



Zionism: Ancient Dream, Modern Movement

HPHP4013

Session Outline



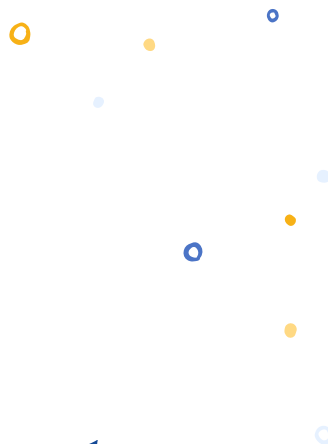
- Jewish association with the land of Israel
- Zionism as a response to the ideals of the Enlightenment
 - Zionism as a response to persecution
- The modern state of Israel & religious responses to Zionism

Key Terms

- *Eretz Yisrael*: the land of Israel.
- *Eretz Hakodesh*: the Holy Land.
- **Zion**: one of the biblical names for Jerusalem which has also come to stand for Israel as a whole.
- **Zionism**: a political and religious ideology concerned with the restoration of the land and the ingathering of exiled Jews.



Jewish Association with the Land of Israel



- Land a central concept in the Jewish scriptures.
- Jewish scriptures reflect the belief that *Eretz Yisrael* is the place that God had promised to the Jewish people as part of the covenant relationship first made with Abraham.
- The same promise given to Abraham's descendants (see the book of Genesis).

The Covenant with Abraham

‘Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing”’ (Gen. 12:1-2).

‘On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates”’ (Gen 15:18).

‘No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God’ (Gen. 17:5-8).

The Promise to Jacob

‘God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he was called Israel. God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you”’ (Gen. 35:10-12).

Eretz Hakodesh

- The early chapters of Exodus present the story of Jacob's descendants and their liberation from slavery in Egypt to a land 'flowing with milk and honey' (Exod. 3:8; Deut. 26:9).
- The physical area in which the covenant people were expected to live out God's requirements. Jerusalem of special significance.
- Many regulations in the Torah concerning the land. Emphasis on the divine ownership of the land (e.g. Lev. 25:23).



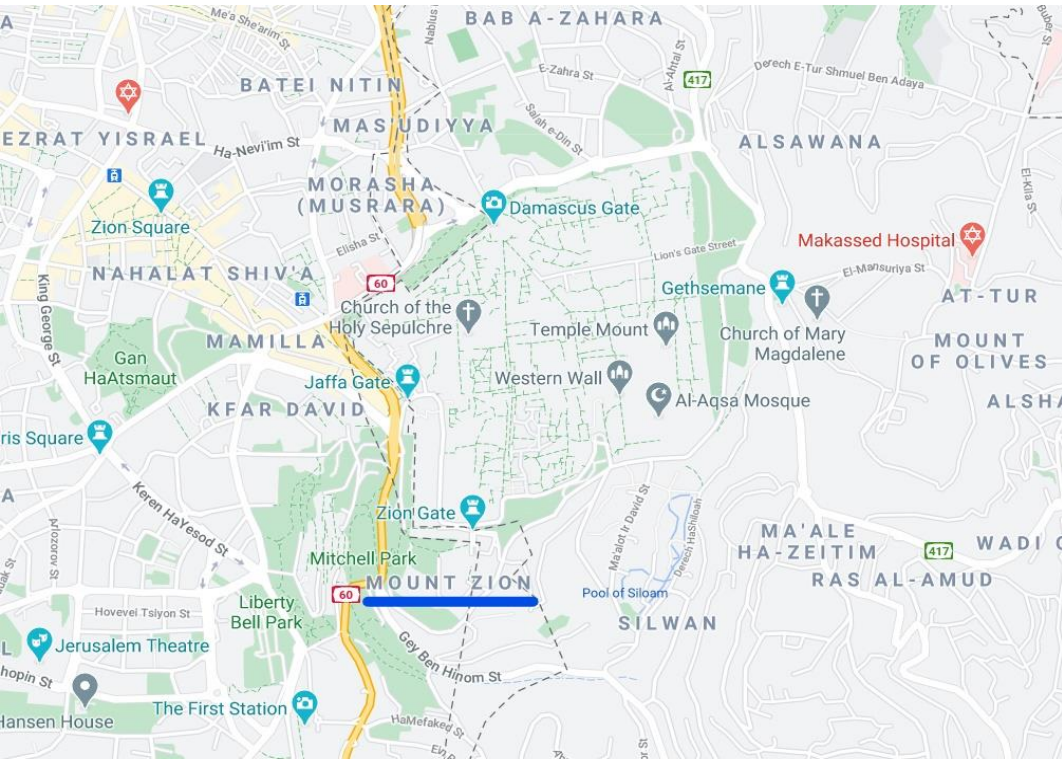
Jerusalem: The Holy City

‘As the navel is set in the centre of the human body,
So is the land of Israel the navel of the world...

