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Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

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Zionism.

A mythic vision?

A vibrant force?

An aged ideology?

Four views of a term, and a movement a century old, that changed the course of Jewish history.

The israel of american jews Jonathan D. Sarna

The Israel of American Jews--the Zion that they imagined in their minds, dreamed about, and wrote about--was for centuries a mythical Zion, a Zion that reveals more about American Jewish ideals than about the realities of *eretz Yisrael*.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, American Jews depicted Israel as a "holy" land, a land where desperately poor and scrupulously faithful Jews engaged in prayer and study; a land, in short, where the material life, values and practices of Jews were precisely the reverse of the American Jews' own.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, alongside this traditional image, a new one arose: the image of the romantic pioneer, the hardworking agricultural colonist, the brawny Jewish farmer--the answer, in other words, to those who claimed that Jews were merely parasites, racially incapable of 'productive' labor.

Zion as Myth

Finally, in the second decade of the 20th century, Zionists like Louis D. Brandeis added a further twist to this image. Zion became a utopian extension of the American dream, a Jewish refuge where freedom liberty and social justice would reign supreme, an "outpost of democracy" that American Jews could legitimately, proudly and patriotically champion.

All of these images, whatever truth they may have contained, took on mythic proportions in America. They embodied American Jews' yearnings and dreams,

responded to their psychological, political and emotional needs, and helped them to counter the malicious slurs of their enemies. The Zion of the American Jewish imagination, in short, became something of a fantasy-land: a seductive heaven-on-earth where enemies were vanquished, guilt assuaged, hopes realized, and deeply-felt longings satisfied.

Vicarious Holiness

These images all developed from--and addressed--the needs of *American Jewry*, and were, as a result, increasingly out of touch with reality back in *eretz Yisrael*. Over time, this "Israel of American Jews" became more and more of an idealized dream world--no more realizable than the starry-eyed visions of a *goldene medina* that some Jewish immigrants to America brought with them when they sailed into Ellis Island. This in no way, of course, diminishes from the significance of these dreams, for like all such dreams they reveal much about the mind of the dreamers--in our case American Jews.

Take, for example, the early image of the Holy Land as a poor, suffering and holy community deeply committed to the

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continuous study of Torah. According to this exaggerated picture, largely created (as most such images are) by fundraisers, America and Israel were polar opposites. Where American Jews cultivated commerce, neglected Jewish learning, evinced considerable laxity in their religious behavior, and enjoyed liberty and freedom, the Jews of *eretz Yisrael* wallowed in poverty, suffered brutal oppression, devoted themselves to Jewish learning, and remained completely scrupulous in their religious observances.

America, in this binary scheme, represented modernity's lures and perils, while Israel symbolized tradition and suffering with the promise of redemption. Each nevertheless needed the other, and as a result, the two communities (like diaspora and Israel generally) developed a model of interdependence that endures: material sustenance flowing in one direction, spiritual sustenance in the other.

Contributions aimed at strengthening the Holy Land Jewish community compensated, sometimes consciously so, for American Jewry's own spiritual weaknesses, as if to bridge the chasm between modernity and tradition. Zion functioned for them as something of a counterlife: in conjuring it up, American Jewry caught a glimpse of a world that was practically the antithesis of their own, for better and for worse.

Zion as Social Frontier

By the late 19th century, the aura of holiness surrounding the Jews of Palestine was supplemented by the image of the Jewish farmer, the agricultural pioneer. Agriculture, generally, became something of a Jewish panacea at this time. Jews in Europe and America alike considered it a sure remedy for antisemitism, for those aspects of Jewish life that (to their minds) fomented antisemitism, and for a wide variety of other Jewish group ailments as well.

Most American Jews, despite these promised therapeutic benefits, eschewed the agricultural option for themselves, and continued to live out their lives in crowded cities. But they rewarded with high praise (and with considerable economic assistance) those of their brethren who did return to the land, especially in Palestine, and they took vicarious pleasure in learning of their achievements--which, as a consequence, proponents greatly exaggerated. Again, the Holy Land had come to symbolize to American Jews something of a counterlife.

