

Zionism:

Historical/Ideological development

Zionism, the ideological force behind the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine in 1948, is the product of Western Jewish cultural and political conditions. As a political ideology, it is similar to other European ideological products such as nationalism, fascism, and colonialism. It is derived from and based upon a mixture of arguments and theories advanced by both Jews and Gentiles that are aimed at resolving Europe's "Jewish problem" by emptying Europe of its Jewish population. Zionism emerged as a political party with its own distinct ideology, platform, methodology, and structure. As such, the Zionist leaders recognized early on the importance of organization and the role played by finance, and media in achieving their objective: the establishment of a Jewish state.

In their efforts to establish a Jewish state, the Zionist leadership employed terms often utilized by anti-Jewish circles to describe Jews. Though circumstances were improving for Jews in Europe, many groups were working to rid their countries of Jews. Instead of working on improving conditions for Jews in their countries of origin, Zionist leaders shared anti-Semitic sentiments which aimed to rid their countries of its Jewish population. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, one of the signers of the Declaration of the Establishment of State of Israel, is known to have said "One cow in Palestine is worth more than all the Jews in Europe". Along this horrific thinking, David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister is reported to have said: "If I knew that it was possible to save all the children of Germany by transporting them to England, and only half by transferring them to the Land of Israel, I would choose the latter, for before us lies not only the numbers of these children but the historical reckoning of the people of Israel."¹ This phrase describes vividly the Zionist mission and the symbiotic relationship between Zionism and European anti-Semitic political circles.

Many forces began to come together for the establishment of Israel. The evil of Jewish persecution in Europe had given rise to the Zionist belief that Jews would never be safe in the Gentile world. Zionists claiming to represent the persecuted began to agitate for social change and, at times, for separation and a home of their own. Other elements at play were the social currents in Europe that brought together the interest of wealthy Jews and established powerful

Gentiles to rid Europe of its Jewish agitations for revolutionary change and social justice at home. Colonial design thus gave impetus to such wealthy Jewish individuals to use poor or disenfranchised Jews to establish a Jewish colony on a non-European piece of real estate. In 1899, the Third Zionist Congress established the Jewish Colonial Trust for this purpose.

Argentina, Uganda, Palestine, and Cyprus were just a few countries mentioned as possible sites for this Jewish colonial scheme. Realizing that in order to create a Jewish colony, the colony must depend on and serve the interests of a European surrogate power thus fulfilling the classic definition of a colony as an entity connected with a mother country, Jewish agricultural colonies began to be established in Argentina and Palestine. The allure of creating agricultural colonies was soon eclipsed by the grander plans for establishing a colonial state with direct Jewish domination but the exact location of such a potential Jewish colony was not important to early Zionist thinkers.

Spiritual considerations were another component of this movement. Although poor or religious Jews yearned to return to Jerusalem to fulfill their religious obligations, Judaism views the return and establishment of Israel without the Messiah as an abomination. The Zionists therefore needed to jump this religious hurdle if a Jewish state were to be established in Palestine. It was thus argued that the creation of Israel would hasten the coming of the Messiah. But some influential Jewish leaders in Great Britain, Germany and elsewhere were dead set against Zionism because they saw it as a retrogression of progress in their home countries. In 1897, the Munich Jewish community even forced the Zionists to abandon their plans to hold their first Congress in that city. Meanwhile, some fundamentalist Gentiles believed that the Second Coming was contingent upon the establishment of Israel and the ingathering of the Jews in Palestine.

In sum, all energies, arguments, and resources were discussed, polished, coordinated, and utilized by the Zionist Organization (ZO) which later changed its name to the World Zionist Organization (WZO), for the purpose of establishing a Jewish state.

The Zionists reserved their bitterest and strongest attacks against those Jewish individuals and institutions that opposed their ideology and goals. During the Second Zionist Congress of 1898, sensing Jewish opposition to Zionism, Theodor Herzl, the founding father of Zionism, called on the Congress to “conquer the communities” to quell Jewish opposition to political Zionism. Eventually, once Israel was established in 1948, the WZO continued to partner the newly created Israeli government and Zionism became the adopted and commonly held ideology of Israel's Jewish political parties. In fact, this zionification was even extended to non-Jewish or non-Zionist parties in Israel. In order to be declared a legitimate political party, a total adherence to the Zionist nature of the state had to have been accomplished.

The WZO is a well-connected and financed ultra-nationalist umbrella organization. It is an umbrella organization with many branches in numerous towns, cities, and countries. It

coordinates Zionist affairs among the various between various branches, Zionist groups and individuals. It first met in 1897, approximately forty years before Nazi atrocities against humanity during World War Two.

