

# Restoring Israel: Beyond the Deconstruction of Zionism

Matthew J. Skolnik

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## The Threat from Within

As one begins to wade into the waters of the modern Jewish thought stream, it is valuable to acknowledge the often hidden but ongoing Jewish critique of both the State of Israel and its founding philosophy, Zionism. More precisely, many within the diverse Jewry consider the actions of the State of Israel to be a threat to the state itself, and therefore a threat to the Jewish people. This threat can be expressed through the examination of the cognitive dissonance found within corners of the Jewry regarding its relationship with the Palestinian people.

One on hand, there is an assertion from Israel's founding document that the State of Israel has all the characteristics of a modern democracy (*Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel*, paragraphs 13, 16). On the other hand, as a result of the ongoing conflict, Israel is functionally an ethnocracy which elevates Jewish Israelis above Arab Israelis, and the larger Palestinian population.

More significantly, the segregation within Israel is not a mere division between the Arabs and the Jews within the land. In fact, Badil, a civil rights organization based in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, argues that there are seven distinct divisions of citizenship within the State of Israel; each division having their own unique set of laws and restrictions (Shomali). These divisions are largely based on the location where Palestinian Israelis were born and live. For example, East Jerusalemites, families from Ramallah, and residents of Gaza all have distinct civil restrictions regarding their freedom of movement. It is not the purpose of this paper to document such distinctions. However, it is helpful to note the varying rights of all those who live within the modern State of Israel.

The general argument from within some factions of the Jewry is that as long as Israel attempts to merge ethnocracy into democracy, global support for Israel will wane, destruction will

continue to unfold upon the Palestinians and Jews, and ironically harm will come from the State of Israel to the Jewish identity and way of life even as the State was explicitly created to preserve Jewish life, custom, and culture.

Such a critique is not unique to Israelis and can be found in the arguments of prominent Jewish voices in the United States as well. Jewish thinkers and authors in Israel and America have concluded that the tensions within Zionism create a threat to the state and its people. For example, see the Israeli journalist Gershom Gorenberg's book *The Unmaking of Israel*, or *The Crisis of Zionism* which was written by the American journalist and Zionist Peter Beinart. All the more convincing that Zionism, and therefore the State of Israel, is being dismantled from within is Yoram Hazony's work as he has chronicled the multitude of "culture makers" within Israel who continue to question the vitality of the modern state as well as critique its practices through law and force (Hazony, *The Jewish State* 3-38). According to Hazony's argument, the "culture makers" are the collection of individuals in academia, literature, and the arts who drive the Israeli culture.

After reviewing the first group of Israeli "culture makers," the academics, Hazony offers his understanding of the magnitude of the Jewish opposition to Zionism, "[S]o overwhelming is the assault that it is unclear whether any aspect of [the] former consensus [of Zionism] can remain standing" (Hazony, *The Jewish State* 14). Later, at the end of a detailed discussion of Israeli literature, Hazony refers to an essay by Moshe Shamir entitled *Is Hebrew Literature Still Zionist?* Hazony, picking up Shamir's theme writes, "[T]he adulation of powerlessness among Israel's writers has become so severe that Israeli literature as a whole has effectively rejected the Jewish state as the true homeland of the Jews" (Hazony, *The Jewish State* 33). Still more, upon completing his discussion of the arts in Israel, Hazony writes, "In fact, so thick is the post-Zionism of the Israeli art world that one is hard pressed to name a prominent artistic figure who

still identifies with the ideal of the Jewish state” (Hazony, *The Jewish State* 38). Hazony’s words are certainly revealing. The advancing and powerful attack from within the Jewry towards the Zionist venture has been catastrophic to Zionism.

It is a popular axiom that the State of Israel faces external threats from entities such as Iran and Hezbollah. However, from Hazony’s standpoint, the State of Israel also faces significant threats internally. To Hazony’s horror those who critique and tear down the State of Israel from within have done tremendous damage, perhaps the most damage of all from those who endanger and jeopardize the state. The “culture makers” of Israel have succeeded in...

*...discrediting virtually everything that was precious to Israel’s founders: from historians obsessed with exposing the invidious character and crimes of the Labor Zionist settlers; to artists with their ghastly assault on traditional Jews and the defense forces; to novelists fixated on the Arab claim to the land and images of Israel’s future annihilation; to a court system bent on replicating Canadian legal institutions; to screenwriters and dramatists issuing one savage attack after another against the country’s heroes...; to “philosophers,” whose ruminations inevitably seem to hit upon the fact that Zionism is a medusa, or that Judaism is inimical to the state, or that the defense forces are engaged in Nazism. Israeli culture has become a carnival of self-loathing, offering little from which one could construct the renewed Jewish civilization that was to have arisen in Israel, or the restored state of the Jewish people that was the dream of its founders (Hazony, *The Jewish State* 338-339).*

Hazony’s words are clear and poignant, especially as he goes on in Herzl-like fashion to make the case that a state is not a mere material object but rather a collection of ideas. Such ideas have the power to give life to a nation. However, Hazony asserts, when the ideas of a nation fail, as they did in the former Soviet Union, the state will fail as a whole (*The Jewish State* 339).