Situated in the centre of the world,
And Jerusalem in the centre of the land of Israel,
And the sanctuary in the centre of Jerusalem,
And the holy place in the centre of the sanctuary,
And the ark in the centre of the holy place
And the foundation stone before the holy place
Because from it the world was founded.’

- *Midrash Tanchuma, Qedoshim* 10 (c. 9th century)

Mount Zion



Longing for Zion

- Jewish literature from the period of the Babylonian Exile expresses hope for the restoration of the land and the return of the exiles to Zion.
- ‘By the rivers of Babylon – there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy’ (Psalm 137:1-6).

Longing for Zion (Isaiah)

‘Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion! Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for the uncircumcised and the unclean shall enter you no more. Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter Zion...How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God’ (Is. 52:1-2, 7-10).

The Jewish People in Exile

- Since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the 1st century, Jews have been without a historical homeland.
- Even in the Diaspora, the bond between the Jews and Israel remained, and the hope of a return to the land was kept alive.
- The future ingathering of exiled Jews an important feature in Jewish prayers and in Jewish eschatological thought.
- ‘O Lord our God, receive with pleasure your people Israel and their prayers...May our eyes witness your return in mercy to Zion. Blessed are you, O Lord, who brings back his *shekinah* to Zion’ – from the *Amidah*

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‘My Heart is in the
East (*Libi ba-Mizrah*)’
– Judah Halevi (c.
1075–1141)

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‘My heart is in the east, and I in the
uttermost west.
How can I find savour in food? How
shall it be sweet to me?
How shall I render my vows and my
bonds, while yet
Zion lies beneath the fetter of Edom,
and I in Arab chains?
A light thing would it seem to me
to leave all the good things of Spain -
Seeing how precious in mine eyes
to behold the dust of the desolate
sanctuary.’

Zionism as Political Movement

- As a modern political movement, Zionism arose for two reasons:
 1. As a response to the ideals and challenges of the Enlightenment.
 2. As a response to persecution.



I. A Response to the Ideals of the Enlightenment

- From the late 1700s, Jews able to become full citizens of the countries in which they resided (**the Emancipation**).
- Jews expected to give up their communal, cultural, and national identities upon receiving civil and political equality.
- Many Orthodox rabbis called on Jews to reject the temptation to assimilate into secular society, viewing a sovereign Jewish homeland as the only solution to the disintegration of the European Jewish community.

I. A Response to the Ideals of the Enlightenment



- ❖ Rabi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1898)
- ❖ Rabi Judah Alkalai (1798-1878)
- ❖ *Hovevei Tzion* ('Lovers of Zion')
- ❖ 'to make *aliyah*' = emigration to Eretz Yisrael

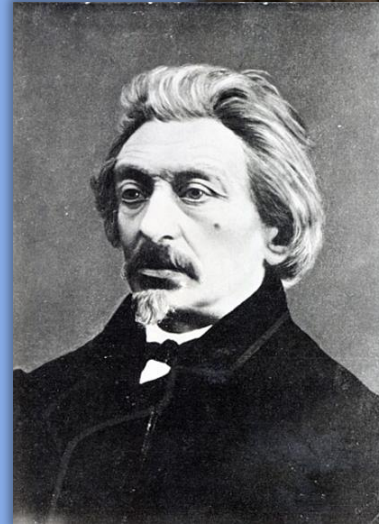
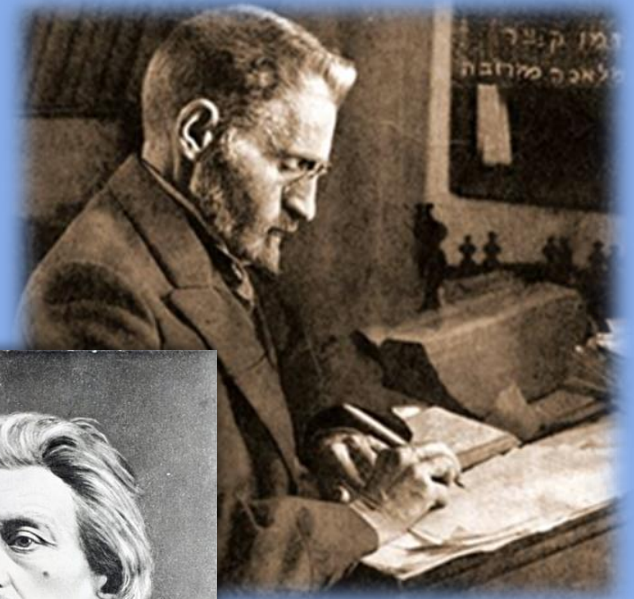
I. A Response to the Ideals of the Enlightenment