In Palestine, the official branch of the WZO was known as the Jewish Agency. The headquarters of the influential Actions Committee was in Berlin, Germany, but the organization met in different European countries on a regular basis. Because the WZO believes that Jews, regardless of citizenship, constitute one people with common cultural, political, and national aspirations, its aims were to establish an exclusive state, Israel, for the Jews. Since Israel was the highest realization of those aspirations, they argued, it was the duty and the objective of every Jew to immigrate to Israel.

Prior to 1948, the WZO often debated the ways and means to establish Israel, by fostering Jewish colonization through the establishment of colonies and *aliyah* (immigration into Palestine), building exclusive settlements in Palestine, strengthening Jewish national feeling and consciousness, and gaining the support of other countries for the Zionist program. Some of the arguments and plans debated seemed to be contradictory and occasionally fantastically wild. Nevertheless, the WZO worked diligently in an octopus-like fashion to accomplish its objectives, its leaders traveling the world, meeting important personalities, and conducting business as if they were statesmen with heads of government. Deals were discussed, loans offered, favors exchanged, and promises made.

Through trial and error, the WZO frequently changed policy arguments, adapted to emerging realities, clouded basic issues, deliberately lied about or distorted historical facts, and often changed ideological colors to suit a range of situations, possibilities and positions in the countries of interest. The types of Zionism offered ranged from a socialist enterprise to being a tool of the British empire. The influence of various Jewish communities, institutions, personalities, and businesses was harnessed to achieve WZO policy objectives. If there were Jewish objections to or criticism of Zionism they were often met with harassment, boycott, or harsh attacks. The energy and resources of the WZO seem to have been inexhaustible.

Meanwhile unfolding events in Europe served to shape and develop Zionist ideology. In order to transfer the Jews from their communities, they reasoned that Jews would not be safe among the Gentiles, so they argued that the Jews must have a state of their own, an idea that caught fire among poor, disenfranchised or idealistic Jews. Herzl and other Zionist leaders traveled throughout Europe in search of sponsors in return for uprooting Jewish communities and offering Jewish support, favors and loans. No effort was spared and no European power exempt. In the British empire, they stressed and tailored their argument to appeal to British colonial experience and interests. They offered to spare His Majesty's empire the thousands of would-be Jewish immigrants from Russia, and later, from Germany. They promised that the Jewish state would serve as Great Britain's client in the region and to bring the influence of American and

Russian Jewish communities to bear upon the world scene on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

In 1917, David Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, acknowledged the perception held by his government regarding the important role played by Jewish communities in America and Russia, "They were helpful in America and in Russia, which at that moment was just walking out and leaving us alone".² In return for Jewish alliance and "sympathies", Great Britain, in a letter dated November 2, 1917, to Lord Rothschild, issued the Balfour Declaration promising the Jews a homeland in Palestine which reads in part:

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

This letter was Zionism's first diplomatic victory on the world stage. It was addressed by Great Britain's Foreign Secretary Lord James Balfour, to Walter Rothschild, who had no connection to historic Palestine having been born in London in 1868 and who served as a Conservative MP for from 1899 to January 1910, and contained two paradoxical promises: the desire of His Majesty's government to establish a "Jewish home for the Jewish people" in Palestine and the promise that such an undertaking would not adversely affect the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine, who just happened to be the then majority of the population.

Shopping for a homeland was intense. Directly and through intermediaries or allies, the Zionists attempted to entice the Ottoman Sultan to support Zionist colonization of Palestine. They offered to launch a public relations campaign to polish the image of the Ottoman Empire on the world stage in the aftermath of the Armenian massacres. In addition, they promised financial support for the cash-starved Ottoman treasury. Herzl noted in his diaries:

If Abdul Hamid would give Palestine to the Zionists as an autonomous statelet, Jewish high finance would... solve the problems of his imperial exchequer by paying off its crushing foreign debts.³

In Italy, they sought out King Victor Emmanuel III, an ally of the Sultan, in order to help intercede with the Sultan. In return, the Zionists would guarantee the support of Libyan Jews for Italy's occupation of Libya. Herzl asked Victor Emmanuel to personally intervene with the

Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Hamid on behalf of an autonomous Zionist Palestine in return for helping Italy occupy Libya. ⁴

In Russia, the Zionists' main goal was to ingather Russian Jews into Palestine. In doing so, they were ridding the tsar of political and social agitators and potential revolutionaries. To the tsar, Zionist colonization of Palestine could enhance Russian influence in the region. The Zionists argued that by facilitating and enabling poor Jews to migrate would serve to fight the enemies of Russia.