Working as Hazony has, with the premise that ideas have the ability to construct and in their absence debilitate a nation, the State of Israel and therefore its people find themselves at a crucial crossroads. For the “culture makers” it is the original ideas of Zionism that have the ability to destroy the state. In Hazony’s opinion, it is not the ideas of Zionism, but rather the post-Zionist ideas of the “culture makers” who are tearing Israel apart. To some degree or

another both of these statements are true. More significantly, however, is the common argument that Israel is on a path of self-destruction.

## **Beyond Deconstruction**

If the State of Israel is self-destructing, strategic and vigorous work lies ahead for all those who care about the Jewish people. Of this work, there are at least two major spheres of thought that deserve attention and can help move the discussion beyond the internal deconstruction of Israel. The first sphere is the modern history of the Jewish people, and the second sphere is the momentous task of building a philosophical structure that has the power to sustain all people within Eretz Israel. While the first sphere requires education, the second sphere will be an ongoing work to assimilate the vast historic Jewish resources into a simple and workable model for the contemporary world.

The bulk of this paper will explore the first sphere through a brief review of the history of Zionism before WWII. Sadly, many only understand the modern State of Israel through the context of the Second World War. While the Shoah is certainly central to Israel's modern history, there is more to the state's creation than this history-changing war. Therefore, the pre-WWII historical review will include a discussion of Zionism's philosophical underpinnings and the basic political backdrop in Europe from which it came. In addition the reader will be briefed on how and why Zionism evolved from the era of Herzl to the era of *The Balfour Declaration*. Hopefully, readers who have an interest in the State of Israel but who do not have a sense of how the modern state came to be established will find this history enlightening and inspiring.

The second sphere, which this paper will briefly touch upon, moves the reader beyond the deconstruction of Zionism. Because Zionism has already been deconstructed and because

deconstruction wears the Jewish outlook, as exhibited by Hazony, it is high time to build-up the Jewish conscience with historical ideas that have the ability to help change the reality of daily life for both Jewish and Palestinian Israelis. Undoubtedly this is a difficult and long path. However, in the those of Herzl, ideas have the power to unite and transform a people.

Finally, there is one necessary word of caution before the first sphere is formally introduced. While this paper focuses on the Jewish story of Zionism, including some of its challenges, and as this paper is a call for a renewed uplifting Jewish metanarrative, it is important for the reader to embrace the reality that Palestine has a parallel labor of history and philosophy before them. For example, it is true that there are some philosophers and theologians in Palestine who reject violence (e.g. the Christian think-tank, Sabeel). However, far too many in Palestine have not rejected violence as a means to justice. In this light, neither nation is innocent and both peoples have important unmet responsibilities.

Admittedly, such precious work is unfathomably difficult, and thinkers and leaders on both sides of the conflict will require ongoing encouragement as their emotions ebb and flow with the episodes of violence and the ever-present reminders of the conflict. In this matter, the later Rabbi, David Hartman is helpful. In his 2011 interview with Krista Tippett, Hartman said:

*I have no difficulty allowing another voice into my consciousness and that's what Israel should be about. It's not about that. I don't want to lie to you. I love Israel not for what it is, but what it could be. I want that to be known. Israel is a possibility and I live with possibilities. I didn't close the final chapter. The final chapter of Jewish history is still going to be written and it's going to grow hair and it's my task as a teacher or philosopher to make it possible for more and more people to study, to understand. If you look at the seminar I'm giving on the meaning of a chosen people, I want to deal with that honestly (Hartman).*

Far too often we live only within the realm of actuality. In Israel and Palestine, actuality means conflict, and conflict leads to hate, despair, and cycles of violence. Hartman, to the contrary, lived with possibilities, and with possibilities new realities can be born. It is the

obligation of those who lead to seek, not what is, but what could be. May each reader hold tightly to Hartman's sentiment and trajectory in the uplifting of the Jewish philosophical tradition.

## **Illegitimate Children of the State**

As early as the Enlightenment, disaster was eminent for European Jews. Shlomo Avineri, in his biography of Theodor Herzl, is helpful in this regard (*Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State* 27-43). As chronicled by Avineri, the emancipation of Europe brought forth the liberal and universal principles of freedom and liberty. As part of the political philosophy of freedom, well known French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau promoted what is called "radical republicanism." This philosophy placed the general good of the society above all other allegiances. As such there could be no loyalty "to a guild, a professional association, a political party, or a religion" which hinders the citizen's "ability to identify with the general good" (Avineri, 35). From this perspective, loyalty to the Jewish people and/or Jewish law within 18<sup>th</sup> century France was viewed as a form of sedition.

The problem for the French Jews, of course, was not simply Rousseau's philosophy. Rather, the Jewish threat was truly born as Rousseau's philosophy claimed the minds of the powerful French establishment. In fact, Rousseau's philosophy of "radical republicanism" was so pervasive it was even expressed among those who supported full equal rights for the French Jewry. In December 1789 before the French National Assembly, Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre stood to make his defense for the equal rights of the Jews within France. In his speech he included one telling sentence which is undergirded by Rousseau's thought, "To the Jews as individuals—everything; to the Jews as a nation—nothing" (Avineri, 35). Here, Clermont-



Tonnerre's message is clear: in order for the French Jews to be fully accepted into the enlightened state of France, the Jews must give up their communal history and their ethnic and religious identity. From the time Clermont-Tonnerre spoke to the French National Assembly more than a century and a half would pass before the Shoah. Yet the philosophical structure of Europe had already been set for genocide. Certainly there are other historical factors beyond Rousseau which contributed to the oppression of the European Jewry, such as Christian/Islamic Wars, and Czarist/Socialist battles in Russia (Netanyahu, 11-22). Nonetheless, the Jews being identified as a separate people during the Enlightenment was the root from which modern anti-Semitism grew in Europe.

