

# Understanding Jewish Influence II:

## Zionism and the Internal Dynamics of Judaism

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The history of Zionism illustrates a dynamic within the Jewish community in which the most radical elements end up pulling the entire community in their direction. Zionism began among the most ethnocentric Eastern European Jews and had explicitly racist and nationalist overtones. However, Zionism was viewed as dangerous among the wider Jewish community, especially the partially assimilated Jews in Western countries, because it opened Jews up to charges of disloyalty and because the Zionists' open racialism and ethnocentric nationalism conflicted with the assimilationist strategy then dominant among Western Jews. Zionist activists eventually succeeded in making Zionism a mainstream Jewish movement, due in large part to the sheer force of numbers of the Eastern European vanguard. Over time, the more militant, expansionist Zionists (the Jabotinskyists, the Likud Party, fundamentalists, and West Bank settlers) have won the day and have continued to push for territorial expansion within Israel. This has led to conflicts with Palestinians and a widespread belief among Jews that Israel itself is threatened. The result has been a heightened group consciousness among Jews and ultimately support for Zionist extremism among the entire organized American Jewish community.

In the first part of this series I discussed Jewish ethnocentrism as a central trait influencing the success of Jewish activism.<sup>1</sup> In the contemporary world, the most important example of Jewish ethnocentrism and extremism is Zionism. In fact, Zionism is incredibly important. As of this writing, the United States has recently accomplished the destruction of the Iraqi regime, and it is common among influential Jews to advocate war between the United States and the entire Muslim world. In a recent issue of *Commentary* (an influential journal published by the American Jewish Committee), editor Norman Podhoretz states, "The regimes that richly deserve to be overthrown and replaced are not confined to the three singled-out members of the axis of evil [i.e., Iraq, Iran, and North Korea]. At a minimum, the axis should extend to Syria and Lebanon and Libya, as well as 'friends' of America like the Saudi royal family and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, along with the Palestinian Authority, whether headed by Arafat or one of his henchmen."<sup>2</sup> More than anything else, this is a list of countries that Israel doesn't like, and, as I discuss in the third part of this series, intensely committed Zionists with close links to Israel occupy prominent positions in the Bush administration, especially in the Department of Defense and on the staff of Vice President Dick Cheney. The long-term consequence of Zionism is that the U.S. is on the verge of attempting to completely transform the Arab/Muslim world to produce governments that accept Israel and whatever fate it decides for the Palestinians, and, quite possibly, to set the stage for further Israeli expansionism.

Zionism is an example of an important principle in Jewish history: At all the turning points, it is the more ethnocentric elements—one might term them the radicals—who have determined the direction of the Jewish community and eventually won the day.<sup>3</sup> As recounted in the Books of

Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews who returned to Israel after the Babylonian captivity energetically rid the community of those who had intermarried with the racially impure remnant left behind. Later, during the period of Greek dominance, there was a struggle between the pro-Greek assimilationists and the more committed Jews, who came to be known as Maccabeans.

At that time there appeared in Israel a group of renegade Jews, who incited the people. “Let us enter into a covenant with the Gentiles round about,” they said, “because disaster upon disaster has overtaken us since we segregated ourselves from them.” The people thought this a good argument, and some of them in their enthusiasm went to the king and received authority to introduce non-Jewish laws and customs. They built a sports stadium in the gentile style in Jerusalem. They removed their marks of circumcision and repudiated the holy covenant. They intermarried with Gentiles, and abandoned themselves to evil ways.<sup>4</sup>

The victory of the Maccabeans reestablished Jewish law and put an end to assimilation. The Book of Jubilees, written during this period, represents the epitome of ancient Jewish nationalism, in which God represents the national interests of the Jewish people in dominating all other peoples of the world:

I am the God who created heaven and earth. I shall increase you, and multiply you exceedingly; and kings shall come from you and shall rule wherever the foot of the sons of man has trodden. I shall give to your seed all the earth which is under heaven, and they shall rule over all the nations according to their desire; and afterwards they shall draw the whole earth to themselves and shall inherit it forever.<sup>5</sup>

A corollary of this is that throughout history in times of trouble there has been an upsurge in religious fundamentalism, mysticism, and messianism.<sup>6</sup> For example, during the 1930s in Germany liberal Reform Jews became more conscious of their Jewish identity, increased their attendance at synagogue, and returned to more traditional observance (including a reintroduction of Hebrew). Many of them became Zionists.<sup>7</sup> As I will discuss in the following, every crisis in Israel has resulted in an increase in Jewish identity and intense mobilization of support for Israel.