In Germany, the Zionists had a significant presence through its Actions Committee. However, though the German Jewish community was strong and influential, it agreed with the German government against settling Jewish refugees from Russia and Poland on German soil. At the time, Germany was an ally of the Ottomans. But because of the Turkish-Armenian conflict; Germany was suffering from an international image problem, so the Zionists hoped to exploit German influence with the Sultan for their scheme in Palestine. They promised to extend to the Germans the same scheme offered to the Sultan in order to rehabilitate Germany's image for its failure to intervene in the massacre of the Armenian community. As a reward for keeping the Actions Committee in Berlin and for enhancing Germany's image, the Zionists were allowed to use the German diplomatic pouch to communicate with the various Zionist branches. To suspicious or closeted anti-Semites, they played the card of emptying Europe of its poor and potentially revolutionary Jews. Europe would be safer if only the Jews were allowed to leave and establish a colony of their own, they argued.

Great Britain, the colonial power par excellence, took the bait and adopted the Zionist scheme to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, dusted off and unfolded his maps of Great Britain's colonial possessions. All potential non-European sites were taken and inhabited. Where to create Israel and what to be done with the indigenous people?

How can one explain the establishment of Israel in Argentina, Uganda, Cyprus, or other proposed sites? How can one convince a poor religious Jew in Poland to leave his or her ghetto to settle in Argentina? What strategic interests does Uganda hold for Great Britain? The whole enterprise hinged on creating a link between the Zionists and the future location of Israel. Most Zionist leaders claimed to have been secular and practicing atheists. Max Nordau, the co-founder of Zionism with Herzl, wrote: "When I reached the age of fifteen, I left the Jewish way of life and the study of the Torah... Judaism remained a mere memory and since then I have always felt as a German and as a German only."⁵ But, now, they had to alter their outlook for the purpose of establishing Israel in Palestine. So the Zionist leaders chose Palestine as the location for their experiment in nation-building because of the prevailing assumption that ancient Jews had settled in Palestine some thousands of years ago, an argument that would find receptiveness among both, Jews and Gentiles.

Now that they settled on Palestine as the future location for Israel, the Zionist leaders had to deal with the question of the land and the indigenous people. Since Palestine had been continuously inhabited, owned and cultivated by its people, the Palestinians, the Zionists found it convenient to deny their existence and to work diligently on uprooting them. Co-existence between Jews and the natives was not on the Zionist agenda. However, some early Zionist thinkers such as Ahad Ha'am and Martin Buber flirted with the idea of cooperation and coexistence. Mr. Buber "hoped and believed that Jews and Arabs one day would live in peace in a joint nation."⁶ But the noble sentiments of such thinkers gave way to the brutal version of Zionism. In those circumstances where natives had to be dealt with, the Zionists deprived them of their land, denied their basic rights, and reduced them to cheap laborers in Jewish establishments. But the underlying objective was to empty the future Jewish state of its non-Jewish population. Ahad Ha'am warned the Zionist colonial settlers against what he termed as the "great error", noticeable among Jewish colonial settlers, of treating the Palestinians with contempt, regarding them as savages, and comparing them to donkeys. He described the actions of Jewish colonial settlers toward the Palestinians:

And what do our brothers [Jewish colonial settlers] do? Exactly the opposite! They were slaves in their Diasporas, and suddenly they find themselves with unlimited freedom, wild freedom that only a country like Turkey [the Ottoman Empire] can offer. This sudden change has planted despotic tendencies in their hearts, as always happens to former slaves [eved ki yimlokh – when a slave becomes king – Proverbs 30:22]. They deal with the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, trespass unjustly, beat them shamefully for no sufficient reason, and even boast about their actions. There is no one to stop the flood and put an end to this despicable and dangerous tendency.⁷

The Zionists constructed elaborate schemes and arguments to deny the very presence of the Palestinians and to demonize them. Some Zionists viewed the Palestinians as the invention of antiSemites to irk the Jews and to spoil their reputation. Some argued that the Jews were the original Palestinians. Palestine was described as desolate. Only through the genius and hard work of the Jews was, a desert country made to bloom. Obviously, in this instance, the atheist Zionists found it convenient to ignore the Bible which described the country as the "land of milk and honey". To justify their colonialism of Palestine, Zionists reduced the indigenous population to savages. Only Jews could establish a western oasis in a primitive East, they argued. At first, they concentrated on relocating western Jews. Once they realized that the conditions of western Jews were improving in their countries of origin and that western Jews were not migrating en masse, they shifted their attention to the Jews of the East. All methods were employed to make Jews migrate to Palestine, including the bombing of synagogues. Once relocated to Israel, they are treated as second class citizens and some made sterilized.⁸ How else could the Zionists establish a Jewish state and dismantle the deeply rooted Jewish communities?