While the danger which lay ahead for the Jewry would have been evident to some of Clermont-Tonnerre's Jewish contemporaries, it took decades for Jewish thinkers, such as Rabbi Alkalai of Spain and Moses Hess of France and Germany, to begin the significant task of formulating a response to the rising tide of European anti-Semitism. Later, in 1882, another early Zionist, Leo Pinsker, from Odessa expressed his understanding of how parlous the political segregation of the Jewish people in Europe was. In Pinsker's 1882 manifesto to the Jewry entitled *Auto Emancipation*, he wrote:

*No matter how much the nations are at variance with one another, however diverse their instincts and aims, they join hands in their hatred of Jews. On this matter all are agreed...In the great majority of cases, the Jew is treated as a step-child, in the most favorable cases he is regarded as an adopted child; never is he considered a legitimate child of the fatherland...You are foolish because you expect of human nature something which it has never produced—humanity (Netanyahu, 49).*

If the great dangers of Rousseau's Europe were experienced by some Jews in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, by the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish thinkers began to crystallize their thoughts around the urgency of Jewish action. According to Pinsker's thought-stream, if emancipated Europe

consider the Jews to be their illegitimate children then Europe would never fully emancipate the Jews. Therefore, according to Pinsker, the Jews would have to emancipate themselves.

As important as the idea of Jewish self-liberation was in the creation of what would one day be considered as the guardian state of the Jews, it would soon become evident to Herzl that Jewish thinkers should necessarily begin to ask how the Jewry would physically go about emancipating themselves. Without a plan, self-emancipation would never develop into a lived Jewish experience.

## **The Plan for Self-Emancipation**

Twenty years after Leo Pinsker wrote *Auto-Emancipation*, the lawyer, playwright, and journalist Theodore Herzl from Hungary began the history-changing work of defining exactly how the Jewry would emancipate themselves from the dangers of Europe. According to Benzion Netanyahu, Herzl is the pinnacle of Zionism because he is uniquely credited with creating the concrete plan by which to assure a Jewish future apart from the oppression of Europe (72-73). In Netanyahu's view, self-emancipation was merely a desire before Herzl. However, through Herzl's work, self-emancipation had the ability to become a reality.

Herzl's action plan and overarching philosophy can be found in his public and private writings. Not diminishing the value of Herzl's private letters and dairy, his public works, such as his 1896 manifesto *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) and his 1902 novel *Altneuland* (Old New Land) contain the details of his plan by which to build the guardian state of the Jews. Herzl's plan as expressed in *Der Judenstaat* includes but is not limited to:

- 1) the acquisition of land through purchase (98-101)

- 2) mass Jewish immigration to this land in waves of socio-economic classes under the authority and protectorate of empirical powers who could politically and militarily grant Jewish sovereignty (82, 95)
- 3) the methods to generate the necessary income streams to support the new society (98, 107-108, 109-112, 116-118, 118-122)
- 4) the construction of institutions for the purpose of developing the economy and infrastructure such as roads and schools, as well as institutions to advance the sciences, arts, and agriculture (83, 93, 95, 141-143)
- 5) the creation of a Jewish defense force for internal and external order (108, 147)

## **A Model Society**

As Herzl outlined in his action plan, the political tone and tenor of his plan is also worthy of attention. For example, Herzl did not envision a theocracy. Rather, Herzl's vision was to create a secular and democratic state (*The Jewish State* 146-147). In Herzl's own expression, "we shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks" (*The Jewish State* 146). Therefore, in Herzl's view, the future guardian state of the Jews would be run by democratic rule and not by religious nor military tyrants. For Herzl, the state would be a full democracy (*The Jewish State* 143-145).

All the more important is Herzl's declaration of equality for the goyim: "[I]f it should occur that men of other creeds and different nationalities come to live amongst us, we should accord them honorable protection and equality before the law. We have learnt toleration in

Europe” (*The Jewish State* 146-147). Later, in 1948, when the State of Israel was founded its declaration of existents would include this idea of profound equality:

*The State of Israel will be open to Jewish immigration and to the ingathering of the exiles. It will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants. It will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisioned by the prophets of Israel. It will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex. It will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture. It will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions. And it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations (Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, paragraph 13).*

From Herzl’s political tone to it’s fulfillment stated by later generations, equality and freedom are clear aspects of the state that was envisioned by Herzl as the guardian of the Jews. The theme of equality can also be located in Herzl’s *Old New Land*. In the novel there is dissension in the land regarding the relationship between the “new society” and the native inhabitants of the land. At a political rally, the character David Littwak, who ends the novel as the President of the “new society” speaks against discrimination of the native inhabitants of the land: “I say to you, therefore, that you must hold fast to the things that have made us great: to liberality, tolerance, love of mankind. Only then is Zion truly Zion!” (*Old New Land* 92).