Today the people who are being rooted out of the Jewish community are Jews living in the Diaspora who do not support the aims of the Likud Party in Israel. The overall argument here is that Zionism is an example of the trajectory of Jewish radicalism. The radical movement begins among the more committed segments of the Jewish community, then spreads and eventually becomes mainstream within the Jewish community; then the most extreme continue to push the envelope (e.g., the settlement movement on the West Bank), and other Jews eventually follow because the more extreme positions come to define the essence of Jewish identity. An important part of the dynamic is that Jewish radicalism tends to result in conflicts with non-Jews, with the result that Jews feel threatened, become more group-oriented, and close ranks against the enemy—an enemy seen as irrationally and incomprehensibly anti-Jewish. Jews who fail to go along with what is now a mainstream position are pushed out of the community, labeled “self-hating Jews” or worse, and relegated to impotence.

## **Table 1:**

### **Jewish Radicals Eventually Triumph within the Jewish Community: The Case of Zionism**

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1. Zionism began among the more ethnocentric, committed segments of the Jewish community (1880s).
  2. Then it spread and became mainstream within the Jewish community despite its riskiness. (1940s). Supporting Zionism comes to define what being Jewish is.
  3. Then the most extreme among the Zionists continued to push the envelope (e.g., the settlement movement on the West Bank; constant pressure on border areas in Israel).
  4. Jewish radicalism tends to result in conflicts with non-Jews (e.g., the settlement movement); violence (e.g., intifadas) and other expressions of anti-Jewish sentiment increase.
  5. Jews in general feel threatened and close ranks against what they see as yet another violent, incomprehensible manifestation of the eternally violent hatred of Jews. This reaction is the result of psychological mechanisms of ethnocentrism: Moral particularism, self-deception, and social identity.
  6. In the U.S., this effect is accentuated because committed, more intensely ethnocentric Jews dominate Jewish activist groups.
  7. Jews who fail to go along with what is now a mainstream position are pushed out of the community, labeled “self-hating Jews” or worse, and relegated to impotence.
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### **Origins of Zionism in Ethnic Conflict in Eastern Europe**

The origins of Zionism and other manifestations of the intense Jewish dynamism of the twentieth century lie in the Yiddish-speaking world of Eastern Europe in the early nineteenth century. Originally invited in by nobles as estate managers, toll farmers, bankers, and moneylenders, Jews in Poland expanded into commerce and then into artisanry, so that there came to be competition between Jews and non-Jewish butchers, bakers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and tailors. This produced the typical resource-based anti-Jewish attitudes and behavior so common throughout Jewish history.<sup>8</sup> Despite periodic restrictions and outbursts of hostility, Jews came to dominate the entire economy apart from agricultural labor and the nobility. Jews had an advantage in the competition in trade and artisanry because they were able to control the trade in raw materials and sell at lower prices to coethnics.<sup>9</sup>

This increasing economic domination went along with a great increase in the population of Jews. Jews not only made up large percentages of urban populations, they increasingly migrated to small towns and rural areas. In short, Jews had overshot their economic niche: The economy was unable to support this burgeoning Jewish population in the sorts of positions that Jews had traditionally filled, with the result that a large percentage of the Jewish population became mired

in poverty. The result was a cauldron of ethnic hostility, with the government placing various restrictions on Jewish economic activity; rampant anti-Jewish attitudes; and increasing Jewish desperation.