The evolving Zionist ideology concentrated on uprooting ancient Jewish communities and expelling the Palestinian natives to realize the underlying objective of a Jewish state. To the Zionists, a Jewish state meant precisely that; only Jews were to be the nationals of it. Land in the Jewish state was to be held in trust for the benefit of Jews only. Jews, regardless of citizenship or cultural background, could settle in the Jewish state and become its nationals. Palestinians were to be enticed to sell their land and if they refused, could be forced out in due time in order to confiscate Palestinian land.

Ben Gurion informs us of the preferred Zionist practices when he said:

Regarding the Galilee, Mr. [Moshe] Sharett already told you that about 100,000 Arabs still now live in the pocket of Galilee. Let us assume that a war breaks out. Then we will be able to cleanse the entire area of Central Galilee, including all its refugees, in one stroke. In this context let me mention some mediators who offered to give us the Galilee without war. What they meant was the populated Galilee. They didn't offer us the empty Galilee, which we could have only by means of a war. Therefore if a war is extended to cover the whole of Palestine, our greatest gain will be the Galilee. It is because without any special military effort which might imperil other fronts, only by using the troops already assigned for the task, we could accomplish our aim of cleansing the Galilee.⁹

The Zionists organized and financed bands of Zionist settlers and built Jewish-only settlements often built on or near former Palestinian cities and villages, and named, in many cases, with similar sounding names:

Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahlal arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Huneifis; and Kefar Yehushua in the place of Tal al-Shuman. There is not a single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population.¹⁰

The early settlements were located on land occupied, confiscated, or provided to the Zionists by the colonial power. Their location was strategic and reflected the nature of the scheme to come: the establishment of Israel. Later, these settlements played a crucial role in disrupting the territorial integrity and encircling Palestinian communities. Current settlements in the so-called West Bank continue to play the same functions.

With all the material, organizational, and financial powers at the disposal of the WZO, the Jewish community in Palestine owned 2.5% of the total land of Palestine in 1918. In 1948, their ownership increased to 5.67%. In 1918, Palestinian Arabs constituted the majority of the total population, totaling 644,000 inhabitants to 56,000 Jews. In 1922, the Palestinians were 660,641 and the Jews 87,790. By 1931, Palestinians were 848,607 and 174,980 Jews. In 1944, the

Palestinians were 1,196,824, and the Jews were 528,702. On the eve of the establishment of Israel, Palestinians numbered 1,380,000 and the Jews 700,000. Most of the Jews were newly-arrived immigrants from Europe.

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly issued Resolution 181 partitioning Palestine into three separate entities: Israel, Palestine, and International Jerusalem. Palestinians were to remain the majority in all three entities. Israel, having the smallest population, was assigned approximately 52% of the total land of Palestine; International Jerusalem was to be established on 2% of the land; and Palestine on the minority 46% of the remaining portion. Then through military actions, Israel between 1948 and 1949, extended its occupation to 78% of the total land of Palestine after it forced the majority of the inhabitants to flee their properties.

In 1947, the population of Palestine (not taking into account the large numbers of recent Jewish immigrants into the country) and land ownership was as follows:

| Sub-district | Total Pop. | | Land Ownership | |
|--------------|---------------|----------|----------------|-------------|
| | Percentage of | | Percentage of | |
| | %Arabs | %Jews | %Arabs | %Jews |
| Safad | 87 | 13 | 68 | 18 |
| Acre | 96 | 4 | 87 | 3 |
| Tiberias | 67 | 33 | 51 | 38 |
| Beisan | 70 | 30 | 44 | 34 |
| Nazareth | 84 | 16 | 52 | 28 |
| Haifa | 53 | 47 | 42 | 35 |
| Jenin | 100 | - | 84 | less than 1 |
| Nablus | 100 | - | 76 | less than 1 |
| Tulkarm | 83 | 17 | 78 | 17 |
| Ramallah | 100 | - | 99 | less than 1 |
| Jerusalem | 62 | 38 | 84 | 2 |
| Hebron | 99 | ≥ Than 1 | ≥ than 1 | less than 1 |
| Jaffa | 29 | 71 | 47 | 39 |
| Ramle | 78 | 22 | 77 | 14 |
| Gaza | 98 | 2 | 75 | 4 |
| Beersheba | 99 | ≥ Than 1 | 14 | less than 1 |