Even more than equality, Herzl argued that the coming guardian state of the Jews would be a robust benefit to all people. In this regard, Herzl’s closing remarks in *The Jewish State* are oft quoted, “The world will be freed by our liberty, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness. And whatever we attempt there to accomplish for our own welfare, will react powerfully and beneficially for the good of humanity” (157). Likewise, in *Old New Land* the image of a universally beneficial society is promoted by the wealthy gentile Kingscourt, who had just visited Palestine with his new aid, Dr. Friedrich Loewenberg, a disenfranchised Jewish man from Austria. Just as the characters, Kingscourt and Loewenberg, journeyed to escape the imperfect world, Mr. Kingscourt concludes a conversation with Dr. Loewenberg by saying:

*If I believed [that people were better off with money], I should not be going off to my lonely island; I should have stayed in the midst of humanity. I should have told them how to better themselves...No philosopher's stone, no dirigible airship is needed. Everything needful for the making of a better world exists already. And do you know, man, who could show the way? You! You Jews! Just because you're so badly off. You've nothing to lose. You could make the experimental land for humanity. Over yonder, where we [just]were [in Palestine], you could create a new commonwealth. On that ancient soil, Old-New-Land" (33).*

In addition to similar sentiments which can be found in the novel, one of David Littwak's dearest confidants and friends in the Old New Land is Reschid Bey, a Arab man whose life is only enriched by the new Jewish society which has reinvigorated his homeland. Though Herzl foresaw tension with the native inhabitants of the land, Herzl most certainly believed that the new society would truly be a political and economic blessing to all its people. This axiomatic view of Herzl's can be witnessed in the logo which he chose for his own newspaper *Die Welt* (The World), which incorporated a *Mogen David* (Star of David) and a globe with Palestine as the epicenter. According to Avineri, this logo "was a fitting symbol for Herzl's conviction that the Zionist cause belonged to the entire world, not just to the Jews" (147).

As one can see, the collection of Herzl's work creates a utopic image of a new Jewish society based in the best of all modern freedoms, equality, and opportunity. However, in the 1937, Netanyahu argued that Herzl did not offer a utopia as a solution to the Jewish question (88). The basic logic to Netanyahu's assertion is that Herzl created a plan and not a simple vision like other utopias (67-105). Nonetheless, the fact remains that the new Jewish society was envisioned by Herzl to be a supreme example of civilized and progressive life that would benefit the world, especially the native population of Palestine. As stated by Avineri, Herzl viewed the population of Palestine "as equals, partners in citizenship who would vote and be elected to public institutions of the society...This is, then, real equality, not colonial domination" (179).

## Herzlian Tension

At this point, it is simple to unfold the philosophical tension within Herzl's Zionism. On the one hand, it is safe to argue that Herzl believed that the Arabs of Palestine were to receive great political and material blessings from the Jewish people. Highlighting the material benefits to the native population, Herzl once said in an interview, "According to our view, [the Arabs] will be better off, since work, transportation links and culture will be poured into this impoverished and depleted land" (Netanyahu, 76). Herzl's words here are nothing more than a reiteration of what has already been stated above. Nonetheless, it is of utmost importance to recognize that Herzl viewed the guardian state of the Jews to be a blessing to all people, especially the native inhabitants of Palestine.

On the other hand, as Netanyahu has argued, Herzl is unique in that he distinguishes himself from the "practical Zionist" in his views regarding the Arab population's response to Zionism. While the "practical Zionist" believed that they could gradually infiltrate the land without consequence, Herzl was keenly aware that the Arab population of Palestine would revolt against Jewish power in the land (Netanyahu, 76). In Herzl's own language, he feared the "moment, which is inevitable, when the local population senses danger to its position, awakens a general alarm, and forces the government to stop any further influx of Jews" (Netanyahu, 76). In fact, Herzl understood that the Arab rejection of Jewish immigration would be so strong that 1) "Jewish settlement [must be] defined *a priori* as a right of sovereignty, one that has the power to annul all other rights," 2) the *a priori* Jewish right must be secured by imperial powers and a Jewish military force, and 3) mass and synchronized Jewish immigration was necessary in order to out number the Arab resistance (Netanyahu, 76-79, 87).

At this point there are a variety of ways to parse Herzl's thought regarding how the Arab population would receive the Jewish takeover of Palestine. However, what is important here is that a reasonable observer can, at the very least, identify a tension between 1) the Jews blessing the Arabs with their presence, and 2) the Arabs feeling so threatened in their native land that they would revolt against the incoming Jewish power.

For Herzl, this apparent tension (if it even existed in his mind) would have simply been theoretical. Herzl never lived to settle in the new Jewish society and therefore never experienced firsthand how strongly the Arab population would reject Zionism. Nor did Herzl live to experience the rise of a Palestinian national consciousness. However, for those who came after Herzl and did experience these, adaptation of Herzl's philosophy would be required, for though Herzl may have foreseen this, his plan included simple defensive measures and reliance on external political powers for protection; and ultimately the Arab anger and retaliation challenged the Jewry more than Herzl's solutions could handle. As will be seen, this alteration of Zionism becomes even more detrimental to the native inhabitants of the land.

## **The Birth of a Conflict**

Well after Herzl's death, in the aftermath of the First World War, Great Britain took custody over much of the Middle East as the Ottoman Empire collapsed. During this period, Herzl's plan was realized for the first time through tangible political action. The British mandate of 1917, known as *The Balfour Declaration*, opened the political reality for the Jews to establish "in Palestine...a national home for the Jewish people," with the qualification "that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine" (*The Balfour Declaration*).