The third image of Zion, created in the 20th century, went beyond agrarian dreams to envisage not just agricultural settlements but a full-fledged "social common-

wealth". This Zion, a vision that proved enormously appealing to American Jews, combined Progressive-era American designs and European Labor Zionist ideals, linked them to (selectively-read) traditional Jewish sources and then projected them onto the landscape of the so-called new Palestine, described by one proponent, as "a land of waste places with few inhabitants, not many vested interests, and its future all in the making".

Zion as the Model State

Social justice stood at the heart of this vision of Zion, and so did social engineering. The ultimate aim was to turn Palestine into what the American Zionist leader Bernard Rosenblatt called "a laboratory for momentous experiments". This "model community", as Rosenblatt himself described it, was based upon communitarian principles and social justice. Its central ideals included common ownership of all land, profit-sharing, separation of religion and state, freedom of religion, "equal rights for all Palestinians", and "the principle of democratic rule and equal rights, as developed in America and England".

Sh'ma

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This image of the "model state" endured in the mind of American Jews for over half a century. Its longevity was due, in part, to its extraordinary political value as a symbol. A "model state", cast in the image of America, served not only to defuse the sensitive issue of dual loyalty, it actually worked to strengthen the position of America's Jews by permitting them both to bask in the reflected glory of those engaged in building the state, and to boast of their own patriotic efforts to spread the American dream outward.

The image of the "model state" also came to serve an important religious function for its adherents. It offered American Jews, many of whom had become disenchanted with the traditional beliefs, rituals and practices of Judaism, a sacred "mission" that both linked them to other Jews and infused their own personal lives with meaning--the lofty satisfaction that comes from pursuing work of transcendent importance.

Seeing the Real Israel

Myths die hard, and so the image of Israel as a "model state", akin to America at its birth, bravely fighting for freedom and democracy, welcoming immigrants, praying for peace, taming the land, singing and dancing, lived on long after the State of Israel came into existence in 1948. It was nourished in no small part by successful films about the birth of the Jewish state, particularly *Exodus* (1960) and *Cast A Giant Shadow* (1966).

The Israel depicted in these films actually revealed more about American values and ideals than about Israeli society, then caught up in a welter of social, economic, political and religious problems. Nevertheless, the positive image lingered, reinforced by educators, fundraisers and public relations experts alike. Since most American Jews had never visited Israel for themselves, the country continued to be for them what they had long imagined it would be and wished it to be--an American-style Utopia.

The past two decades have witnessed the collapse of this idyllic image. The Israel regularly seen on American nightly news looked different indeed from what American Jews had expected, and hardly comported with their images and ideals. On a broad range of religious and political issues, American Jews also suddenly found that they diverged from their Israeli counterparts. Nothing had prepared the American Jewish community for this eventuality, and confusion reigned.

Today, with the Labor Party back in power and a new era in the history of the Middle East poised to begin, the opportunity arises for American Jews to recast their image of Israel yet again. In the past, as we have seen,

these images always spoke to the needs of *American* Jews, and reflected *their* ideals and fantasies rather than the contemporary realities of Israel and the Middle East. The question now is whether the American Jewish community can do better, forging a new image of Israel that is at once credible enough to pass the test of reality, inspiring enough to command a following, and powerful enough to carry the relationship between the two communities into the 21st century and beyond. □

Is zionism still relevant?

Ronald Kronish

Is "Zionism" dead? If so, what has replaced it? What meaning does it have for diaspora Jews anymore, if any? Is it still a significant term for Israeli Jews?

The purpose of this article is to address some of these questions and to raise many more which flow from them.