Demographics in Palestine:

| Year | Jews | Non-Jews |
|------|---------|-----------|
| 1800 | 6,700 | 268,000 |
| 1880 | 24,000 | 525,000 |
| 1915 | 87,500 | 590,000 |
| 1931 | 174,000 | 837,000 |
| 1947 | 630,000 | 1,310,000 |

| Population of Palestine by Religions | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------|--------|
| Year | Muslims | Jews | Christians | Others |
| 1922 | 486,177 | 83,790 | 71,464 | 7,617 |
| 1931 | 493,147 | 174,606 | 88,907 | 10,101 |
| 1941 | 906,551 | 474,102 | 125,413 | 12,881 |
| 1946 | 1,076,783 | 608,225 | 145,063 | 15,488 |

According to the statistics of the Mandate Government of Palestine and a statement by David Ben Gurion before the Anglo- American Commission in 1946, the total ownership by Jews of land in Palestine was 6.7% of the total area of the country.

As a result of the war that erupted between the Zionists and Arabs in 1947 and 1949 and the Zionist's deliberate policy ethnically cleansing Palestine of its people, the Zionist armed forces, aided and abetted by the forces of the Mandatory power, were able to occupy 78% of the territory of Palestine. They occupied 2,421 square miles (approximately 50%) more than had been allotted to the Jewish state by the UN partition plan. The Haganah, the military arm of the Jewish Agency, carried out independent acts and coordinated operations with the Irgun and Stern terrorists to massacre or uproot Palestinian civilians from their cities, towns, and villages. Members of these three terrorist organizations were responsible in 1948-49 for the following war crimes:

They expelled from the area they occupied over 800,000 Arabs (700,000 Muslims and 100,000 Christians). They completely destroyed 531 towns and villages by demolishing all houses and other buildings. They completely destroyed 480 Muslim Mosques and 6 Christian churches. They destroyed 410 Muslim cemeteries and 30 Christian cemeteries by bull-dozing all gravestones and remains. Only 156,000 Muslim and Christian Palestinians remained in the so-called Jewish state.¹¹

The Zionist scheme to colonize Palestine was an integral part of the European colonial experience and the product of that era. It was approximately forty years prior to the ascendance

of the Nazis to power in Germany. One could successfully conclude that the atrocities of Nazi Germany contributed to and aided, as predicted by Herzl, in the success of Zionism and in the establishment of Israel. But no one can argue that the success of Zionism was the unintended byproduct of the atrocities of Nazi Germany. Unlike the other colonial ventures, the Zionists deliberately obfuscated the clear lines of delineation between politics and religion; liberation and colonialism; fact and fiction, and aggression and justice. This deliberate confusion is at the root of today's Israel/Palestine conflict.

Zionism began in Europe in the nineteenth century as a secular international political movement that advocated the establishment of Jewish colonies that were to be settled, operated, and governed by Jews, of Jews, and for Jews. A few years later, a shift occurred whereby the ZO alone supported the establishment of a homeland for the "Jewish people" in Palestine, the uprooting and transporting of Jews from Europe, their settlement in and the colonization of the country, and the development of the Jewish political, military, financial, and economic institutions in Palestine.

Zionism bases its ideological program on Jewish religious tradition linking the "Jewish people" to Palestine. While the modern Zionist movement was mainly secular, several types of Zionism emerged from the beginning which included labor Zionism, liberal Zionism, revisionist Zionism, and religious Zionism, but Zionism itself became the dominant Jewish political movement after World War II as a result of Nazi atrocities. The movement eventually succeeded in establishing the state of Israel in Palestine in 1948. Today, Zionists argue that anyone who supports the continuing existence of Israel as an exclusive "Jewish state" is a Zionist.

Beginning in the 1920s, a small vocal group of religious Jews began to develop the concept of religious Zionism. This group saw religious value in many of Zionism's ideals, while rejecting its anti-religious undertones. They were also motivated by a concern that growing secularization of Zionism and antagonism toward it by Orthodox Jews would lead to a schism among the Jews. As such, they sought to forge a branch of Orthodox Judaism which would properly embrace Zionism's "positive" ideas while also serving as a bridge between Orthodox and secular Jews. Not all Orthodox Jews embraced political Zionism or its product, the state of Israel. Religious Zionism came to play a significant role in Israeli political life. It is a major component in the Israeli settler movement, although not all religious Zionists support the settlements. Those who do often justify their attitude on the basis of the biblical promises supposedly made by God to Abraham, in which the current Palestinian territories are described as belonging to Abraham's descendants through Isaac, and specifically not through the descendants of Ishmael (Genesis 21:12), through whom Arabs trace their ancestry. However, this narrow interpretation of the Bible assumes that Abraham, the main party to the covenant, was Jewish and that modern Jews are the direct descendants of Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac but ignoring the fact that Abraham himself was not Jewish but rather a historic figure who

reportedly existed long before Moses led the Israelites into the wilderness and who even had to purchase a burial lot for his wife Sarah from the Canaanites— A lesson in riotousness that modern Israel clearly lacks.