The main Jewish response to this situation was an upsurge of fundamentalist extremism that coalesced in the Hasidic movement and, later in the nineteenth century, into political radicalism and Zionism as solutions to Jewish problems. Jewish populations in Eastern Europe had the highest rate of natural increase of any European population in the nineteenth century, with a natural increase of 120,000 per year in the 1880s and an overall increase within the Russian Empire from one to six million in the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Anti-Semitism and the exploding Jewish population, combined with economic adversity, were of critical importance for producing the sheer numbers of disaffected Jews who dreamed of deliverance in various messianic movements—the ethnocentric mysticism of the Kabbala, Zionism, or the dream of a Marxist political revolution.

Religious fanaticism and messianic expectations have been a typical Jewish response to hard times throughout history.<sup>11</sup> For example, in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire there was “an unmistakable picture of grinding poverty, ignorance, and insecurity”<sup>12</sup> among Jews that, in the context of high levels of anti-Semitism, effectively prevented Jewish upward mobility. These phenomena were accompanied by the prevalence of mysticism and a high fertility rate among Jews, which doubtlessly exacerbated the problems.

The Jewish population explosion in Eastern Europe in the context of poverty and politically imposed restrictions on Jews was responsible for the generally destabilizing effects of Jewish radicalism in Eastern Europe and Russia up to the revolution. These conditions also had spillover effects in Germany, where the negative attitudes toward the immigrant *Ostjuden* (Eastern Jews) and their foreign, clannish ways contributed to the anti-Semitism of the period.<sup>13</sup> In the United States, radical political beliefs held by a great many Jewish immigrants and their descendants persisted even in the absence of difficult economic and political conditions and have had a decisive influence on U.S. political and cultural history into the present. The persistence of these beliefs influenced the general political sensibility of the Jewish community and has had a destabilizing effect on American society, ranging from the paranoia of the McCarthy era to the triumph of the 1960s countercultural revolution.<sup>14</sup> In the contemporary world, the descendants of these religious fundamentalists constitute the core of the settler movement and other manifestations of Zionist extremism in Israel.

The hypothesis pursued here is that Jewish population dynamics beginning in the nineteenth century resulted in a feed-forward dynamic: Increasing success in economic competition led to increased population. This in turn led to anti-Jewish reactions and eventually to Jewish overpopulation, poverty, anti-Jewish hostility, and religious fanaticism as a response to external threat. In this regard, Jewish populations are quite the opposite of European populations, in which there is a long history of curtailing reproduction in the face of perceived scarcity of resources.<sup>15</sup> This may be analyzed in terms of the individualism/collectivism dimension, which provides a general contrast between Jewish and European culture:<sup>16</sup> Individualists curtail reproduction in response to adversity in order to better their own lives, whereas a group-oriented culture such as Judaism responds to adversity by strengthening group ties; forming groups with

charismatic leaders and a strong sense of ingroup and outgroup; adopting mystical, messianic ideologies; and increasing their fertility—all of which lead to greater conflict.

There is an association between religious or ethnic fanaticism and fertility, and it is quite common for competing ethnic groups to increase their fertility in response to perceived external threats.<sup>17</sup> Ethnic activists respond to the perceived need to increase the numbers of their group in several ways, including exhorting coethnics to reproduce early and often, banning birth control and abortions, curtailing female employment in order to free women for the task of reproducing, and providing financial incentives. In the contemporary world, Jewish activists both within Israel and in the Diaspora have been strong advocates of increasing Jewish fertility, motivated by the threat of intermarriage in the Diaspora, the threat of wars with Israel's neighbors, and as a reaction to Jewish population losses stemming from the Holocaust. Pro-natalism has deep religious significance for Jews as a religious commandment.<sup>18</sup> Within Israel, there is "a nationwide obsession with fertility," as indicated by the highest rate of in-vitro fertilization clinics in the world—one for every 28,000 citizens. This is more than matched by the Palestinians. Originating in the same group-oriented, collectivist culture area as the Jews, the Palestinians have the highest birth rate in the world and have been strongly attracted to charismatic leaders, messianic religious ideology, and desperate, suicidal solutions for their political problems.<sup>19</sup>

For the Jews, the religious fundamentalism characteristic of Eastern Europe from around 1800–1940 has been a demographic wellspring for Judaism. Jewish populations in the West have tended to have low fertility. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Western Jewish populations would have stagnated or declined in the absence of "the unending stream of immigrants from Jewish communities in the East."<sup>20</sup> But the point here is that this demographic wellspring created the stresses and strains within this very talented and energetic population that continue to reverberate in the modern world.