As one can imagine this was an extraordinary moment in Jewish history. The mandate provided legal cover for mass Jewish immigration in the ancient and beloved land just as Herzl sought. However, within years Herzl's plan began to unravel to some degree as the *Herzlian Tension* eventually could not stand under the effects of Zionist migration. The result was a full scale ethnic war between the Jews and the native population of Palestine. Here, Herzl's words are haunting. As mentioned above, Herzl was afraid of the "moment, which is inevitable, when the local population senses danger to its position, [and] awakens a general alarm" (Netanyahu, 76). Unfortunately, one of the legacies that the world has received from the mass migration of the Jews and the general alarm which arose in Palestine in response is that Palestine/Eretz Israel have suffered endless rounds of violence for a century.

There is a disagreement regarding when the violence between the Jews and the Arabs turned from local disputes to a regional ethnic war. Benny Morris, in *Righteous Victims*, places the rise of Arab Nationalism, and therefore the ethnic war as early 1918 by recounting Jewish reaction to Arab Nationalism (78-79). However, Ari Shavit argues that the ethnic war did not fully begin until the sustained conflicts of 1936 (*My Promised Land*, Ch. 4). Still others, point to the riots of 1929 as the beginning of an ethnic war. Identifying an exact beginning to the ethnic war is not necessary. For the purposes of this paper, it is enough to state that the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian Conflict began before the Second World War.

As the reader acknowledges the century old conflict, it is helpful to recall that while Herzl foresaw the rejection of Zionism from the Arab population, Herzl did not have a detailed plan regarding how to handle the Arab anger that was bound to ensue. On one level, it can be argued that Herzl truly believed that he would help build a nation that would honor and build up the native population. However, Herzl also understood that the native Arab population would never



fully embrace a Jewish state and therefore Herzl envisioned a massive population transfer of the indigenous population to neighboring Arab countries. As early as 1895, Herzl wrote in his diary:

*We must expropriate gently...We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our country...Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly* (Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* 41).

At best, Herzl's instinct regarding the Zionist necessity of population transfer is an undeveloped thought that neither explored the means by which to carry the transfer to fruition, nor considered its full consequences to the people who would be disposed. In addition, while Herzl and others considered population transfer to be right and just, Herzl did not fully understand how the contemporary world would one day disparage ethnic cleansing through population transfer. While Babylon and other empires of antiquity used population transfer as a political tool, Israel by claiming the charter of the United Nations in its founding document prohibits itself from such a dehumanizing act.

Though Herzl recorded his thoughts within the privacy of his diary, the idea of a mass population transfer was never cited publicly by Herzl and was viewed as a sensitive but moral objective (Morris, *Righteous Victims* 139-140). It was only after the violence of 1936 that central Zionist leaders, like Ben-Gurion, publicly spoke of transferring the indigenous Arabs of Palestine to other Arab countries; at the same time Zionist leaders continued to promote an old adage: "there was enough room in the country for the two peoples and the Zionist immigration did not necessitate Arab displacement" (Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* 45).

Considering this history, the Zionist endeavor could not bless the indigenous Arabs enough to stem their anger. Though, Herzl painted a picture of a new Jewish state which embraced and uplifted the native population, Arab rejection of the takeover of their land could

not be held at bay. Though there was never a peaceful population transfer, as Herzl ruminated, the enduring ethnic war has resulted in periods when Palestinians fled their homes. Therefore, population transfer occurred through military conquest—most notably in 1948 and 1967.<sup>1</sup>

For the purposes of this paper the details of Israeli law and modern practices of population transfer are not important. Instead, it is necessary to develop a keen understanding that as conflict between the Arabs and Jews developed into a full ethnic war, the philosophy of Zionism was forced to adapt to the unexpected levels of Arab resistance.

## The Evolution of Zionism

The evolution within Zionist philosophy is best observed through the life and work of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, a Jewish militia leader and author from Odessa, Ukraine. If Herzl was the one who laid out the tangible pathway for the Jews to realize their national aspirations, Jabotinsky followed portions of Herzl's pathway and in Herzl's ethos cut new pathways when necessary. While both men addressed their people, Herzl labored in the halls of great powers and Jabotinsky labored in the barracks of a forming Jewish defense force. Herzl carried a pen and appointment book; Jabotinsky carried a pen and a rifle.

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<sup>1</sup> To this day, practices of land and population transfer continue to take place through the process of Jewish settlement in the West Bank. Another method of population transfer is the "Center of Life Policy" in Jerusalem which requires East Jerusalemites at any time to prove that the center of their life is in Jerusalem. If East Jerusalemites can not produce adequate evidence that Jerusalem is the center of their life they have no legal standing to reside in the city. One specific example of how the "Center of Life Policy" affects East Jerusalemites is found in the Israeli paper *Haaretz*. In his April 24, 2012 article *East Jerusalem Man, Denied Residency by Israel*, Nir Hasson recounts how Amir Salima is the only member of his family who legally can not reside in Jerusalem. The rationale for his legal standing is that Amir was born in the West Bank as his mother unexpectedly went into labor while visiting family; because Amir was born in the West Bank, Jerusalem is not considered to be the center of his life, though he has been raised in his Jerusalem family home for over two decades.