Not all Jewish groups are Zionists or pro-Zionists. After the establishment of the state of Israel, most Jewish groups are pro-Zionist, but other religious and secular groups and individuals remain steadfast in their opposition to Zionism. Some oppose Zionism on religious grounds and denounce all cooperation with Zionists. Others argue that the country should be a secular and multi-ethnic state-- a post-Zionism movement that is gaining ground among Jews and gentiles.

Contrary to the facts on the ground, the ZO and later WZO worked diligently to create a common bond among the diverse and scattered Jewish communities. The ZO argues that Jews, regardless of their country of origin, political orientation, culture, or religious practices, etc., are one people, the "Jewish People". As such they share religion, a history, and an ethnicity. This means that the religious practices, the historical experiences, and the biological make-up of Ethiopian Jews are the same as Moroccan Jews or Russian Jews. Obviously, this is not the case. Precisely because of this Israel has two rabbinical authorities and two chief rabbis: one for Ashkenazi (European) Jews and the other for Sephardic (Iberian Peninsula and North Africa) Jews. The other example is the perennial question of who is a Jew? Orthodox, conservative, reform, and liberal Judaism are unable to agree on the definition of who is a Jew, but all denominations of Judaism agree that a person may be a Jew either by birth or through conversion. However, they differ on what these requirements consist of. If there is a disagreement on defining a Jew, how can one subscribe to the notion that there is a group of people or an entity that can be called the "Jewish people"?

Among the various aspects of Zionism is the deliberate spin woven by Zionists and their unsuspecting gentile apologists to market Zionism as meaning various things to various peoples in various circumstances. To the Zionists, Zionism is mainly a national liberation movement that aims to gather the exiles into a Jewish homeland of Jews, by Jews, for Jews. To its critics, Zionism is an archaic political ideology that keeps people apart, holds, and promotes Jewish racial purity and divine entitlement to Palestine. It is a military occupation enabling and supporting colonialist settlers. It practices ethnic cleansing through the confiscation of land and the expulsion of indigenous Palestinians. It exercises political domination and exploitation through the denial of basic human rights under the guise of divine entitlement and the spread of Western values. In short, Zionism in Israel today practices economic, cultural domination and persecution through control, systematic destruction, segregation, ethnic cleansing, and genocide against the indigenous presence and heritage.

In Israel, the historical record shows that:

1. Zionism is a segregationist movement based on the premise that all Jews, regardless of cultural differences and religious observance, are one nation and cannot be secure except in a state of their own because the non-Jewish world is inherently hostile to Jews. Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, argued that the key to establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine was to harness European anti-Semitism for the realization of the Jewish state by encouraging European governments to rid their countries of Jews: "Herzl regarded Zionism's triumph as inevitable, not only because life in Europe was ever more untenable for Jews, but also because it was in Europe's interests to rid the Jews and relieved of anti-Semitism. The European political establishment would eventually be persuaded to promote Zionism. Herzl recognized that anti-Semitism would be harnessed to his own--Zionist-purposes."⁽¹²⁾ In his Diaries, Herzl recorded that "The anti-Semites will become our most dependable friends, the anti-Semitic countries our allies." Many years later in Rome, Ariel Sharon as prime minister of Israel, stated: "If Israel is weakened ... the Jews worldwide will not be able to live the lives they live today We are witness to a great wave of anti-Semitism, and apart from the usual anti-Semitism against Jews, there is today the added hate of the collective Jew, which is Israel... The best solution to anti-Semitism is immigration to Israel. It is the only place on Earth where Jews can live as Jews."⁽¹³⁾

Zionism as an ideology and strategy works to isolate Jews and force them to abandon the larger community in which they live and who are supposedly an integral part of and encourage them to settle in Israel. Zionism as an ideology does not seek to resolve the issues of anti-Semitism at the source. To the Zionist, shipping Jews to Israel and the issue of anti-Semitism are solved at once. Here thus, both the interests of Zionism and anti-Semitism converge. Currently, Israel is the largest Jewish ghetto ever, survives by military means, and in perpetual state of war and oppression against the native population.