- ❖ 19th century – a time of nationalist upheavals.

- ❖ *The Maskilim*

- ❖ Moses Hess (1812-1875)

- ❖ Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922)



2. A Response to Persecution

- Despite the legal emancipation of European Jews, hostility towards the Jews remained.
- Growth of anti-Semitism towards end of 19th century in both eastern and western Europe.
- 1881-82 – a wave of severe pogroms in the Russian Empire forces many Jews to emigrate.

Pogrom, Issachar Ber Ryback (before 1935)



2. A Response to Persecution



- ❖ Leon Pinsker (1821-91)
- ❖ *Autoemancipation: A Warning of a Russian Jew to his Brothers* (1882)
- ❖ The freedom and safety of the Jews will only be secured through the establishment of a Jewish homeland.



Autoemancipation, Leon Pinsker (1882)



‘...when a number of other dependent and oppressed nationalities have been allowed to regain their independence, we, too, must not sit even one moment longer with folded hands; we must not admit that we are doomed to play on in the future the hopeless role of the “wandering Jew”...it is our bounden duty to devote all our remaining moral force to re-establish ourselves as a living nation, so that we may finally assume a more fitting and dignified role’.

The Influence of Theodor Herzl (1860-1904)

- ❖ The most important figure in the history of political Zionism.
- ❖ The Dreyfus Affair (1894)
- ❖ *Der Judenstaat* (1896)
- ❖ August 29, 1897 – the First Zionist Congress convened in Basel.



The Influence of Theodor Herzl (1860-1904)

‘I therefore address my first words to those Jews who are strong and free of spirit...I am introducing no new idea; on the contrary, it is a very old one. It is a universal idea...old as the people, which never, even in the time of bitterest calamity, ceased to cherish it. This is the restoration of the Jewish state’ – Herzl, ‘A Solution to the Jewish Question’, *The Jewish Chronicle* (17 Jan 1896)

‘And what glory awaits those who fight unselfishly for the cause! Therefore I believe that a wondrous generation of Jews will spring into existence...The Jews who wish for a State will have it. We shall live at last as free men on our own soil, and die peacefully in our own homes’ – Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (1896)

The First Zionist Congress



‘At Basel I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty, everyone will know it’ – Herzl, diary entry 3 September 1897

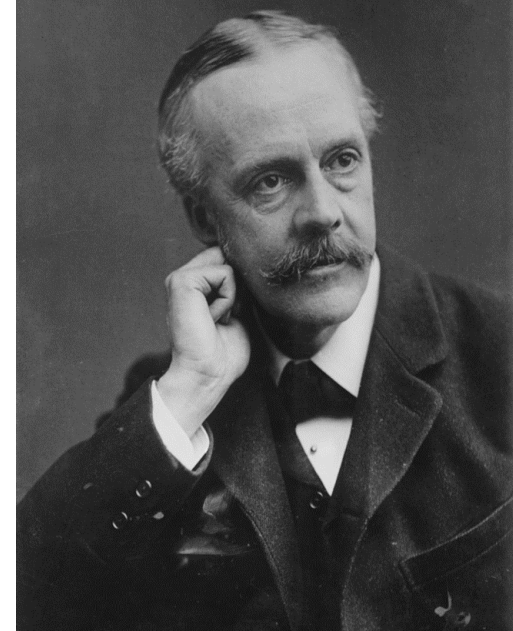
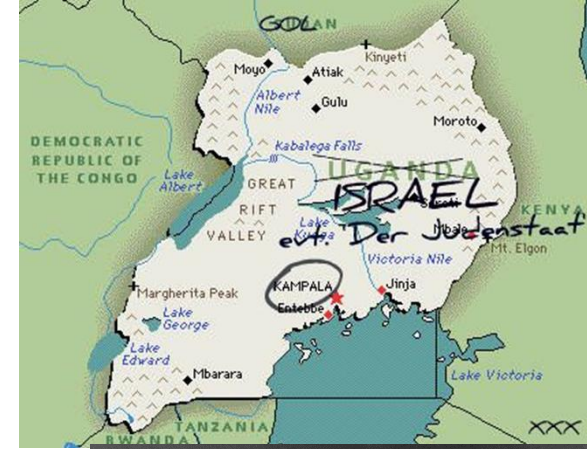
The Basel Program (1897)