Because Herzl did not come face to face with the Arab rejection of Zionism, Herzl could not experience the *Herzlian Tension* in Palestine as Jabotinsky did. Precisely because Jabotinsky lived in a world of actuality, and not theory like Herzl, Jabotinsky was faced with the very real dilemma that Herzl's philosophy of blessing and defending was not enough to ensure the safety of the newly growing Jewry in Palestine.

Jabotinsky experienced the anger of the Arabs in a way that Herzl only foresaw. After serving in a military capacity in Palestine, Jabotinsky in 1923 wrote an essay entitled *The Iron Wall*. In it Jabotinsky expresses the same Arab threat that Herzl once anticipated, "the Arabs have the same instinctive love and inbred zeal for Palestine that the Aztecs had for Mexico and the Sioux had for the prairies...every native people fights foreign settlers as long as it can hope to get rid of them" (Halkin, 138).

While Jabotinsky generally agreed with the transfer of the Arab population to neighboring Arab lands, Jabotinsky publicly rejected such action (Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* 45). Perhaps this is because Jabotinsky knew that population transfer would not be viable. During Jabotinsky's time there are at least two reasons why population transfer was not an option. First, in the 1920's there was simply not enough Jewish power in Palestine to carry out and defend a transfer. Second, Jabotinsky, being very intelligent, knew that the Jewish enterprise in Palestine still needed support from its benefactor, Great Britain. Not only does the ethos of *The Balfour Declaration* reject notions such as population transfer, *The Balfour Declaration* explicitly prohibits infringement upon the civil liberties of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.

As the growing Jewish influence was still weak, and as direct population transfer of Arabs was not feasible, Jabotinsky needed an other way to clear the land for a Jewish takeover. Jabotinsky's solution (outlined in *The Iron Wall*) ushered in a new era of Zionism.

While it is beneficial to read Jabotinsky's 1923 manifesto *The Iron Wall* in whole, it is perhaps more beneficial to draw on Benzion Netanyahu's interpretation of it. As it is well know, Netanyahu was an assistant, student, and friend of Jabotinsky. Having such a relationship validates Netanyahu's words.

In *The Founding Fathers of Zionism* Netanyahu's argument flows as follows (220-222):

- 1) Jabotinsky truly desired peace with the Arabs of Palestine as demonstrated in one of his poems, "There the son of Arabia, the son of Nazareth, and my own son will happily live together in abundance."
- 2) Nonetheless, Zionist "abundance and happiness" which could be offered to the Arabs would not be enough to "compensate them" for their loss.
- 3) Quoting Jabotinsky: To think that one could pacify the anger of the Arabs is a form "of contempt towards the Arab people."
- 4) Further quoting Jabotinsky: "[I]ndividual Arabs can be bribed, but...the totality of Palestine's Arabs" will "fight settlers as long as there is a spark of hope of getting rid of the danger of foreign encroachment. The Arabs of Palestine, too, are acting this way now and will so act in the future as long as a spark of hope nests in their hearts that they will be able to prevent the transformation of Palestine into the Land of Israel."
- 5) Therefore Jabotinsky's answer to the Arab Question is the philosophy of the Iron Wall—"a strong military and political force that in the last analysis will convince the Arabs that they will not succeed in driving us out of here."
- 6) Finally, Netanyahu summarizes Jabotinsky's 1923 theory, "there is no room to hope for peace with the Arabs—real peace—at this time. After all, they still have not been convinced that they cannot destroy us or to push us into the sea."

Jabotinsky is the turning point of Zionist philosophy. While Herzl promoted Jewish self-defense, Jabotinsky moved to a political and military offensive model. More specifically, the purpose of the philosophy of the Iron Wall was to destroy the hope of the native population

through military and political power. This philosophical shift from a defensive posture (Herzl) to an offensive one is perhaps Jabotinsky's most influential contribution to Zionism. Understanding this shift and why it occurred is central to understanding how the State of Israel functions today. In addition, this shift highlights why world opinion continues to move against Israel. As the consequences of the philosophy of the Iron Wall are witnessed by the world, global support of Israel lessens.

## **Becoming Samson**

As Herzl needed to motivate his people after he published *The Jewish State* through his novel *Old New Land*, Jabotinsky needed to inspire Zionism's new political and military offensive against Palestine's hope after he wrote *The Iron Wall*. Much in the vein of Nordau, Jabotinsky recognized that he needed to help the Jewry reinvent itself. As others before Jabotinsky noted, the Jews over the course of 2000 years, without a state, lost the ability and even the memory of how to fight. While in the Diaspora the Jewish population had excelled in scholarly work and business. However, the Jewry as a whole lost the sling shot of David and they no longer knew how to pick up Goliath's sword in victory.

In this light, Jabotinsky revitalized an ancient image of the Jew long-missing. For Jabotinsky, neither Moses, Elisha, Isaiah, nor Daniel epitomized the ideal Jewish man because none of these men were warriors. Instead, Jabotinsky reinvigorated the memory of the muscular, fighting Jew, in his novel *Samson*. Any one familiar with the Biblical story understands that Samson's ability to slay enemies can only be rivaled by David. Both David and Samson had the ability to end the life of the beast with bare hands—a feat few would try, let alone accomplish. In

Jabotinsky's thinking, this image of power and braun is what the forming Jewish defense force needed for inspiration.