2. Zionism practices a racist colonial-settler ideology which claims that historical Palestine was desolate and uninhabited and that the Palestinian people never existed. Before Palestine had been selected by the Zionists to be the site of their new state, Theodor Herzl himself acknowledged in his 1896 book, "The Jewish State", that both Palestine and Argentina were populated, saying that "[i]f the Powers show themselves willing to grant the Jewish people sovereignty over a neutral territory, the Society [of Jews] will negotiate for the land to be taken. Two regions are possibilities: Palestine and Argentina. Noteworthy experiments in colonization have been made in both places, although they have been based on the mistaken principle of a gradual infiltration of Jews. Infiltration is always bound to end badly. For there invariably comes a moment when the government, under pressure of the native population--which feels itself threatened--bars any further influx of Jews. Consequently, emigration will be pointless unless it is based upon our guaranteed sovereignty."⁽¹⁴⁾ Leo Motzkin, another Zionist leader, wrote of his disappointment upon visiting Palestine and, finding the country densely inhabited and its fertile land utilized by its Arab natives, wrote "One has to admit that the density of population does not exactly put the visitor to Palestine in a joyful mood. In large stretches of

land, one constantly comes across big Arab villages, and it is a well-established fact that the most fertile regions of our land are occupied by Arabs.”(15)

The fact that Palestine was inhabited and fertile did not deter the Zionists from perpetrating the big lie that it was desolate and uninhabited. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Zionists, as an integral part of their scheme to colonize Palestine, began using the slogan “A land without a people for a people without a land” referring to Palestine.(16)

Israel Zangwill, a British Zionist who visited Palestine in 1897, became so obsessed with this slogan that he consequently authored several versions of it to the point where it is often attributed to him.(17) In using this slogan, the Zionists were deliberately trying to convince themselves and the world that Palestine was desolate and uninhabited and thus it was permissible to colonize it. This myth continued to be repeated to deceive the world, such that in 1969 Prime Minister Golda Meir stated in public that “There was no such thing as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was either southern Syria before the First World War, and then it was a Palestine including Jordan. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.”(18)

In the few instances where Zionists conceded the existence of the indigenous population, they were labeled as “savages”, “barbarians”, or “terrorists”. Zangwill wrote: “...the people living in Palestine were not a people with a history, culture, and legitimate claim to national self-determination of their own; to the extent that any of this existed, it was regarded as inferior in value to the history, culture, and claim of the Jewish people. Put differently, Palestine contained ‘people’, but not a people’. There were people who (possibly) had their homeland there, but they lacked a national identity and thus had no claim to national self-determination, let alone a state.”(19)

The denial of the very existence of the Palestinian people and the process employed to demonize them enables Israel to this day to justify its brutal practices against them. Even when one finds some ‘humane’ Zionists who advocate some rights for the Palestinians, their advocacy never amounts to granting Palestinians the same rights enjoyed by Jews. This fact was not missed by David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister, who ridiculed “humane” Zionists when he said; “You cannot have humane Zionism, it is a contradiction in terms.”(20) According to Israel’s basic law, Jews, regardless of their country of origin or ethnicity, can settle in Israel on land that was confiscated by force after the expulsion of the majority of the indigenous Palestinians. In an essay titled “Judea and Galilee,” Ben Gurion describes the Zionist settlers in Palestine as “conquering, conquering a land. We were a company of conquistadors.”(21) Such ideological discourse prompted the late professor Israel Shahak to conclude: “It is my considered opinion that the State of Israel is a racist state in the full meaning of this term: In this

state people are discriminated against, in the most permanent and legal way and in the most important areas of life, only because of their origin. This racist discrimination began in Zionism and is carried out today mainly in co-operation with the institutions of the Zionist movement.”(22)

3. Zionism distinguishes between Jews and Palestinians on various levels and its laws and practices are designed to keep them apart. All Jews in the world are considered ‘nationals’ of Israel, whereas a mere portion of Palestinians are considered citizens. Through the enactment of several laws, including but not limited to the Absentee Property Law of 1950, the Land Acquisition Law of 1953, and the Basic Law: Israel Lands of 1960, Israel has confiscated lands belonging to those Palestinians who were uprooted and expelled from their properties and later declared as absentees and prevented by Israel from returning to it and from Palestinians who remained under its control. Israel established various schemes to keep, manage, and utilize Palestinian confiscated land for the benefit of Jews only. According to the Israel Land Administration Authority (ILA), the Israeli government agency responsible for managing this land, Israel owns approximately 93% of the total land : “... that is, either property of the state, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) or the development Authority.”(23) The land is comprised of 4,820,500 acres. Ownership of land according to ILA means leasing rights for 49-98 years. Palestinians, therefore, are treated merely as tillers and tenants on Jewish land and it is only a matter of time before they are completely expelled as were their predecessors.

