it struggled to overcome), on the whole it had a very good record of accomplishment and struggle.

What is Zionism? A view from the Left - Eric Lee

My Zionism is the Zionism of Dov Ber Borochof, the theoretician who tried to blend Jewish nationalism with Marxism in the early twentieth century, and who is the inspiration for the Zionist Left. It is the Zionism of Ya'akov Hazan and Me'ir Yaari, the historic leaders of Mapam, who led the fight for equality between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and for peace with the Palestinians and an end to the occupation. It is the Zionism of Dr Arie'el Ya'ari, a founder of Kibbutz Ein Dor, a man who devoted his entire life to the struggle for socialism and for peace, and who was proud to be called a Zionist.

That is my Zionism.

Eric Lee is the founder of the LabourStart website. He was the founding editor of the magazine Workers Education and has written several books, including Operation Basalt: The British Raid on Sark and Hitler's Commando Order.



Zionism - Different but Equal

Einat Wilf

Zionism is an ode to human responsibility and imagination. Zionism is living proof that human beings have it within them to imagine a future far better than the circumstances of their present, and then go about realising it.

Zionism is a universal ideal. Zionism has never been about the Jews only and for the Jews only. Zionism has been about giving Jewish expression to the most noble of universal human ideals - that different need not mean unequal.

The ongoing transition of human society into modern times has been about challenging the most fundamental tenet of all pre-modern societies - that difference between human beings, whether innate or chosen, mandate unequal status and treatment, all the way to subjugation, slavery and murder. In pre-modern societies to be born different was to be destined to be unequal. That was as it should be.

Modernity has been about attempting to sever the necessary relationship between birth and destiny. Modernity put up a vision of a just society based on the idea that even if people were different they were not to be treated as anything less than equal.

Despite remarkable advances, humans are still straining to live up to the ideal of different but equal. Whether it is moving from abolishing slavery to black lives matter, from voting rights for women to accepting women in power, from ending colonialism to a world where all people have a voice in shaping their governments, from murdering people for being gay to fighting for transgender rights, global human society continues the long and arduous struggle to fully realise the profound implications of the revolution of modernity - that difference provides no justification for unequal treatment, not legally, not socially.

Zionism emerged precisely because the journey towards this new ideal has been so wrenching. Early Zionist thinkers realised that as much as a post-French-revolution Europe was beginning to espouse the ideal that Jews could live as equals in a new world comprised of nation states, most Europeans were finding it very difficult to live up to that ideal, and were coming up with new and insidious ways to continue justifying the unequal treatment of Jews. Early Zionist thinkers had a glimpse of the future: they realized both how noble the ideal of different but equal could be, and how dangerous the path to get there.

Zionism - Different but Equal - Einat Wilf

Zionism was also born of the realisation that it is often up to those who are different and unequal to transcend the circumstances of their oppression to shape a world where they can be both different and equal. Zionism was born when Jews accepted that those who suffer unequal treatment in the hands of others cannot rely on those others to reverse that treatment all by themselves. Zionism was the realisation that human beings need to be lent a helping hand to help live up to their noble ideas in practice. It is up to those who are left out of universal visions of justice to remind those who espouse it, that if justice is to be truly universal, they too should be included.

Zionism was about expanding a universal vision of a just world order comprised of nation states where all peoples are masters of their fate, and have a voice in their government, that fell short of including the Jews. Zionism was about testing the true universality of human ideals by applying them to Jews. If Jews, as they were - whether as individuals, or as a collective - were excluded from the universal ideals of the time, and of any time, those espousing them could not lay claim to those ideas being truly universal. Zionism argued quite simply that if all peoples have a right to self-determine their future in a state of their own, then so do the Jews, a people, a nation, perhaps one of the world's first nations.