Diaspora Zionism: A Contradiction in Terms

It is important, in my view, to state at the outset what Zionism is and is not. Zionism is not merely love and support of the land or state of Israel. One can be an avid supporter of the state of Israel from afar and not necessarily be a "Zionist". As Professor Steven M. Cohen has argued cogently, "being pro-Israel and being a Zionist are not co-equal". Many Jews (and non-Jews) do all kinds of wonderful things to support the state of Israel--financially, politically, morally, culturally, spiritually--but that does not make them "Zionists".

Zionism is a modern Jewish ideology--a set of ideas with a concrete program of action--which grapples with the two central problems of Jewish survival in the contemporary world--antisemitism and assimilation. It argues that these problems are endemic to diaspora existence and that they can essentially only be overcome by establishing *and living in* a Jewish state. By living in their own state, Jews will rule their own destiny and consequently no longer be subject to antisemitism. At the same time, they will create and maintain a *Jewish* state--one whose culture, calendar, customs and ceremonies are distinctively Jewish in ways that are simply impossible in the diaspora. Accordingly, Zionism is an ideology that can only really be lived in Israel, and therefore, the

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singular aspect of Zionism that might be relevant in the diaspora is *aliyah*, namely, making the preparations to fulfill Zionism by coming to Israel.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that with the establishment of the State of Israel, Zionism as an ideological movement has become largely outmoded in the diaspora. The term "diaspora Zionist" is a contradiction. There is really no difference between Jews outside Israel who call themselves "Zionists" and those who are "pro-Israel" except that the so-called "Zionists" are guilty about not having made *aliyah*. The rest of the community (which is certainly the overwhelming majority in America) has come to terms with the legitimacy of the diaspora in which they live.

It is completely illogical to maintain the concept of Zionism in the diaspora today. *Aliyah* is the only thing that distinguishes a "Zionist" from a "Pro-Israelnik". Those who argue that one can be a Zionist in the diaspora on a permanent basis by participating in Zionist culture (Hebrew song, dance, art, etc.) and by supporting the upbuilding of the land of Israel from a distance are deluding themselves. Zionism as an alternative form of Jewish cultural identity outside of Zion has proven to be virtually impossible. If Zionism is to have any meaning for diaspora Jews, it must be connected with the mitzvah of *aliyah*, settling in Israel, which is clearly the basic imperative of any Zionist ideology. But most American Jews are simply not interested in fulfilling this mitzvah (or even hearing about it).

Using Israel

Zionism as a movement in American Jewish life has been moribund for a long time. The ranks of Zionist organizations and Zionist youth movements have dwindled from decade to decade. Zionism has long ago been replaced by Pro-Israelism, as exemplified by the enormously successful fundraising work of the Federations/UJA, Israel Bonds, American Friends of every Israeli university, hospital, and so many other institutions, and by the political work on behalf of Israel by AIPAC, The Conference of Presidents and other Jewish organizations. American Judaism and Jewish institutions have rejected the notion of "negation of the diaspora" which was inherent in mainstream Zionist thought; yet, they have made Israel central to their Jewish identity, exploiting it largely for their own purposes. Therefore, Pro-Israelism has become one of the major expressions of Jewish identity and commitment for American Jews; it has nothing to do with classical ideas of Zionism which were (and still are) antithetical to most American Jews.

Only if *aliyah* were to become a serious option for a larger part of the community, due to threat to Jewish continuity in America stemming from antisemitism or assimilation (the classical motivator of Zionist ideology and action) as has happened in other parts of the Jewish world, would Zionism have a chance to become a meaningful ideology for American Jews. While this is not an impossible scenario--especially with all the current anxiety about Jewish continuity today--it is not very likely in the foreseeable future.

Zionism in Israel

Not unsurprisingly, "Zionism" is not faring much better in Israel either. Most Israelis believe that it ended with the creation of the state. For many young Israelis, "Zionism" is something to be put in quotations--it is a thing of the past, a phenomenon which ended in 1948. One can, and in fact does, learn the history of Zionism in Israeli schools, but that is essentially it. Zionism, for most Israelis, has become a matter of history. In fact, the very term "*tzionut*" in contemporary Hebrew has a negative ring to it in Israeli society today, and is usually identified with old-fashioned preaching and long speeches. As a result, there has been a serious educational effort during the last two decades to recast the teaching of Zionism by exploring the student's own Jewishness and their relationship to the Jewish state.