These trends can be seen by describing the numerically dominant Hasidic population in early nineteenth-century Galicia, then a province of the Austro-Hungarian empire; similar phenomena occurred throughout the Yiddish-speaking, religiously fundamentalist culture area of Eastern Europe, most of which came to be governed by the Russian empire.<sup>21</sup> Beginning in the late eighteenth century, there were increasing restrictions on Jewish economic activity, such as edicts preventing Jews from operating taverns, engaging in trade, and leasing mills. There were restrictions on where Jews could live, and ghettos were established in order to remove Jews from competition with non-Jews; taxes specific to Jews were imposed; there were government efforts to force Jewish assimilation, as by requiring the legal documents be in the German language. These laws, even though often little enforced, reflected the anti-Jewish animosity of wider society and undoubtedly increased Jewish insecurity. In any case, a large percentage of the Jewish population was impoverished and doubtless would have remained so even in the absence of anti-Jewish attitudes and legislation. Indeed, the emigration of well over three million Jews to Western Europe and the New World did little to ease the grinding poverty of a large majority of the Jewish population.

It was in this atmosphere that Hasidism rose to dominance in Eastern Europe. The Hasidim passionately rejected all the assimilatory pressures coming from the government. They so

cherished the Yiddish language that well into the twentieth century the vast majority of Eastern European Jews could not speak the languages of the non-Jews living around them.<sup>22</sup> They turned to the Kabbala (the writings of Jewish mystics), superstition, and anti-rationalism, believing in “magical remedies, amulets, exorcisms, demonic possession (dybbuks), ghosts, devils, and teasing, mischievous genies.”<sup>23</sup> Corresponding to this intense ingroup feeling were attitudes that non-Jews were less than human. “As Mendel of Rymanów put it, ‘A Gentile does not have a heart, although he has an organ that resembles a heart.’ ”<sup>24</sup> All nations exist only by virtue of the Jewish people: “Erez Yisreal [the land of Israel] is the essence of the world and all vitality stems from it.”<sup>25</sup> Similar attitudes are common among contemporary Jewish fundamentalists and the settler movement in Israel.<sup>26</sup>

The Hasidim had an attitude of absolute faith in the person of the *zaddic*, their rebbe, who was a charismatic figure seen by his followers literally as the personification of God in the world. Attraction to charismatic leaders is a fundamental feature of Jewish social organization—apparent as much among religious fundamentalists as among Jewish political radicals or elite Jewish intellectuals.<sup>27</sup> The following account of a scene at a synagogue in Galicia in 1903 describes the intense emotionality of the community and its total subordination to its leader:

There were no benches, and several thousand Jews were standing closely packed together, swaying in prayer like the corn in the wind. When the rabbi appeared the service began. Everybody tried to get as close to him as possible. The rabbi led the prayers in a thin, weeping voice. It seemed to arouse a sort of ecstasy in the listeners. They closed their eyes, violently swaying. The loud praying sounded like a gale. Anyone seeing these Jews in prayer would have concluded that they were the most religious people on earth.<sup>28</sup>

At the end of the service, those closest to the rabbi were intensely eager to eat any food touched by him, and the fish bones were preserved by his followers as relics. Another account notes that “devotees hoping to catch a spark from this holy fire run to receive him.”<sup>29</sup> The power of the *zaddic* extends so far “that whatever God does, it is also within the capacity of the *zaddic* to do.”<sup>30</sup>

An important role for the *zaddic* is to produce wealth for the Jews, and by taking it from the non-Jews. According to Hasidic doctrine, the non-Jews have the preponderance of good things, but

It was the *zaddic* who was to reverse this situation. Indeed, R. Meir of Opatów never wearied of reiterating in his homilies that the *zaddik* must direct his prayer in a way that the abundance which he draws down from on high should not be squandered during its descent, and not “wander away,” that is, outside, to the Gentiles, but that it mainly reach the Jews, the holy people, with only a residue flowing to the Gentiles, who are “the other side” (Satan’s camp).<sup>31</sup>

The *zaddics*’ sermons were filled with pleas for vengeance and hatred toward the non-Jews, who were seen as the source of their problems.