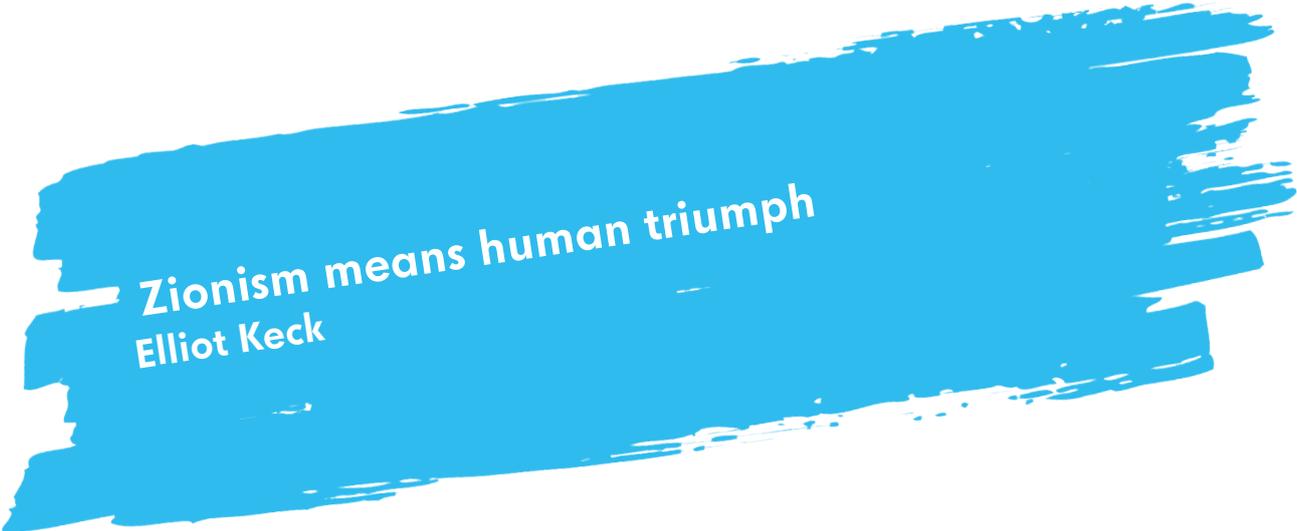
But rather than calling out European society for the glaring gaps between its ideals and reality, Zionists chose not to wallow in the status of Jews as victims, as a marginalised and oppressed minority. Zionists called upon Jews themselves to change their destiny. Zionism was about building for oneself, rather than destroying for others. Zionism was about Jews forgoing reliance on "the kindness of strangers" to be masters of their own fate. Zionism channeled the spirit of a new age of responsibility - rather than passively waiting for the Messiah, Zionists called upon the Jews to be their own Messiahs, active vehicles of their own redemption.

Zionism continues to have many enemies, because it has the power to inspire people to imagine and build a different future. Its enemies are the ones who fear the profound implications of the extraordinary success of Zionism - that all people and peoples have a right to be treated as equals, while maintaining their difference. Zionism is the enemy of those who believe that different should mean unequal and that they should have the right to determine which kind of different should mean what kind of unequal.

Zionism is also the enemy of those who have given up on the ideal of human responsibility. It is the enemy of those who believe that it is always up to others to correct their ways. Zionism is the enemy of those who fear the implications of assuming responsibility to no longer be victims. Zionism has enemies because if even the most trod upon, marginalised and oppressed people in the world, who have been victims of genocide, have found within themselves the power to take fate into their own hand and change the course of history, then no-one is exempt from assuming the responsibility to change their future.

Zionism has enemies because it reminds human beings that they have it within themselves to change their fate and the course of history, and they need not be victims of their birth and history.

Dr. Einat Wilf is a Senior Fellow with the Jewish People Policy Institute and an Adjunct Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. She has a PhD in Political Science from the University of Cambridge and served as a member of the Knesset for the Labour Party and Independence from 2010 to 2013



Zionism means human triumph

Elliot Keck

Some stories, events and figures are too improbable to be fiction. Told in the absence of footnotes, they would simply not be believed.

Think, for example, of the fact that Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, two of America's founding fathers whose rivalry dominated the turn of the 19th century, both died on the same day, the 4th of July, 1826, the anniversary of the day on which American independence was formally declared 50 years prior.

Or the fact that nuclear Armageddon was averted not once, but twice, during the Cold War, on one occasion by a two-to-one vote on board a submarine which had lost radio contact and on another occasion by the refusal of a Soviet lieutenant colonel to follow military protocol, based on a hunch that Soviet early-warning signals had malfunctioned.

Or the fact that the world's most oppressed and downtrodden minority managed, in the wake of the Holocaust, to forge, in a small strip of religiously significant but economically and environmentally destitute strip of land, one of the world's most dynamic and successful nations currently existing today.

All of this in the space of just a few decades. In a region with only enemies; in a world with few friends; and, with little more than wit, bravery and guile in their arsenal, this community has done more than just survived. Israel, the nation state of the Jewish people, has triumphed.