After expelling the majority of the Palestinians from Palestine in 1948-49, Israel concentrated on cleansing the Galilee of its indigenous people.(24)

4. Zionism, in its campaign to segregate the Jews and to establish an exclusive Jewish state, is derived from the narrow tribal understanding of Judaism that the cosmos is divided into five parts: plants, vegetables, animals, human beings, and Jews; Jews being the noblest and the closest to God. This fanatic religious view is clearly reflected by Rabbi Yosef Ovadia, former Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, who advocates the annihilation of the Palestinians on the basis that they are not Jews. "It is forbidden to be merciful to them. You must send missiles to them and annihilate them. They are evil and damnable."(25) Unfortunately, the views of the Chief Rabbi on non-Jews are not only shared by some Jews, but it is becoming a central belief of the American Christian-Zionists. Rabbi Ovadia said: "Gentiles were born only to serve us. Without that, they have no place in the world – only to serve the People of Israel."(26)

5. In addition to annihilating the Palestinians, the Zionist advocacy regarding the indigenous population is centered on fothe objectives:

a. A systematic attempt at purchasing the land of Palestine from the Palestinians and colonizing it through Jewish immigration for the benefit of Jews only. The Israeli historian Benny Morris described this thinking when he said: "The early Zionists had been aware of the Arab presence in the country--there were just under half a million around 1882, the year the first Zionists came

ashore in Jaffa. And there were, at the time, some twenty-five thousand Jews in the country."(27) Writing in 1882 Eliezer Ben-Yehuda wrote: "The thing we must do now is to become as strong as we can, to conquer the country, covertly, bit by bit . . . buy, buy, buy [the land from the Arabs]."(28)

Writing decades before the holocaust in Europe, Ben-Yehuda and many other Zionist leaders believed that the country's demographics would be changed through Jewish immigration which would ultimately alter its future to favor the Zionist scheme to colonize Palestine. Early Zionist leaders were not fully convinced that the Palestinians would sell their land and cooperate in their own colonization. Accurately predicting the swift and predictable reaction of the Palestinian Arabs to the Zionist colonial scheme through immigration, Herzl warned in 1896 that their objection and resistance could bring Jewish immigration to an end. Vladimir Jabotinsky, writing in 1923, argued that the consent of and agreements with Palestinian Arabs to hand over their country to the Zionists are not necessary: "There can be no voluntary agreement between ourselves and the Palestine Arabs. Not now, nor in the prospective future. I say this with such conviction, not because I want to hurt the moderate Zionists. I do not believe that they will be hurt. Except for those who were born blind, they realised long ago that it is utterly impossible to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs for converting 'Palestine' from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority."(29) He continued: "We cannot offer any adequate compensation to the Palestinian Arabs in return for Palestine. And therefore, there is no likelihood of any voluntary agreement being reached. So that all those who regard such an agreement as a condition sine qua non for Zionism may as well say 'no' and withdraw from Zionism. Zionist colonisation must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population."(30)

b. The Israeli mindset centered on crushing the Palestinians like "grasshoppers," eliminating them entirely. Israel's former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir wrote in *Hehazit*: "We have before us the command of the Torah, whose morality surpasses that of any other body of laws in the world: 'Ye shall blot them out to the last man'."(31) This genocidal view has been shared by many in Israel including several Prime Ministers such as Menachem Begin, Ariel Sharon, and Benjamin Netanyahu.

c. There is no room for non-Jews in the Jewish state. In 2001, Rehavam Zeevi, then Israel's Minister of Tourism, described Palestinians as living "illegally" in Israel. He is quoted as saying: "We should get rid of the ones who are not Israeli citizens the same way you get rid of lice. We have to stop this cancer from spreading within us." In 1983, Raphael Eitan, then Israel's military chief of staff, speaking of plans to increase Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, said: "When we have settled the land, all the Arabs will be able to do about it will be scurry around like drugged roaches in a bottle." This racist ideological view in Israeli governing Zionist circles is widespread and determines Israel's policies and practices toward the Palestinians.

In 1948 Zionism military triumphed and succeeded in establishing Israel as a “Jewish homeland” in Palestine. The majority of the indigenous population were expelled and prevented by Israel from returning; Palestinian land was confiscated, held, and utilized for the benefit of Jews; and Palestinians remaining in Israel were placed under horrific military rule and discriminatory laws.