These groups were highly authoritarian—another fundamental feature of Jewish social organization.<sup>32</sup> Rabbis and other elite members of the community had extraordinary power over other Jews in traditional societies—literally the power of life and death. Jews who informed the

authorities about the illegal activities of other Jews were liquidated on orders of secret rabbinical courts, with no opportunity to defend themselves. Jews accused of heretical religious views were beaten or murdered. Their books were burned or buried in cemeteries. When a heretic died, his body was beaten by a special burial committee, placed in a cart filled with dung, and deposited outside the Jewish cemetery. In places where the authorities were lax, there were often pitched battles between different Jewish sects, often over trivial religious points such as what kind of shoes a person should wear. In 1838 the governor of southwestern Russia issued a directive that the police keep tabs on synagogues because “Very often something happens that leaves dead Jews in its wake.”<sup>33</sup> Synagogues had jails near the entrance, and prisoners were physically abused by the congregation as they filed in for services.

Not surprisingly, these groups had extraordinary solidarity; a government official observed, “The Hasidim are bound to each other with heart and soul.”<sup>34</sup> This solidarity was based not only on the personality of the rebbe and the powerful social controls described above, but on the high levels of within-group generosity which alleviated to some extent their poverty. Needless to say, Hasidic solidarity was seen as threatening by outsiders: “How much longer will we tolerate the Hasidic sect, which is united by such a strong bond and whose members help one another.”<sup>35</sup>

Hasidism triumphed partly by its attraction to the Jewish masses and partly because of the power politics of the rebbes: Opposing rabbis were forced out, so by the early nineteenth century in Galicia, Poland, and the Ukraine, the vast majority of Jews were in Hasidic communities. Their triumph meant the failure of the Jewish Enlightenment (the *Haskalah*) in Eastern Europe. The *Haskalah* movement advocated greater assimilation with non-Jewish society, as by using vernacular languages, studying secular subjects, and not adopting distinguishing forms of dress, although in other ways their commitment to Judaism remained powerful. These relatively assimilated Jews were the relatively thin upper crust of wealthy merchants and others who were free of the economic and social pressures that fueled Hasidism. They often cooperated with the authorities in attempts to force the Hasidim to assimilate out of fear that Hasidic behavior led to anti-Jewish attitudes.

As noted above, one source of the inward unity and psychological fanaticism of Jewish communities was the hostility of the surrounding non-Jewish population. Jews in the Russian Empire were hated by all the non-Jewish classes, who saw them as an exploitative class of petty traders, middlemen, innkeepers, store owners, estate agents, and money lenders.<sup>36</sup> Jews “were viewed by the authorities and by much of the rest of population as a foreign, separate, exploitative, and distressingly prolific nation.”<sup>37</sup> In 1881 these tensions boiled over into several anti-Jewish pogroms in a great many towns of southern and southwestern Russia. It was in this context that the first large-scale stirrings of Zionism emerged.<sup>38</sup> From 1881–1884, dozens of Zionist groups formed in the Russian Empire and Romania.

