

The Path Forward: Israel Fundamentals Bootcamp

Monday, November 18, 2024

Mikhael Reuven Keshar □ mkeshar@jewishedproject.org



All texts from *The Zionist Ideas*, ed. Gil Troy (2018)

<u>The Zionist Ideas</u>	Pioneers 1843–1947	Builders 1948–2000	Torchbearers 2001–2018
Political Zionism Diplomatic and political action toward the establishment and then survival of the State of Israel	Theodor Herzl <i>The Jewish Question... is a national question... to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world</i> (p2)	David Ben-Gurion <i>A vision of life, a vision of national rebirth, of independence, equality and peace</i> (p2)	Tal Becker <i>Zionism was never only a response to crisis—it was a values project from its inception</i> (p3)
Labor Zionism Collective labor, socialist principles, and social values as means for creating a new Jewish society	A.D. Gordon <i>What we need is zealots of labor—zealots in the finest sense of the word</i> (p3)	Golda Meir <i>We dream of doing better in building... a good society founded on concepts of justice and equality</i> (p4)	Ari Shavit <i>There is no Zionist future in this place that isn't liberal... no liberal future in this place that isn't Zionist</i> (p4)
Revisionist Zionism Urgent military action toward establishing a Jewish state in the whole land of Israel	Ze'ev Jabotinsky <i>As long as there is a spark of hope that they can get rid of us, they will not sell these hopes</i> (p5)	Menachem Begin <i>The State of Israel has arisen, but we must remember that our country is not yet liberated</i> (p5)	Yoram Hazony <i>The Land of Israel is the historic inheritance of only one people, the Jews</i> (p6)
Religious Zionism Harmonization of (Orthodox) Judaism with Zionism, resulting in the transformation of both	Abraham Isaac Kook <i>Eretz Yisra'el is part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and inner being</i> (p6)	Zvi Yehuda Kook <i>Where is our Hebron—have we forgotten her?! Where is our Shehem, our Jericho,—where?</i> (p7)	Benjamin Ish-Shalom <i>Identification with and responsibility toward the nation, and taking an active part in its national life</i> (p7)
Cultural Zionism Cultivating the Jewish homeland as a national center for Hebrew culture	Ahad Ha'am <i>From this center, the spirit of Judaism will radiate to the great circumference to inspire them with new life</i> (p8)	S.Y. Agnon <i>It is by virtue of Jerusalem that I have written all that God has put into my heart and into my pen</i> (p8)	Yair Lapid <i>Hebrew is the language I use to thank the Creator, and also to swear on the road</i> (p9)
Diaspora Zionism Reconciling diaspora Jews' patriotism with philanthropic and political support for Jewish nationalism	Louis Brandeis <i>Let no American imagine that Zionism is inconsistent with patriotism</i> (p9)	Arthur Hertzberg <i>I am a Zionist because I am a citizen of world Jewry, of Am Yisra'el.</i> (p10)	Alan Dershowitz <i>Israel—like Judaism itself—must remain a positive option to be freely chosen out of love</i> (p10)

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Political Zionism

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904)

The Jewish State (1896)

The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is an ancient one: It is the restoration of the Jewish State. . . .

I think the Jewish Question is more than a social or religious one, notwithstanding that it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question which can only be resolved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council. . . .

The creation of a new state is neither ridiculous nor impossible. We have in our day witnessed the process in connection with nations which were not largely members of the middle class, but poorer, less educated, and consequently weaker than ourselves. The governments of all countries blighted by antisemitism will be keenly interested in assisting us to obtain the sovereignty we want

Let me repeat once more my opening words: The Jews who wish for a state will have it. We shall live at last as free people on our own soil and die peacefully in our own homes. The world will be liberated by our freedom, 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.

David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973)

Speech to Mapai Central Committee (January 1948)

There is now nothing more important than war needs, and nothing equal to war needs. And just as I don't understand the language of "state" right now, I don't understand the language of *aliyah* and the language of settlement and the language of culture. There is only one criterion: are these things needed for the war effort or not? If they are needed—let them be done. If they are unnecessary—let them wait until the crisis is past. There are no exceptions, that is the great terror and the great misfortune embedded in every war. . . .

It is necessary that we take up the yoke of war and show a greater will to win than those others. We shall do it, precisely because for us war is not a goal in itself, and we see war as a terrible accursed misfortune, and resort to war only from lack of choice—war and peace are nothing more than means to something else—that "something" will give us the advantage that our enemies do not have and that is denied to the followers of violence: a vision of life, a vision of national rebirth, of independence, equality and peace—for the Jewish nation and for all peoples of the world.