Zionism did not run the course with the creation of the State of Israel. Such thinking confuses ends with means. The state was never really meant to be a goal in and of itself; rather, it was meant to be a means to an end, a framework for ensuring the survival of the Jewish people. And so, the critical question, after statehood, is: what kind of Jewish survival are we, or ought we be, ensuring in the State of Israel? Now that the framework of the national home has been constructed, what will be the inner contents in the home.

Will it be both Jewish and democratic? What will be its relationship to the Jewish tradition? to Jewish history? to Jewish values? to "the stranger" in our midst? to the Jewish people who will continue to live in the diaspora? to Jews who may never make *aliyah*?

For those who still consider themselves Zionists of the cultural school (including myself), these questions remain very central and relevant. They need to be addressed if we are to preserve and maintain Israel not only as a state of Jews but also as a Jewish state.

Zionism has never been an abstract philosophy, reserved only for an intellectual elite; rather, it has been a powerful ideology, i.e., a set of ideas which lead to action. At the very least, it has been a movement which

has concerned itself with saving and redeeming Jews. "The Ingathering of the Exiles from the four corners of the earth" was certainly one of the central tenets and tasks of Zionism and now of the State of Israel and the Jewish people worldwide. That is why there has been so much excitement--both in the diaspora and in Israel--about the *aliyah* of over 20,000 Ethiopian Jews, hundreds of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union, and most recently hundreds of Jews from Yemen. This excitement is not limited to Jews who call themselves "Zionists"; rather, it is the *nachas* of the pro-Israel Jewish community in North America and all over the world, irrespective of whether one belongs to a "Zionist" organization or not.

Still an Ideology For Israel

Zionism was not, however, a movement only about saving Jews. It was also created as a school of thought and a movement to redeem Judaism from the outmoded and anachronistic pre-modern forms which appeared to be strangling and stultifying Judaism in the Exile. This was certainly the case in late 19th and early 20th century Europe, when classical Zionism rebelled against traditional *galut* Judaism.

But, at the same time, it was a revolution which offered radically new ways of being Jewish in the contemporary world. In particular, cultural Zionism offered exciting and energizing alternatives to religious Jewish expression for modern Jews via the revival of the Hebrew language, the redemption of the land of Israel, the re-entry into and re-interpretation of Jewish history and the creation of modern expression of Hebrew literature, songs, dance, art, theater as part of a thriving old-new culture, all of which were developed to ensure the Jewish character of the Jewish state.

If Zionism is to be relevant at all in Israel, it must offer something meaningful to Israelis in the cultural and spiritual realms of their lives. In other words, Zionist ideology and action in Israeli society must be connected to Jewish identity. It must help Jews in Israel--young and old, new immigrants and veteran immigrants, *sabras* and scientists--connect themselves to the Jewish past, present and future, to Jewish tradition (pluralistically understood, of course) and Jewish history. It must teach them concern and caring about the fate of their brothers and sisters in the diaspora, whether they intend to make *aliyah* or not. In so doing, cultural Zionism can serve as a bulwark against assimilation (abandonment of Judaism or Jewishness) on the part of so many secular Israeli Jews. In the final analysis, it may only be a semantic issue of whether we call this educational agenda by the name of Zionism

any more; what is more important is that this agenda be addressed seriously and systematically by concerned Jews in Israel, and by those in the diaspora who care about the Jewish nature of this state and their relationship to it. □

Reform religious zionism

Lawrence A. Hoffman

The Crisis in Zionist Thought: Zionism as Landedness

Zionist thought today suffers because its classical theory was constructed on an assumption that has ceased being obvious: "exile" (*galut*) as an actual metaphysical state inherent in Jewish life outside of Israel, marked by an ineradicable environmental disease called antisemitism, and thus, by an equally diseased and attenuated form of Judaism itself.