Jabotinsky's call to the Jewry, therefore, was to be strong and courageous, almost to the point of Samson's recklessness. Near the end of Jabotinsky's novel, the jovial Samson sends his farewell message to the Jews through his friend Hermesh. In Samson's instructions to Hermesh, he tells the Jews to remember a series of words. Of these, the first word is most significant: "The first word is Iron. They must get iron. They must give everything they have for iron—their silver and wheat, oil and wine and flocks, even their wives and daughters. All for iron! There is nothing in the world more valuable than iron" (Jabotinsky, 330). For Jabotinsky's astute readers, the parallel between his philosophy of the Iron Wall and Samson is unmistakable. In order to destroy the hope of the Arabs, it is necessary and paramount for Jewish warriors to wield the iron of the sword both politically and militarily.

Jabotinsky was successful in transplanting the image of the weak Jew with the almighty and all powerful Samson. Today, the State of Israel stands like Samson among average armies in the Middle East. Even across political ideologies within the Jewry and far removed from Eretz Israel, Jews have learned overtime to fight and defend themselves. Jeffery Goldberg is helpful in this regard. Growing up in New York City and mortified by having to face evil taunts and games such as "Bend the Jew" on the school grounds Goldberg chose to go off to summer camp in the 1970's to learn to be a "mountain Jew" instead of a "money" or "book Jew" (Goldberg, 45-46, 86). At camp Shomria, Goldberg played war games including "Warsaw Ghetto Uprising" and participated in Hebrew chants translated as "Strength to the Guardsmen!" and "Strength and Courage!" (Goldberg, 56-57). Later, as a fulfillment of his training, Goldberg left the States to serve in the IDF. Samson certainly lives within the contemporary Jewish ethos.

## Means of Destruction

As we enter into the second sphere of this paper, it is necessary to recall the various levels by which Israel is under threat. As argued above, Israel is on a path of self-destruction. In addition, Israel is threatened by its historical enemies. However, there is one more nexus of destruction looming for the State of Israel; Israel is beginning to lose the support of world opinion in relationship to the Palestinian people. Part of this shrinking support can be traced to the aggressive political and military stance that is derived from Jabotinsky's philosophy of the Iron Wall.

In the 21st century, the most visible sign of Jabotinsky's Iron Wall is the separation wall which runs along the ridge, and in some places within the West Bank. Though the wall was officially started by Prime Minister Barak, the "security wall" or the "apartheid wall" continues to be built under the influence of Israel's current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Peter Beinart, a self-proclaimed Zionist who also values liberal democracy, connects Jabotinsky to Benjamin Netanyahu through his father Benzion Netanyahu in his book *The Crisis of Zionism* (100-123). From this perspective, one can view the separation wall as the physical manifestation of the philosophical Iron Wall, which, to be clear from Benzion Netanyahu's assessment, was designed in part to crush the hope of freedom for the Palestinian people. Further, in this light, one can make the claim that Jabotinsky's reality of Zionism, and not Herzl's is being lived out in Palestine/Eretz Israel to this day.

In the modern world, whether right or wrong, the philosophy of Jabotinsky's Iron Wall is untenable to the contemporary ear. Therefore, Jabotinsky's particular evolution of Zionist philosophy from defense to offense, whether stated or unstated, whether known or unrealized by

the global community, is a primary reason why world opinion continues to shift towards the Palestinians with sympathy. In the same way the United States lost world support for the Bush Doctrine, Israel is at risk of losing global sympathies as the world watches the results of the Iron Wall doctrine.

The most recent evidence of a shifting world opinion occurred in France. On December 2, 2014 the French Parliament voted to recognize a Palestinian state. Earlier in the year, other countries including Ireland, Sweden, and Spain also voted to recognize a Palestinian state. The most damning country to vote to recognize a Palestinian state is Great Britain, surprisingly underreported in part because of the significant historical connection. Considering *The Balfour Declaration*, Britain's October vote is a clear reminder that world political power not only helped to build Israel, world political power also has the ability to harm the Zionist enterprise. In addition, as Israel continues to lose world support, Parliamentary (non-binding) votes are only one manifestation of support for the Palestinian people; boycotts, sanctions, and divestments are also on the rise from governments in Europe to religious organizations in the United States.

For Zionists who argue that Jabotinsky's philosophy still holds true and must remain, it is wise to consider Samson, not as Jabotinsky portrayed him, but as the scriptures do. Though Jabotinsky ends Samson's story with a farewell address, the scriptures end Samson's era with his own bloody demise. In short, while nations are ethically required to defend themselves, the modern world neither celebrates nor supports those who stand on the neck of others for the purpose of crushing their hope. In the words of Jesus, "Those who live by the sword will die by the sword," or in Jabotinsky's language, "Those who live by Iron will die by Iron." No person who truly cherishes the Jewish people should stand idly by as Israel faces catastrophe, and chillingly, its own bloody demise.



## Beyond the Deconstruction of Zionism

As Yossi Klein Halevi has shown in his recent publication *Like Dreamers*, Israel is divided over the issue of the Arab Question. Fundamentally this is the same division which is represented between Hazon and the “culture makers.” This divide may be growing in magnitude. However, what Israel is not divided on is the self-preservation of its people. If a century of conflict is detestable, the destruction of the protective state is all the more objectionable. In order to avoid the complete destruction of the state, all Israelis, Jews from around the world, and people who cherish Israel have a responsibility to build a new future for Israel. Israelis who reject contemporary Zionism, need no longer deconstruct it. The work of deconstruction is already complete and their time and efforts can be used to build something new—building a *new*, New Old Land. Likewise, Israelis who are either blind or indifferent to the consequences of Zionism and its Iron Wall philosophy no longer have the luxury to hide their eyes. Zionists also have a reason and a need to restore the New Old Land through vigorous philosophical work.