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Tal Becker (b. 1974)

Beyond Survival: Aspirational Zionism (2011)

Israel is Jewish in the sense that it has a Jewish majority to maintain Jewish political self-determination, the Law of Return enables all Jews to find refuge here, the state feels an obligation to protect Jews worldwide, and the state's public symbols and days of rest have Jewish origins. But in what ways can it be said that Israel's policies or society reflect Jewish values or aspirations? By this, I do not mean the way in which Israel meets Torah standards or approaches theocracy. I mean... the kind of Zionism that values narrative engenders: one which imagines Israel not as a "normal state" but as a state which gives public expression to the unique history and tradition of the Jewish people. It argues that the "Chosen People" in the Holy Land need to... debate, articulate, and ultimately seek to implement what the prophetic vision of a sovereign nation that lives in righteousness means in modern times. . . .

This Aspirational Zionism would ask more aggressively how we create a society that is both Jewish and democratic—recognizing both as values that need to live in harmony with one another. It would examine options for a responsible and lasting peace not only through the prism of Israel's basic need and right for security and stability, but also through a Jewish prism that sees the relentless and genuine pursuit of a responsible peace as a moral and quintessentially Jewish obligation. And it would examine Israel's social and economic challenges by asking not only how to enhance prosperity and reward excellence, but also by honoring the supreme Jewish obligation to care for the needy and vulnerable.

Labor Zionism

A. D. Gordon (1856–1922)

People and Labor (1911)

The Jewish people has been completely cut off from nature and imprisoned within city walls these two thousand years. We have become accustomed to every form of life, except to a life of labor—of labor done at our own behest and for its own sake. It will require the greatest effort of will for such a people to become normal again. We lack the principal ingredient for national life. We lack the habit of labor—not labor performed out of external compulsion, but labor to which one is attached in a natural and organic way. This kind of labor binds a people to its soil and to its national culture, which in turn is an outgrowth of the people's soil and the people's labor. . . .

We need a new spirit for our national resistance. That new spirit must be created here in Palestine and must be nourished by our life in Palestine. It must be vital in all its aspects, and it must be all our own. What we need is zealots of Labor—zealots in the finest sense of the word.

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Golda Meir (1898–1978)

A Land of Our Own (1973)

The pioneer settlers saved the Jewish people and the opportunity for the reestablishment of Jewish independence, because a simple, but basic principle became their bible: It was called *avodah atzmit*—self-labor.

Jews had to teach themselves to work with their hands. . . . That was the faith each had to accept if he really wanted to build the country. We had to build it. The houses had to be built by us. The roads had to be built by us. The wheat had to be raised by us. The swamps had to be drained by us. This gave us a moral right to the land in addition to the historic right. If there are no more swamps in Palestine, it is because we drained them. If there are forests, it is because we planted the seedlings. If there are fewer deserts, it is because our children went to the arid areas and reclaimed them. . . .

We are driven by the memory of the past, the responsibility for the future, and by the desire to live up to a sense of “chosenness”—not because we are better than others, but because we dream of doing better in building a society in Israel which will be a good society founded on concepts of justice and equality.

Ari Shavit (b. 1957)

Back to Liberal Zionism (2014)

We’ve had it. We’ve had it with the delusional nationalists who are leading Israel to destruction, and we’ve had it with the visionary leftists who are stoning Israel. We’ve had it with the skullcap-wearing post-Zionists who are burying Zionism in the hills, and we’ve had it with the bespectacled post-Zionists who are depicting Zionism as a series of crimes. We’ve had it with the messianic believers in the entire Land of Israel, who don’t understand that without dividing the land, there will be no state, and we’ve had it with the messianic believers in a perfect peace, who don’t understand Hamas and the Islamic State and don’t know where they’re living.

We’ve had it with the racist Right, which destroys the image of the democratic Jewish state, and we’ve had it with the lamentations of the foolish Left, which has lost any feeling of blue-and-white pride. We’ve had it with those who live in an immoral world of being only for ourselves, and we’ve had it with those who live in a warped world of being only against ourselves. . . .

We’ve been broken by the stubborn refusal to understand that the occupation is killing us, diplomatically, morally, and demographically, and also by the refusal to recognize that Palestine isn’t California. . . .

The stupid spat between the blind zealots is preventing us from seeing a complicated but clear reality: There is no Zionist future in this place that isn’t liberal, and there is no liberal future in this place that isn’t Zionist.