Zionism, commonly defined, is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, calling for self-determination and a Jewish homeland in the land of Israel. Exactly what this homeland looks like was subject for many decades before the State of Israel to intense debate and discussion. Followers of Jabotinsky demanded a nation state in the full territory of the British Mandate, including present-day Jordan. Others, including David Ben Gurion, called for a more pragmatic approach in which a nation state was to be established on a part of the territory, with the possibility of expansion. A smaller number argued for a binational state, or simply strong and codified rights within a larger state.

Whatever the exact parameters, Zionism when seen in this light is a narrow movement with clear boundaries. It is a Jewish movement, for the Jewish people, in pursuit and support of a

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Jewish homeland.

But as a story of human triumph, Zionism is universal. It contains the essence of the human story in two significant, monumental respects which can be fleshed out by analysing two of our literary canon's most compelling and significant tales. Firstly, the story of David and Goliath. Although Biblical, there are few themes more frequently recycled in the pantheon of human storytelling. From Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader through to some of the greatest sporting triumphs, the defeat of a giant by a minnow is omnipresent in our psyche. The story of David and Goliath reflects something deep in the human experience: the victory of the human will over the elements.

The second is the story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde which as well as any piece of literature represents the duality of good and evil which lives within humanity. We are capable, both of extraordinary virtue, kindness, courage and generosity. But also of the most wicked, malevolent and cruel evil. The analogy doesn't perfectly map by any means. Dr Jekyll was fighting an enemy, Mr Hyde, internal to his being. The Jews, on the other hand, were fighting the external enemy of violent, genocidal antisemitism in the form of European fascism. But as an analogy for the good of humanity - the desire of a community for national liberation and a more prosperous future - existing alongside the evil of humanity - the Nazis and their desire to exterminate a people - it works.

Zionism is the triumph of Goliath over David and the victory of Dr Jekyll over Mr Hyde. In the face of not just insurmountable obstacles, but organised and sophisticated evil, Zionism created a better future not just for the inhabitants of the State of Israel but indeed for anyone that has benefitted from the extraordinary cultural, culinary, scientific, technological and medical contributions made by those that call Israel home.

That is why Zionism is, to a secular non-Jew such as myself, universal. It reflects more than the ambition to establish a Jewish homeland. It reflects the defeat of humanity's worst traits by its best. Unlike in Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, on this occasion Dr Jekyll managed to beat Mr Hyde.

It hasn't been an easy journey. Israel has, on occasion, succumbed to its own worst instincts. For over half a century Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have lived in a kind of legal limbo; not entirely stateless, but certainly not with a fully-fledged state of their own. Israel is by no means blameless for this situation. Israeli-Arabs have full rights as citizens of Israel. But they continue to face structural obstacles to opportunity and prosperity.

Yet none of this is exclusive to Israel, nor is it a necessary feature of Zionism. Which nation hasn't at times fallen short of its ideals in its treatment of its minority communities, or in its use of military force, however justified? Which ideology which hasn't been distorted, manipulated or cherry-picked for some nefarious means?

On the other hand, few nations have experienced the challenges that Israel has. And few ideologies have appeared more fanciful or quixotic than Zionism did during its early decades.

We have seen time and time again in the past century how external and internal threats have

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been used to justify or distract from repression at home. As I write, Russian troops are amassed on the border of Ukraine in a naked attempt to distract from enormous difficulties domestically. There is likewise no shortage of examples of national ideologies or belief systems being used to exclude, repress and discriminate. Saudi Arabia has used its status as the protector of Islam's holy sites to justify the most extreme form of Islamic governance.

Yet not once in Israel's history have elections been suspended. In 1973 an invasion by Egypt and Syria led to the postponement of elections for two months, but that was it. Never has a Knesset (parliament) not included Arab parties, voted for by Arab voters.

Zionism meanwhile has proven to be an enormously flexible and capacious national idea, allowing for Jews from across the Middle East and North Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia to share a land alongside Arabs, Circassians, Druze and other minority groups. The benefits can be seen in the country's architecture, cuisine, art, music and more.

Zionism and its creation, the State of Israel, are reminders that for all humanity's aptitude for evil, there is always the possibility that good will win out. From the ghettos and concentrations camps of Eastern Europe, came the skyline of Tel Aviv. Zionism is a tale of human triumph.