It is not that we are not Zionists; we are! But we have lacked the terms to talk about it. History has been unkind to the romantic notion that a return from exile will organically and automatically produce a healthy Judaism; and we are unwilling to cash in the diaspora as so many devalued chips left over from a bad bet with history.

Zionism is like medieval metaphysics, in that it is an ongoing fascination with the human place in the world, but in this case, the Jewish place in a world which contains among other things something utterly inalienable and absolutely irreducible, something called The Land of Israel (*eretz yisrael*). We are Zionists, therefore, if we raise *eretz yisrael* to the same theoretical level as God, Torah and People of Israel (*am yisrael*), the three other irreducible realities that we take for granted because they too cannot be argued, proved or demonstrated, but only assumed as the ground of our Jewish being. Moreover, as long as history is as it is, the Land of Israel (*eretz yisrael*) must also be The State of Israel (*medinat yisrael*).

We were all once taught these three irreducible essences in our metaphysical map of reality: God, Torah and People of Israel. But why privilege them over Land? Land is hardly inconsequential--it is ubiquitous in our tradition. Exodus from Egypt and entry to our Land have never been separable--the first supplied People; the other, Land; and in between there was Sinai, that is, Torah, all three being signs of God.

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Zionism, then, is the insistence on the brute fact of *eretz yisrael* as a metaphysical absolute in Judaism. Zionist debate is a branch of Jewish metaphysics; a rambling conversation about the role of a thing called *eretz* in the fabric of Jewish being. Zionist thought begins with a consideration of what it means to be a landed people; with what must follow from adding a fourth term to the big three, arriving at a core of Judaism that includes God, Torah, Israel [the people] and Israel [the land].

The Need for Pluralism: Reform Zionism and the Sacred

Zionism must be pluralistic. For example, to ask Reform Jews to do Zionism as if Reform were secondary is like asking Jews in Denver or New York to discuss American constitutional law as if their Jewishness is irrelevant to first amendment rights, or asking women to forget they are women while they go about being Jewish.

~~Jews of different sorts thus require different versions of Zionism.~~ A Zionism that is identical for us all will be either a lowest common denominator version to which all adhere but about which no one is passionate, or a concession by one party to another, in which case it will be tangential to the identity of the party that made the concession.

Reform Judaism is 1) essentially religious, so Reform Zionism must be religious Zionism. Reform Judaism 2) emphasizes universal ethics, so that Reform Zionism, while particularistic, may not on that account also be ethically parochial. It has also 3) featured holiness as the end of human endeavor, and it has 4) charged individual human beings with personal autonomy, but also with personal responsibility to achieve holiness in their lives.

Reform religious Zionism, then, will have to accommodate these equally critical components: from Zionism's essence, our inherent landedness as a people; from religion, that landedness raised to primacy alongside God, Torah and Israel [the people]; and from Reform, the primacy of individual conscience, universal ethics, and the commitment to pursue holiness as the end of human life.

Religious Zionism: The Sacred in Time and Space

Religious Reform needs to be Zionistic because of the search for holiness. Classical Reform Jews understood the ethical component of a holy life, but truncated its ritual aspect by acknowledging sacred time (they kept a Jewish calendar), but not sacred space. Judaism, however, being "landed" in essence, cannot live in time alone. It requires a spiritual connectedness to space as well. Space and time

are two aspects of a single continuum; diasporan and Israeli Judaism are charged primarily (though not exclusively) with maintaining the sacrality inherent in one or the other.

Our human predicament is that unlike God, we time-bound human beings have access to only a single limited quadrant of space/time that we call our present. We cannot see it "all at once"--a metaphor combining space ("all") and time ("at once"). Similarly, as beings who are beyond neither, we cannot step outside time and space to know what they are in and of themselves. But we are able to ritualize our encounter with time and with space. Religion sanctifies time; Zionism sanctifies space. And that is why Jews need to ritualize their lives as both: religiously through time; and as Zionists, in space.