‘The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

- I. The promotion, on suitable lines, of the colonization of Palestine by Jewish agricultural and industrial workers.
2. The organization and binding together of the whole Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, local and international in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps towards obtaining government consent, where necessary, to the attainment of the aim of Zionism.’

The Influence of Theodor Herzl

- Meetings between Herzl and Joseph Chamberlain (British Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs).
- Uganda proposed by Chamberlain as a temporary home for the Jewish people. This plan rejected by the Zionist Congress in 1905.
- **Arthur James Balfour** (Foreign Secretary 1916-1919)
- The final draft of the 'Balfour Declaration' published on 2 November 1917.





The 'Balfour Declaration' (1917)



'His Majesty's Government views 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 that object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done, which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish Communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'

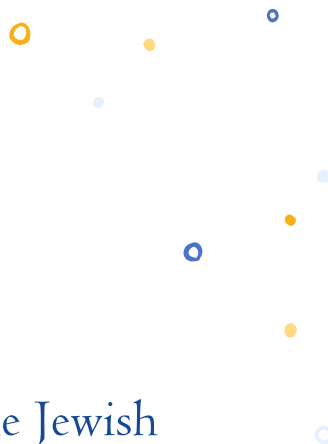
The British Mandate for Palestine

- 9 Dec 1917 – British troops occupy Jerusalem. Palestine remains under British control until 1948.
- The number of Jews making *aliyah* to Israel increases considerably.
- 60,000 Jews leave Germany for Israel after Hitler's rise to power.
- 1944 – the 'Palestine Emergency'



Great Britain's Division of the Mandated Area, 1921-1923

The Creation of the Jewish State



- May 1947 – the Palestinian problem goes before the United Nations.
- A new plan suggested for the partition of Palestine into two states (one Jewish and one Arab), with an international zone in Jerusalem.
- Partition plan endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 29 November 1947.
- 14 May 1948 – David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, reads out the Scroll of Independence, declaring an independent Jewish state.

The Creation of the Jewish State

‘The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed...Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom...Accordingly, we, the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish people in Palestine and the Zionist movement of the world, met together in solemn assembly today, the day of the termination of the British Mandate for Palestine and by virtue of the national and historic right of the Jewish people and of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called Israel.’

- The Scroll of Independence

Unending Conflict

1948 – Arab-Israeli War
1956 – Suez Crisis
1967 – Six-Day War
1967-70 – War of Attrition
1973 – Yom Kippur War
1982 – First Lebanon War
1987-93 – First *Intifada*
2000-05 – Second *Intifada*
2006 – Second Lebanon War
2008-09 – Gaza War
2014 – Gaza conflict continued
2021 – ?







Religious Responses to Zionism

- Initial opposition to Zionism from many mainstream Orthodox and Reform groups in the USA and in Britain.
- Reform Jews, particularly, did not anticipate a return to the land (see, for example, the Pittsburgh Platform). Instead of a national homeland, they viewed assimilation as a solution to anti-Jewish sentiment.
- However, events in Europe – the pogroms of Eastern Europe and, of course, the Holocaust (*HaShoah*) – changed the attitudes of many leading Jews towards Zionism.

Religious Responses to Zionism

- Many *Haredi* Jews ('Ultra-Orthodox') continue to reject Zionism outright, believing Zionism and the creation of a (secular) Jewish state to be a betrayal of traditional Judaism.
- Noteworthy groups here include the Hasidic Satmar dynasty, the activist organization Neturei Karta, and the political parties Agudat Yisrael and Degel HaTorah (aka United Torah Judaism).



Summary

- Jewish scriptures reflect belief that the land of Israel was designated by God as the area in which Jews were to live out their covenantal obligations.
- Zionism (as political movement) a response to both Enlightenment ideals and anti-Semitic sentiment and violence.
- The vision of Theodor Herzl and others finally realised in 1948 with the founding of the modern state of Israel.
- Differing attitudes among religious Jews towards Zionism.