Zionism did not just save the Jews; in many ways, it saved humanity.

Elliot Keck is a Parliamentary Staffer and a former Communications Officer at BICOM, which he originally joined in 2018 as an Intern for We Believe in Israel



Feminism and Zionism

Einat Wilf

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Over the years, I have found many parallels between feminism and Zionism. Both movements are daughters of the Enlightenment.

Through emancipation, empowerment and self-determination, both movements have revolutionized the lives of two of the world's longest and most oppressed peoples.

Both have made remarkable and previously unimaginable strides in the 20th century, but remain unfinished into the 21st. And both have become "stained" words.

Both feminism and Zionism have been so transformative in upending long established power structures and prejudices that they could not but have faced a virulent backlash.

Nowhere has the backlash been more apparent than the words that denote these two revolutions. These words have become so "stained" that even those who support their underlying political purpose - whether it be equal rights and opportunities for women and men or political self-determination for the Jewish people in their ancient homeland - feel at times uncomfortable to publicly identify as a feminists or Zionists.

Women, and especially women in power, face unrelenting social pressures to avoid appearing ambitious, "bossy," or feminist. In her book, *Lean In*, Sheryl Sandberg describes the well intentioned advice she received to avoid taking up the cause of women's empowerment, lest it reflect badly on her hard-earned position in the technology world. Zionism has suffered a similar fate. Recent research conducted separately by pollsters Frank Luntz in the United States and Stanley Greenberg in France has demonstrated the extent to which the word "Zionism" has become toxic, especially among liberal elites. As a result, well-intentioned PR professionals have come to recommend that those who seek to advocate for Israel refrain from using the word. Luntz himself said that there has to be an "end to the use of the word 'Zionism'" because "you can't make the case if you use that word."

But the mechanisms by which feminism and Zionism have acquired negative connotations have been neither innocent, innocuous, nor accidental.

Feminism and Zionism - Einat Wilf

Since their inception, both have faced a purposeful and continuous effort to deprive them of their ideological force. For decades, Zionism has been subject to the relentless attack of the "placard strategy" - the mechanism by which Zionism is equated in placards, UN resolutions and media utterances with a litany of the world's most negative words, from racism to genocide.

Feminism has been painted as an affront to womanhood, an ideology of hatred toward men, and as the main barrier to a nice woman finding a man (though why a man who doesn't view a woman as his equal is worth marrying at all should be the real question).

The outcome has been to deprive both revolutions of vital support.

Those who devised "the placard strategy" against Zionism understood, whether consciously or subconsciously, that the source of Israel's strength is not its army, its economy or even its people, but rather the idea that has motivated its people to acts of great sacrifice and daring. They understood that just as the construction of Israel followed the inspiration of Zionism, the destruction of Israel becomes possible once Zionism is turned into something repellent. Those who have sought to drive a wedge between women and feminism could not but have noticed that if it were to achieve the support of more than half of the world's population, feminism might succeed in transforming long-entrenched power relations.

Therefore, nothing could be more dangerous to the cause of the empowerment of women and Jews than subscribing to the friendly advice of those who suggest that we abstain from using the words "feminism" and "Zionism" to identify themselves. To give up the use of these words is to play into the hands of those who hope to see both revolutions rolled back. To be a woman in power and to shy away from publicly identifying as a feminist is both ungrateful and a betrayal of the women who still hope that the revolution of feminism will one day improve their lives. To be a supporter of the rights of the Jewish people to selfdetermination in their homeland, and to try to defend this cause without using the word "Zionism" is to betray the spirit of the revolution and deny the cause of a true peace of equals between Jews and Arabs.

Neither the revolution of feminism nor that of Zionism would have brought women and Jews this far if their leaders and supporters would have at any time heeded the "friendly" advice to refrain from identifying themselves with those causes. Even if some PR battles may be won this way, this is a classic instance of maybe winning a battle and definitely losing the war - a war that those who truly care about human progress and liberty cannot afford to lose.

Dr. Einat Wilf is a Senior Fellow with the Jewish People Policy Institute and an Adjunct Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. She has a PhD in Political Science from the University of Cambridge and served as a member of the Knesset for the Labour Party and Independence from 2010 to 2013.