The question that remains to be seen is whether Herzl’s vision of equality and blessing can be persuasively reinstated, not only in words, but in the policies and practices of the modern State of Israel. While not perfect, Jewish history contains a benevolence beyond that of most nations and Jewish philosophy is instilled with the basic human experience of desiring to build a better future. Still there are many within Israel today who reject the very idea that Zionism can be improved. As there is a growing tide of voices who proclaim that Israel must alter from what this paper has identified as the Iron Wall philosophy, those in power push hard to maintain the status quo. Just this week, the Parliament in Israel voted to reinforce the Iron Wall philosophy by

buttressing itself through the proclamation that the State of Israel is a Jewish State. To the unaware ear this proclamation is of no consequence. However, to those who witness the segregation of Arabs from Jews in Israel, this vote demonstrates that Arabs have no legitimate home in Eretz Israel as the Jews had no shelter in Rousseau's Europe. Still it is important to remember the world of possibilities mentioned by Hartman and embraced by Herzl. In the ink which flowed from Herzl's pen in *Old New Land*, Kingscourt states "You [Jews can] make the experimental land for humanity" (Herzl, 33). But before Israel can make the experimental land for humanity, Israel must desire to do so.

Pinsker once said to the Jews that "[y]ou are foolish because you expect of human nature something which it has never produced—humanity" (Netanyahu, 49). Netanyahu interprets Pinsker's words to mean that individual states "will never plac[e] the entire human race above any individual feelings or national interests" (Netanyahu, 50). In a similar manner, Jabotinsky stated, "There is no friendship in matters of the state" (Netanyahu, 214). In other words, states exist for their own benefit and interests. Therefore, it is nearly unfathomable to think that Israel will alter its course for the sake of the Palestinians.

"Humanity" might not easily be instilled into any state. However, if this humanity will not be brought forth for the benefit of the Palestinians, perhaps the State of Israel will be motivated to explore new philosophical systems for the benefit of the Jews as well. If Jabotinsky's philosophy leads to a path of destruction, the Jewry would be wise to build up a political philosophy which is based on the depth and breadth of the vast Jewish library of thinking. While Jabotinsky's philosophy of the Iron Wall is only a snapshot of Jewish thought, there is a whole three dimensional movie from which leaders of Jewish thought can select from and build a

working model that not only has the power to secure a future for the Jewish people, but also a future for the Palestinians.

Further, a limited Jewish philosophy is not simply catastrophic, it is also extremely reductionistic. For example, thinkers like Hazony, do the Jewish people no favors when limiting Jewish political theory to the era of the kings (*The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* 140-160). Though Hazony's goal in *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* was not to develop a political philosophy of Judaism, it is nearly incomprehensible to imagine that the scriptures only grant political insight during the period of the kings. At the very least, Hazony could have mentioned in his chapter on political philosophy that other scriptural sources are a significant and vital component to Jewish political thought. However, because this does not fit Hazony's narrative he conveniently leaves out any mention of other scriptural sources regarding Jewish politics.

Therefore, a broader approach to Jewish political philosophy must be unfolded, not in the lens of deconstruction, but in an inspiring metanarrative that lifts Israel above its real and perceived fears. Walzer, in his book *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible* is helpful in this regard. In Walzer's exegesis of Biblical politics he traces the evolution of Jewish politics from Genesis through the end of the Tanakh. Likewise, in corroboration with Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam J. Zohar, and others, Walzer has collected volumes of resources which chronicle the vast Jewish political tradition.

Another resource to be considered is the work of Daniel Elazar and Stuart Cohen. In their book, *The Jewish Polity: Jewish Political Organization From Biblical Times to the Present*, they highlight the extensive forms of Jewish polity. There are at least two things to note here. First, Jewish polity has ever been evolving. Therefore, to claim that the current State of Israel is the only way to be Israel as a state is beyond simplistic. Second, one does not have to argue for the

disillusionment of the modern State of Israel in order to draw from the wisdom of the past. Indeed, it is highly possible to embrace ancient and modern wisdom in the effort of reshaping the modern State of Israel into a nation that benefits and helps both Jews and Palestinians to flourish.

As I have argued, the solution to the Jewish tragedy of the past 100 years is not to narrow but it is to widen. The answer to Israel's internal struggle is not to be found by limiting the Jewish mind to the philosophy of the Iron Wall or to the era of the kings. Instead, the resolution will be discovered by expanding the Jewish mind so that the Jewish mind can live, as Hartman says, in a world of possibilities.

Jews have historically demonstrated their earnest intelligence and if this intelligence is applied with rigor, there is a way that Israel can be preserved and conflict with the Palestinians can end. As stated at the beginning of this paper, it is important to remember that Palestinians have responsibility in this work as well. Nonetheless, if the Jews seek leaders, as Herzl did, these individuals ought to understand and embrace what David Littwak relayed: "I say to you, therefore, that you must hold fast to the things that have made us great: to liberality, tolerance, love of mankind. Only then is Zion truly Zion!" (*Old New Land* 92).

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