Religion gives us a sacred calendar; Zionism provides a sacred map. We have two liturgies too; the daily or annual liturgy of time and the liturgy of space--pilgrimage to our Land, and (for some) actually *living* there in touch with the contours of its space the way diasporan Jews know the feel of sacred time. *Aliyah* is thus sacred option: the decision to celebrate the sacrality of space, prior to time.

Religious Zionism is messianic, in two ways: through diasporan time and Israeli space. Juxtapose the religious conceptual scheme of creation, revelation and redemption with Zionism exile and redemption. Redemption figures in both, but for religion it is a temporal thing that happens to occur in space, while for Zionism, it is a spacial phenomenon that happens to occur in time. Religious Zionism is thus that perspective wherein we strive for redemption in both space and time. As the route to the messianic end, Reform religious Zionism demands a universal ethic rooted in Jewish particularity; and it charges individuals with the ethical and ritual obligation to pursue holiness in space and time. We hope for redemption in our Land, but also in history. □

Zionism--a framework for its study

Isaiah Kuperstein

Ask about the meaning of the word Zionist and you may hear one of the following phrases: Zionism is boring; Zionism is outdated; Every Jew is a Zionist; Only Jews who live in Israel and make *aliyah* are Zionists; Zionism is giving money to Israel. Surely there are many more

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such vacuous notions about Zionism. Most American Jews will more than likely shrug their shoulders in profound ignorance if asked about Zionism.

Jewish educators are often reluctant to present the subject of Zionism because they often do not know where to begin. The subject can be overwhelming, given the many books and articles that exist. Furthermore, a lack of appreciation for the subject's validity and viability in today's American Jewish life, has diverted Jewish educators away from presenting the complexity and broadness of Zionist history and ideology. Instead, a lesson in Zionism is simply turned into a lesson on Israel, thus turning the subject into a mere footnote.

As a way to help Jewish students and educators begin tackling the subject of Zionism the following conceptual framework is offered.

The first part of the framework is the rationale for the study of Zionism. This may entice teachers to teach Zionism in its entirety, and not relegate it to a minor key in the study of Israel. Indeed, Zionism is a subject powerful enough to muster its own position in school's Jewish curriculum

Rationale for the Study of Zionism

Zionism is one of the most successful ideological movements in modern Jewish life.

Zionism complements other Jewish ideologies and philosophies that encompass the past, present and future of Jewish existence. Moreover, the reality of Israel today obligates each Jewish ideology to position itself in relationship to Zionism.

Zionism is directly related to the establishment of Israel, one of the two most momentous Jewish events of the 20th century.

Zionism is the ideological foundation for the State of Israel. One cannot learn about Israel without a deep understanding of its ideological underpinnings.

Zionism is an ideology which continues to respond to current issues on Jewish existence and thus functions as a dynamic force in Jewish life.

Characteristics of Zionism

Any course of study on Zionism should incorporate seven fundamental characteristics which must be included in order to present the totality of the subject. Any one single characteristic of Zionism is insufficient in giving students a full appreciation for the fullness of the topic.

Zionism and the Zionist movement were singularly responsible for creating the Jewish state of Israel thereby accomplishing the realization of the ingathering of Jews

Ta sh'ma

Ta Sh'ma, literally, come and listen, is a talmudic phrase which creates a pause in the flow of an argument, invites rapt attention, and suggests a resolution to the matter at hand based on an authoritative text or precedent.

Ta Sh'ma is also the name of our new column devoted to sharing favorite texts, accompanied by brief comments and attendant insights.

We invite you to send us your favorite text and comment. Submissions should not exceed 200 words. Be sure to include proper citation of sources. *Sh'ma* cannot print Hebrew characters.