5 Reasons I am a non-Israeli, non-Jewish, two-state Zionist Alan Johnson

First, Sean Matgamna

It was Sean Matgamna - or 'Rebbe Matgamna' as some in the Union of Jewish Students affectionately called this brilliant Irish intellectual and former Docker at the time - who woke me from my dogmatic One-State slumber in the mid-1980s. Sean was the leading theoretician of Socialist Organiser, the far-left entryist group I had been a member of since 1980. Out of a clear blue sky he walked in one day with a paper arguing that we should drop the demand for a 'democratic secular state' and embrace 'two states for two peoples.' After a long internal debate - the sophistication and seriousness of which I was never to find in academia - his arguments prevailed. 'It seems to me,' Matgamna wrote, 'that the terms of the only just solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are clear and unmistakable. Unless you think the interests of one side should be entirely sacrificed to the other - that is, unless you are either an Arab or an Israeli chauvinist - there is only one acceptable solution. Each nation should have self-determination in the territory where it is the majority. I understand that to mean, essentially, the 1967 border. There should be full equality for members of each nationality in the other's state. The secular democratic state necessarily involves replacing the Jewish state of Israel with another arrangement in which Jews will not have a state. The goal is not only to secure Palestinian rights by putting an end to Israeli rule in the Palestinian territories, but to deprive Israeli Jews of their national rights.'

Well, indeed. Obvious enough, you might think, but those ideas were a heresy on the far left at the time. And so we were heresy hunted. 'Zionists!' screamed Chris Harman, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party. The Workers Revolutionary Party even wrote that 'a powerful Zionist connection runs from the so-called left of the Labour Party right into the centre of Thatcher's government in Downing Street'.

Armed with those ideas, and those enemies, we fought alongside UJS to prevent the far left drive to ban student Jewish Societies as 'Zionist' so 'racist'. We worked closely with UJS inside the NUS and I was impressed by the Jews I met. I recall Adrian Cohen, after he was called an antisemitic name at an NUS conference, squaring up and threatening to bury his 'Jewish fist' in the guy's face. How could a Suedehead from North Shields not be impressed with that? It was our youth leader Jane Ashworth - who later set up the Engage website with another Matgamna boy, David Hirsh - who came up with the phrase 'cultural Zionists', to describe ourselves at the time.

Second, Leon Trotsky

I still revere the Old Man and bristle when people attack him in words that should really be reserved for his followers. His final words were read out at my wedding to Debbie, a Matgamna girl, by our children: 'Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression, and violence and enjoy it to the full.'

And it was from Trotsky that I learned that the assimilationist approach of classical Marxism to the problem of antisemitism was wrong. A target of both Tsarist and Stalinist antisemitism himself, Trotsky understood antisemitism was no feudal hangover. He grasped the modernity of antisemitism. I read his searing account of the antisemitic pogroms of the 1905 Russian Revolution and his desperate and prescient warnings about Fascism. 'The next development of world reaction signifies with certainty the physical extermination of the Jews.' (emphasis in the original) he wrote, before his murder by the Stalinists in 1940. As Enzo Traverso, an intellectual historian of Marxism and antisemitism, has put it, 'The rise of Nazism in Germany led the Russian revolutionary to a global revision of his approach to the Jewish Question' i.e. to the question of antisemitism.

Though Trotsky never thought of himself as a Zionist - having faith in a World Socialist Revolution which we cannot, in good faith, still claim - he became convinced of the necessity of a national solution to the problem of radicalising antisemitism. The Jews, Trotsky came to believe, have every right to live in a 'compact mass' as a nation. And nations, he wrote as far back as 1915, 'constitute an active and permanent factor of human culture. The nation will not only survive the current war, but also capitalism itself.' 'The Jewish nation' he said in 1937, 'will maintain itself for an entire epoch to come.'

Third, Isaac Deutscher

From Trotsky's biographer, the Polish socialist Isaac Deutscher, I learned that the Jewish state is not only a right but a necessity, and that to oppose its existence on the basis of abstract left-wing dogma is, literally, a matter of Jewish life and death:

I have, of course, long since abandoned my anti-Zionism, which was based on a confidence in the European labour movement, or, more broadly, in European society and civilisation, which that society and civilisation have not justified. If, instead of arguing against Zionism in the 1920s and 1930s I had urged European Jews to go to Palestine, I might have helped to save some of the lives that were later extinguished in Hitler's gas chambers.