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Revisionist Zionism

Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880–1940)

The Iron Wall (1923)

My emotional relationship to the Arabs is the same as it is to all other peoples—polite indifference. My political relationship is characterized by two principles. First: the expulsion of the Arabs from Palestine is absolutely impossible in any form. There will always be two nations in Palestine—which is good enough for me, provided the Jews become the majority. Second: ... I am prepared to swear, for us and our descendants, that... we will never attempt to expel or oppress the Arabs. Our credo, as the reader can see, is completely peaceful. But it is absolutely another matter if it will be possible to achieve our peaceful aims through peaceful means. This depends, not on our relationship with the Arabs, but exclusively on the Arabs' relationship to Zionism. . . .

We hold that Zionism is moral and just. And since it is moral and just, justice must be done. . . .

All this does not mean that any kind of agreement is impossible, only a voluntary agreement is impossible. As long as there is a spark of hope that they can get rid of us, they will not sell these hopes, not for any kind of sweet words or tasty morsels, because they are not a rabble but a nation, perhaps somewhat tattered, but still living. A living people makes such enormous concessions on such fateful questions only when there is no hope left. . . .

I am optimistic that they will indeed be granted satisfactory assurances and that both peoples, like good neighbors, can then live in peace. But the only path to such an agreement is the iron wall, that is to say the strengthening in Palestine of a Government without any kind of Arab influence, that is to say one against which the Arabs will fight. In other words, for us the only path to an agreement in the future is an absolute refusal of any attempts at an agreement now.

Menachem Begin (1913–1992)

Broadcast to the Nation (May 15, 1948)

Now, for the time being, we have a Hebrew rule in part of our homeland. And as in this part there will be Hebrew Law—and that is the only rightful law in this country—there is no need for a Hebrew underground. In the State of Israel, we shall be soldiers and builders. And we shall respect its government, for it is our government. . . .

The State of Israel has arisen, but we must remember that our country is not yet liberated. . . . Our God-given country is a unity, an integral historical and geographical whole. The attempt to dissect it is not only a crime but a blasphemy and an abortion. Whoever does not recognize our natural right to our entire homeland does not recognize our right to any part of it. And we shall never forego this natural right. We shall continue to foster the aspiration of full independence. . . .

We cannot buy peace from our enemies with appeasement. There is only one kind of “peace” that can be bought—the peace of the graveyard, the peace of Treblinka. Be brave of spirit and ready for more trials. We shall withstand them. The Lord of Hosts will help us.

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Yoram Hazony (b. 1964)

The End of Zionism? (October 1995)

Zionism was predicated on the idea that the Land of Israel is the historic inheritance of only one people, the Jews; that this right was recognized under international law by the League of Nations in 1920; and that the Arabs, having secured self-expression in twenty Arab national states, do not need one more. . . .

Which cuts to the heart of why Oslo has created such a sandstorm of opprobrium and horror in Israel: the recognition of such an Arab national right to the Land of Israel is a flagrantly post-Zionist proposition. It means that the PLO's carnival of carnage spanning three decades was a perhaps distasteful, but nevertheless justified, war of resistance. By the same token, all the lives lost in pursuing Zionism—from the draining of the malarial swamps to the raid on Entebbe—all were in the service of a morally questionable and perhaps even illegitimate enterprise. For under this rendering of history, the land never really belonged to the Jews. . . .

This means that, in spite of all the hardware procured over the last fifty years, the Jewish state will have to wage and win its next war, the war of ideas, outgunned again. . . .

The relentless trend towards a post-Zionist Israel must be reversed on the battlefield of ideas.

Religious Zionism

Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935)

The Land of Israel (1910–30)

Eretz Yisra'el is not something apart from the soul of the Jewish people; it is no mere national possession serving as a means of unifying our people and buttressing its material, or even its spiritual, survival. *Eretz Yisra'el* is part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and inner being. Human reason, even at its most sublime, cannot begin to understand the unique holiness of *Eretz Yisra'el*; it cannot stir the depths of love for the land that are dormant within our people. What *Eretz Yisra'el* means to the Jew can be felt only through the Spirit of the Lord which is in our people as a whole, through the spiritual cast of the Jewish soul, which radiates its characteristic influence to every healthy emotion. This higher light shines forth to the degree that the spirit of divine holiness fills the hearts of the saints and scholars of Israel with heavenly life and bliss.

To regard *Eretz Yisra'el* as merely a tool for establishing our national unity—or even for sustaining our religion in the Diaspora by preserving its proper character and its faith, piety, and observances—is a sterile notion; it is unworthy of the holiness of *Eretz Yisra'el*. A valid strengthening of Judaism in the Diaspora can come only from the deepened attachment to *Eretz Yisra'el*. The hope for the return to the Holy Land is the continuing source of the distinctive nature of Judaism. The hope for the Redemption is the force that sustains Judaism in the Diaspora; the Judaism of *Eretz Yisra'el* is the very Redemption.