Dvora Weisberg

How did Rabbi Akiba begin [to study Torah]? They said: He was forty years old and had never studied. Once, he was standing next to a cistern. He asked, "Who shaped this stone?" They said to him, "Akiba, haven't you read the verse, 'Water wears away stone' (Job 14:19)?" Akiba drew the following inference: "If that which is soft can shape that which is hard, certainly words of Torah, which are as strong as iron, can shape my heart that is flesh and blood." He immediately turned to the study of Torah.

AVOT DE RABBI NATHAN, CHAPTER 6

Akiba imputes to words of Torah the power to shape human character. Unlike a rock, the human heart is pliant. Each of us is shaped by our encounters with others, by our education and experience. Many events and encounters had gone into forming the forty year old Akiba, but, seeing the cistern, he realized that Torah could still transform him. Already an adult, Akiba was willing to open himself to transformation. Regardless of our current reality, the Torah challenges us to transform ourselves, to see new possibilities for growth and pursue them.

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throughout the world, creating a national territory, achieving political sovereignty, and reviving the Hebrew language.

Zionism continues to be an ongoing ideological and philosophical discussion about the nature, quality and prospect of a Jewish future among the family of nations.

Zionism is a worldwide ideology which is shared by Jews of all backgrounds, national origins, economic standings, intellectual levels and religious persuasions.

Zionism encompasses not only political issues, but also, spiritual, social, economic and cultural ones as well. It concerns itself with all issues related to Jewish life as part of a comprehensive approach to the Jewish condition.

Zionism is a vibrant and dynamic Jewish ideology. It derives its ideology from several basic values in Jewish tradition; sense of exile; longing for redemption; religious and spiritual attachment to the land of Israel.

Zionism is a Jewish ideology to which non-Jews may adhere.

Zionism is rooted in history. Though its ideology includes many philosophical antecedents, the word Zionism was first coined by Nathan Birnbaum in 1890 to define it as the organization of a national political party which eventually led to the First Zionist Congress in 1897. Historically, Zionism has assumed different configurations, e.g., practical Zionism; political Zionism; spiritual Zionism. These forms of Zionism attest to its dynamic viability.

Principles of Zionism

Given the many historical evolutions and permutations of Zionism, it is difficult to define the meaning of the word in a single phrase. At best, Zionism is a philosophy which combines a number of principles established over time by various Zionist thinkers and assemblies in the form of the Zionist congresses. Here is a sample of principles which may be applied in any discussion of the subject.

Zionism affirms the paramount importance and centrality of Israel in the history, life and destiny of the

Jewish people. Zionism sees Israel as the spiritual and cultural center for Judaism and the Jewish people. Zionism is the idea that the Jewish people are inseparable from the land which they inherited, have inhabited, and integrated into every fiber of their existence.

Zionism believes that Jews constitute one people, whether in the diaspora or in Israel. Thus, Israel is the State of the entire Jewish people. Zionism works for the unity and survival of the Jewish people everywhere, and is committed to the continuity and creativity of Jewish life in terms of national sovereignty. Zionism's concern for the fate of Jews everywhere has led it to be at the forefront of protecting the survival of Jews and protection of Jewish rights everywhere. Recently, Zionism has evolved to a position of affirming the life of Jews in the diaspora by seeking to strengthen the relationship between Israel and the diaspora on principles of common destiny and mutual responsibility in Jewish affairs.

Zionism believes *aliyah* to be an historic imperative and opportunity for the personal fulfillment of every Jew. *Aliyah* is the apex in the Zionist development of every individual Jew.

Zionist credo is that Jews can and should control their own destiny by building their national homeland where they can live in their own way, as a majority, no longer dependent upon the whims and caprices of other nations or peoples.

Zionism seeks to maintain the cultural distinctiveness of Jewish communities throughout the world and therefore fights assimilation in all its forms. It seeks to make Hebrew the language of Jews in the diaspora as a way of preserving Jewish distinctiveness.

As Jewish parents, educators and leaders, we have the responsibility to make Zionism more than a footnote for the next generation. Zionists are not born. They are made. □

Sh'ma

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