For the remnants of European Jewry - is it only for them? - the Jewish State has become an historic necessity. It is also a living reality. Whatever their cleavages, grievances, and frustrations, the Jews of Israel are animated by a fresh and strong sense of nationhood and by a dogged determination to consolidate and strengthen their State by every means at their disposal. They also have the feeling - how well justified - that the 'civilised world', which in one way or another has the fate of European Jewry on its conscience, has no moral ground

to stand on when it tries to sermonise or threaten Israel for any real or imaginary breaches of international commitments.

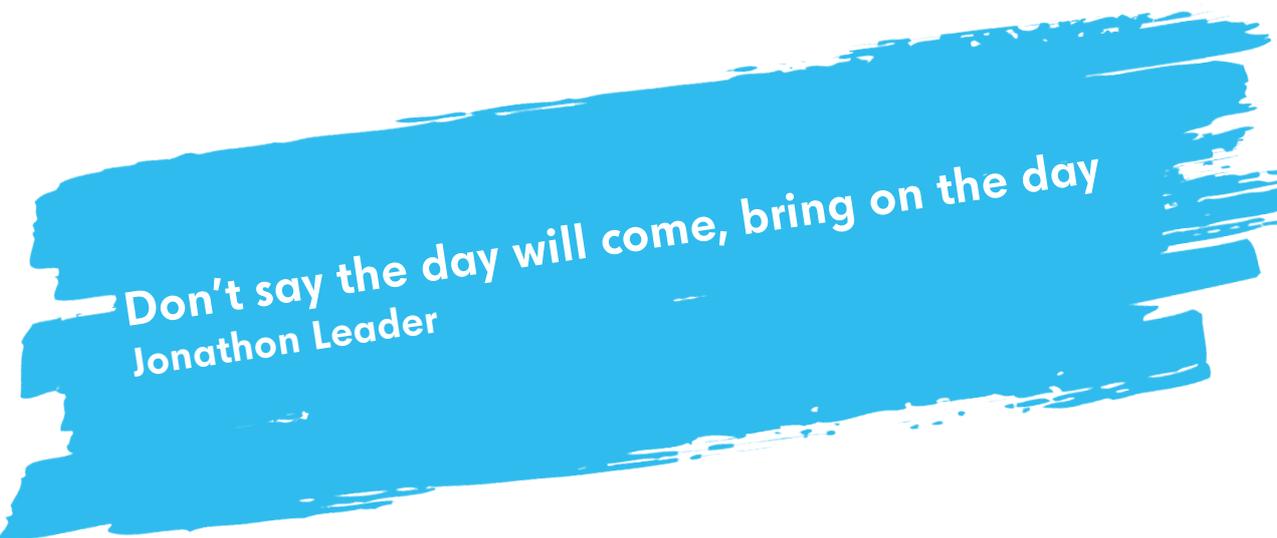
Four, the experience of teaching the Holocaust

A sustained engagement with antisemitism as a university teacher – deep reading in the texts, images, films, memoirs, and histories; sustained discussion with your students; the effort to write about antisemitism, in my case about the work of Primo Levi – produced this insight: our natures are mixed, capable of great good and great evil. In the words of the Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi, we are centaurs, a ‘tangle of flesh and mind, of divine inspiration and dust’. Then add this in: humanity, for reasons that do not concern us here, for no good reason, again and again, has selected the Jew as the scapegoat. More precisely, and with a smidgeon more hope, let us say that humanity has done so for millennia and is still doing so today, though we can allow ourselves the hope – as we may hope for the return of the Messiah – that humanity will not do so in the future. But what we can’t not know is that from time to time, in the words of Levi’s favourite writer Dante, western civilisation takes leave of its senses and ‘descends into hell with trumpets and drums’. And when it does, the Jews – not only, but above all, the Jews – need a state with ramparts and an IDF standing on those ramparts. At one level, my Zionism comes down to that brute fact.

Five, boys and girls in Jerusalem

Walking in Jerusalem one day I came upon Jewish children playing in a narrow street, the early evening sun warming the stone flags and lending their ringlets a glow. They were playing a game I could not understand, white shirts flapping, Kippahs in danger of falling off, one shriek chasing another. I had two thoughts. My first, as ever, was about Primo Levi. I was reminded that in play we adults can find again ‘the savour of childhood, delicate and forgotten,’ and that to enjoy play is rather ‘like receiving, free of charge or almost, a rare and beautiful object.’ A second thought then shadowed my first, a typical experience for anyone who has spent a lot of time reading about the Holocaust, let alone those who have a familial connection to the Shoah: other images and other shrieks from another time arrived unbidden. In some indefinable way, my own Zionism was expressed at that moment, by that juxtaposition.