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Zvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1982)

On the 19th Anniversary of Israel's Independence (1967)

Nineteen years ago, on the night when news of the United Nations decision in favor of reestablishment of the State of Israel reached us, when the People streamed into the streets to celebrate and rejoice, I could not go out and join in the jubilation. I sat alone and silent; a burden lay upon me. During those first hours I could not resign myself to what had been done. I could not accept the fact that indeed “they have... divided My land” (Joel 4:2)! Yes [and now after nineteen years] where is our Hebron—have we forgotten her?! Where is our Shehem, our Jericho,—where?

Have we forgotten them?! And all that lies beyond the Jordan—each and every clod of earth, every region, hill, valley, every plot of land, that is part of *Eretz Yisra'el*? Have we the right to give up even one grain of the Land of God?

The question has been asked, “Is this the state that our prophets envisioned?” And I say: This is the state that the prophets envisioned. Of course, it has not yet attained perfection. But our prophets, our sages and those who followed them, said: “The seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will return and will reestablish settlement and independent political rule in the Land.” We were not told whether those who return will or will not be men and women of righteousness. . . .

Benjamin Ish-Shalom (b. 1953)

Jewish Sovereignty: The Challenges of Meaning, Identity, and Responsibility (2014)

Outside the land and without sovereignty, each person is responsible only for himself and his dependents. Inside the land with sovereign existence, responsibility becomes a national one, and an individual must choose the good of the collective over his own. This balance is expressed in Jewish law in other areas as well, such as the general prohibition against endangering oneself, as opposed to the obligation to engage in warfare to protect national life and protect others. . . .

We have then defined a revolutionary theological principle: identification with and responsibility toward the nation, and taking an active part in its national life are of monumental significance, since the lack thereof is equivalent to heresy. This radical position redefines our perception of Torah, nationalism, and of Judaism itself, informing a “theology of sovereignty.” . . .

Development of a “*halakhah* of sovereignty,” like that of a “theology of sovereignty,” must consider the challenges of a sovereign state: development of ethical principles for a sound economy; ethics of diplomatic relations with other countries; formation of policy towards national minorities and other religions; and ethical standards and principles for military action. These areas have not been seriously developed in halakhic literature and religious thought over two thousand years of exile—however this literature can serve as the inspiration for a renewed creative effort to respond to the critical questions faced by a Jewish sovereign state.

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Cultural Zionism

Ahad Ha'am (1856–1927)

The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem (1897)

It is not only the Jews who have come out of the ghetto; Judaism has come out, too. . . . Judaism has come out (or is coming out) of its own accord wherever it has come into contact with modern culture. This contact with modern culture overturns the inner defenses of Judaism so that it can no longer remain isolated and live a life apart! . . . In exile, Judaism cannot, therefore, develop its individuality in its own way. When it leaves the ghetto walls, it is in danger of losing its essential being or—at very least—its national unity. . . .

So it seeks to return to its historic center where it will be able to live a life developing in a natural way, to bring its powers into play in every department of human culture, to broaden and perfect those national possessions which it has acquired up to now, and thus to contribute to the common stock of humanity in the future as it has in the past, a great national culture, the fruit of the unhampered activity of a people living by the light of its own spirit. . . .

Then, from this center, the spirit of Judaism will radiate to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, to inspire them with new life and to preserve the overall unity of our people. When our national culture in Palestine has attained that level, we may be confident that it will produce men in the Land of Israel itself who will be able, at a favorable moment, to establish a State there—one which will be not merely a state of Jews but a really Jewish state.

S. Y. Agnon (1888–1970)

Nobel Prize Speech (1966)

As a result of the historic catastrophe in which Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and Israel was exiled from its land, I was born in one of the cities of the Exile. But always I regarded myself as one who was born in Jerusalem. In a dream, in a vision of the night, I saw myself standing with my brother-Levites in the Holy Temple, singing with them the songs of David, King of Israel, melodies such as no ear has heard since the day our city was destroyed and its people went into exile. . . .

The young artisans, tailors, and shoemakers, who used to sing my songs at their work, were killed in the First World War, and of those who were not killed in the war, some were buried alive with their sisters in the pits they dug for themselves by order of the enemy, and most were burned in the crematories of Auschwitz with their sisters, who had adorned our town with their beauty and sung my songs with their sweet voices. . . .