Professor Alan Johnson is Editor of Fathom and Senior Research Fellow at BICOM. He is an editorial board member of Dissent Magazine and Senior Research Associate of the Foreign Policy Centre.



Don't say the day will come, bring on the day
Jonathon Leader

I, like the vast majority of world Jewry, and even some non-Jews, am a Zionist. I say this proudly, and with no apologies.

But what does it mean? In short, it means I subscribe to the idea that Jews, in addition to a cultural, or religious identity, also have a national identity; and that national identity renders us worthy of national self-determination in parts of the land of Israel. In practice, this also means that I am committed to Israel's existence as both a Jewish and democratic state, grounded in the values of equality and peace espoused in Israel's declaration of independence.

But how did I get there? I became politically aware at around the age of 14-15 and instantly identified with leftist politics, the rhetoric of equality, human rights and the union, for whatever reason spoke to me. Maybe it was because of the stories I'd heard of my grandfather fighting alongside trade unionists against Oswald Mosley's black shirts at Cable Street in the 30s, or my great uncle's commitment to USDAW, the "Union for Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers". In terms of my life experience, unlike many of my peers I'd never been to Israel by that time, I had then, and still have now, no family in Israel, and when my family talked about Israel it was largely in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; suffice it to say that I didn't like much of what I heard in those conversations. My formal Jewish education, if anything, nearly sent me further the other way.

There was however, one Jewish and Zionist space where I felt fully at home, both socially and ideologically; the youth movement I now have the privilege to work for, Habonim Dror. There, cool leaders in blue shirts and red strings spoke about Zionism as a Jewish revolution, a movement to liberate a people yearning for a homeland for millennia, they spoke of the idealism of the chaluzim¹, and the Kibbutz movement as a project to create a new, more egalitarian society. This Zionism was different from what I'd heard about at school or at home. It wasn't about European antisemites or Palestinian terrorists. It was infectious, aspirational and, at times, critical.

This Zionism was one of responsibilities, social justice and partnership. Yes, it's OK to criticise

1 Immigrants to Israel

Don't say the day will come, bring on the day - Jonathon Leader

Israel when necessary, but when you do it you have to take responsibility for that. You don't criticise the occupation or growing economic disparity to disengage from Israel but rather to bring you closer to it, you have to understand the problem before you can be part of the solution. Despite this deep, historic commitment to the Jewish people, the Jewish state and the Zionist project, the charge of anti-Zionism is occasionally levelled at us by the Zionist hard right.

Now for a while, I asked myself the following question, "Why do these people believe something which I know for a fact to be untrue?" In fairness the answer came to me quite quickly, and forgive me if the answer I've come to seems too simplistic, but here it is. These people don't truly understand what the Zionist vision and ethos is really about. They mistake an ideology, which in its modern inception was a socialist one aimed at liberating the Jewish people, with an ideology of "supporting the Israeli government". This is, to my mind a farcical mutation of the original Zionist dream. A dream which aimed to recreate and revolutionise the way Jews all over the world related to themselves and their identities. This is the key aspect of Zionism which our critics seem unable to grasp. Zionism is a revolutionary force. At a time when religious Orthodox Judaism was offering less and less answers to less and less people, secular Zionism aimed to unite the Jewish people around the idea of nationhood. The idea that we cannot afford to wait for our emancipation but must take it with both hands and make Jewish sovereignty a reality for the first time in over two millennia.

Mistakes have been made along the way, that's for sure, Jewish terrorists from the Irgun blew up market places and hotels full of innocent people, 1948 was not pretty, nor was the way Mizrachim¹ were treated on arrival; fleeing their own persecution in neighbouring Arab countries, the occupation that began in 1967, economic disparity, and Yitzhak Rabin's assassination; coupled with the 2nd intifada has shattered the Israeli peace camp.

For a long time now, I believe that for the most part the revolutionary view of Zionism, which we as a movement hold dear, and what was intended by its creators, is slowly dying out. The values of Jewish collective responsibility and social justice have been eroded by the values of individualism and the need to make a fast shekel. The Declaration of Independence's pledge that the state 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" has been replaced by the exclusion of Arabs, of Ethiopians of the poor and even, in some places of women.

Yet none of this makes me waver in my support for the Zionist project; the most important project of the Jewish people certainly in my lifetime. All it means is that there is more work to be done. Israel has the capacity to become a more peaceful, equal and democratic society; however it needs the kind of Zionism I was imbued with in my youth movement to make it happen. It needs a Zionism that is aspirational, not defeatist, a Zionism that has the strength to look Israeli society in the eye and see its beauty and its flaws in equal measure; and a Zionism that commits itself to the values of freedom, justice and peace, as envisaged by the prophets of Israel.

1 Jews from the Middle East

Don't say the day will come, bring on the day - Jonathon Leader

Some might call it naive, but despite everything I still believe this is all still possible, as Herzl, the grandfather of the Zionist project famously said, "If you will it, it is no dream".

Jonathon Leader Is the former Mazkir of Habonim-Dror UK



The past, present and future of Zionism from my perspective

Nina Freedman

Zionism has always been an integral part of my identity. Growing up in a Jewish environment, I was always taught that Zionism was a fundamental part of my Judaism and that the two were largely inseparable. As I matured and got older, I formed my own experiences with Israel on various tours and organised trips that helped to cement my Zionism within myself.

Being a young Jewish Zionist in the 21st century is something that is often difficult to navigate. We are often defined by what we are not, rather than what we are. Too often, we are forced to explain (or exclaim!) that we are not racists, we do not advocate for apartheid, we are not apologists for hatred, nor are we fundamentally anti-Palestinian. Time and time again, our Zionism is taken away from us to be defined by the narrow limitations of others' perception.

There exists a clear definition of Zionism, one that not only was created by the early modern Zionists but was brought into UJS policy in 2021. The Jerusalem Programme, originally devised by the World Zionist Congress, agreed on by all members and parties from the left to the right, defines Zionism as the national liberation movement of the Jewish people.

But this definition is unfortunately far from universal. To many people, the word 'Zionist' is a slur, a dirty word, associated with hatred and fear. On university campuses especially, it is an epithet used to describe that which is hateful, oppressive and wrong. Somewhere along the way, Zionism has come to mean something completely different to different people. The cavernous disconnect between these interpretations is one that must be breached.

In order for Zionism to survive and thrive as a respected ideology, we must work to educate people on what it means to us. We need to show the world that there is so much more to our Zionist identities than colonialism and oppression. Zionism is, at its core, built on culture, on freedom, on liberation and this is something that we must work to help people understand.

There is a lot of debate over what the role of Zionism is in a world where we are fortunate to have the State of Israel. But one thing is for certain, Zionism is a proud ideology of self-determination that has no end. Just because we have reached our ideological aim of the establishment of the State of Israel does not mean that the ideology ceases to be integral to our identity.

The past, present and future of Zionism from my perspective - Nina Freedman

The Zionism of the past is important to reflect on. It is important for us to look at its imperfections and failings. But it is also important to look to the future.

The place of Zionism in the future of young people is often unclear. As we begin to navigate the world outside of our Jewish bubbles for the first time, some of our identities can come into conflict with one another in a way that often feels uncomfortable and scary. But I have learnt that Zionism is a fundamental part of me and my identity, though I am acutely aware that my self-determination cannot and must not be elevated above the self-determination of Palestinians, much like no other self-determination can be conditional on my lack of.

Mutual recognition, mutual understanding and mutual success. That is the Zionism of the future, and the Zionism that I am proud to stand up and adhere to. We cannot simply sit back and rest while others are trampled, and we cannot sit back and rest while our own dreams are trampled.

The Zionism of the future that I look towards is a compassionate, empathetic Zionism. One that is mindful of how far we have come but that we still have so far to go. One that uplifts the Jewish people and their neighbours and strives for a State of Israel that we can be proud of. Young people have spoken overwhelmingly time and time again in favour of a two-state solution. This, to me, is the only future of Zionism and one that we must all strive towards. I strongly believe that we can maintain our proud Zionist identities while recognising that we need to work for peace in the region. Social justice makes up as much of my Jewish identity as my Zionism does and I think that our future must emphasise these two values hand-in-hand to enact the Jewish commandment of 'Tikkun Olam' (repairing the world).

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