At the age of nineteen and a half, I went to the Land of Israel. . . . God gave me the wisdom to return to Jerusalem. I returned to Jerusalem, and it is by virtue of Jerusalem that I have written all that God has put into my heart and into my pen. . . .

If I am proud of anything, it is that I have been granted the privilege of living in the land which God promised our forefathers to give us.

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Yair Lapid (b. 1963)

I am a Zionist (2009)

I am a Zionist.

Hebrew is the language I use to thank the Creator, and also to swear on the road. The Bible does not only contain my history, but also my geography. King Saul went to look for mules on what is today highway 443, Jonah the Prophet boarded his ship not too far from what is today a Jaffa restaurant, and the balcony where David peeped on Batsheva must have been bought by some oligarch by now. . . .

I already laid down on my back to admire the Sistine Chapel, I bought a postcard at the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, and I was deeply impressed by the emerald Buddha at the king's palace in Bangkok. Yet I still believe that Tel Aviv is more entertaining, the Red Sea is greener, and the Western Wall Tunnels provide for a much more powerful spiritual experience. It is true that I'm not objective, but I'm also not objective in respect to my wife and children. . . .

My Zionism is natural, just like it is natural for me to be a father, a husband, and a son. People who claim that they, and only they, represent the "real Zionism" are ridiculous in my view. My Zionism is not measured by the size of my *kippah*, by the neighborhood where I live, or by the party I will be voting for. It was born a long time before me, on a snowy street in the ghetto in Budapest where my father stood and attempted, in vain, to understand why the entire world is trying to kill him.

Diaspora Zionism

Louis Brandeis (1856–1941)

The Jewish Problem and How to Solve It (1915)

Let no American imagine that Zionism is inconsistent with Patriotism. Multiple loyalties are objectionable only if they are inconsistent. A man is a better citizen of the United States for being also a loyal citizen of his state, and of his city; for being loyal to his family, and to his profession or trade; for being loyal to his college or his lodge. Every Irish American who contributed toward advancing home rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice he made. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feels that neither he nor his descendants will ever live there, will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so. . . .

Indeed, loyalty to America demands rather that each American Jew become a Zionist. For only through the ennobling effect of its strivings can we develop the best that is in us and give to this country the full benefit of our great national inheritance. The Jewish spirit, so long preserved, the character developed by so many centuries of sacrifice, should be preserved and developed further, so that in America as elsewhere the sons of the race may in the future live lives and do deeds worthy of their ancestors.

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Arthur Hertzberg (1921–2006)

Some Reflections on Zionism Today (1977)

In America, Zionism has contributed not to the discomfort of the Jews in the Diaspora, but rather to the acceptance of themselves and their acceptance by others. It has provided the Jews of America with a set of mitzvot, the labors for Israel. The only offense for which Jews can be “excommunicated” in the U.S. today is not to participate in those efforts. Inter-marriage, ignorance in the Jewish heritage, or lack of faith do not keep anyone from leadership in the American Jewish community today. Being against Israel or apathetic in its support does.

What we have today, and for at least a generation to come, is a Jewish World which our Zionists fathers imagined not, in which the largest Diaspora, that in the U.S., derives much of its sense of security out of working to lessen the insecurities of Israel. . . .

Of course Israel is in danger and defending it is the prime objective of world Jewry, but strengthening and preserving Jewishness, wherever it might be, is an almost coequal purpose. . . .

I am a Zionist not because I may carry an Israeli passport, but because I am a citizen of world Jewry, of *Am Yisra'el*. The task of Zionism in our time is to educate our children for that pervasive citizenship, and to create the modes of joint endeavor, with Israel as the center, which will create and retain that citizenship.

Alan Dershowitz (b. 1938)

The Vanishing American Jew (1997)

Israel—like Judaism itself—must remain a positive option to be freely chosen out of love, not merely a negative response to hatred and fear, as Herzl characterized both Zionism and Judaism a century ago. As Israel and the Jewish communities around the world strengthen and mature, a new, more symbiotic relationship must develop among them. . . . As Israel grows stronger both militarily and economically, it will become less dependent on Jewish communities around the world. . . .

We will continue to send our children to Israel for visits from all parts of the Jewish world. Israel will continue to produce Jewish literature, Jewish music, Jewish art, and Jewish philosophy, as the rest of world Jewry gravitates more closely to the national characters of its adoptive homes.

Yes, a divided Israel may divide world Jewry in the short term, as it appears to be doing today, but as Israel becomes stronger, it will help to unite us by becoming the place where the elusive Jewish character is defined and perpetuated, especially for more secular Jews.