Political radicalism emerged from the same intensely Jewish communities during this period and for much the same reasons.<sup>39</sup> Political radicalism often coexisted with messianic forms of Zionism as well as intense commitment to Jewish nationalism and religious and cultural separatism, and many individuals held various and often rapidly changing combinations of these ideas.<sup>40</sup>

The two streams of political radicalism and Zionism, each stemming from the teeming fanaticism of threatened Jewish populations in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, continue to reverberate in the modern world. In both England and America the immigration of Eastern European Jews after 1880 had a transformative effect on the political attitudes of the Jewish community in the direction of radical politics and Zionism, often combined with religious orthodoxy.<sup>41</sup> The immigrant Eastern European Jews demographically swamped the previously existing Jewish communities in both countries, and the older community reacted to this influx with considerable trepidation because of the possibility of increased anti-Semitism. Attempts were made by the established Jewish communities to misrepresent the prevalence of radical political ideas and Zionism among the immigrants.<sup>42</sup>

The Zionist and radical solutions for Jewish problems differed, of course, with the radicals blaming the Jewish situation on the economic structure of society and attempting to appeal to non-Jews in an effort to completely restructure social and economic relationships. (Despite attempting to appeal to non-Jews, the vast majority of Jewish radicals had a very strong Jewish communal identity and often worked in an entirely Jewish milieu.<sup>43</sup>) Among Zionists, on the other hand, it was common from very early on to see the Jewish situation as resulting from irresolvable conflict between Jews and non-Jews. The early Zionist Moshe Leib Lilienblum emphasized that Jews were strangers who competed with local peoples: “A stranger can be received into a family, but only as a guest. A guest who bothers, or competes with or displaces an authentic member of the household is promptly and angrily reminded of his status by the others, acting out of a sense of self-protection.”<sup>44</sup> Later, Theodor Herzl argued that a prime source of modern anti-Semitism was that Jews had come into direct economic competition with the non-Jewish middle classes. Anti-Semitism based on resource competition was rational: Herzl “insisted that one could not expect a majority to ‘let themselves be subjugated’ by formerly scorned outsiders whom they had just released from the ghetto.... I find the anti-Semites are fully within their rights.”<sup>45</sup> In Germany, Zionists analyzed anti-Semitism during the Weimar period as “the inevitable and justifiable response of one people to attempts by another to make it share in the formation of its destiny. It was an instinctive response independent of reason and will, and hence common to all peoples, the Jews included.”<sup>46</sup>

As was often the case during the period, Zionists had a much clearer understanding of their fellow Jews and the origins of anti-Jewish attitudes. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, a prominent Zionist and leader of the American Jewish Congress whose membership derived from Eastern Europe immigrants and their descendants, accused Western European Jews of deception by pretending to be patriotic citizens while really being Jewish nationalists: “They wore the mask of the ruling nationality as of old in Spain—the mask of the ruling religion.”<sup>47</sup> Wise had a well-developed sense of dual loyalty, stating on one occasion “I am not an American citizen of Jewish faith. I am a Jew. I am an American. I have been an American 63/64ths of my life, but I have been a Jew for 4000 years.”<sup>48</sup>

Zionists in Western countries were also at the ethnocentric end of the Jewish population. Zionism was seen as a way of combating the assimilatory pressures of Western societies: “Zionist ideologues and publicists argued that in the West assimilation was as much a threat to the survival of the Jewish people as persecution was in the East.”<sup>49</sup> Zionism openly accepted a national/ethnic conceptualization of Judaism that was quite independent of religious faith. As

Theodore Herzl stated, “We are a people—one people.”<sup>50</sup> The Zionist Arthur Hertzberg stated that “the Jews in all ages were essentially a nation and...all other factors profoundly important to the life of this people, even religion, were mainly instrumental values.”<sup>51</sup> There were a number of Zionist racial scientists in the period from 1890–1940, including Elias Auerbach, Aron Sandler, Felix Theilhaber, and Ignaz Zollschan. Zionist racial scientists were motivated by a perceived need to end Jewish intermarriage and preserve Jewish racial purity.<sup>52</sup> Only by creating a Jewish homeland and leaving the assimilatory influences of the Diaspora could Jews preserve their unique racial heritage.

For example, Auerbach advocated Zionism because it would return Jews “back into the position they enjoyed before the nineteenth century—politically autonomous, culturally whole, and racially pure.”<sup>53</sup> Zollschan, whose book on “the Jewish racial question” went through five editions and was well known to both Jewish and non-Jewish anthropologists,<sup>54</sup> praised Houston Stewart Chamberlain and advocated Zionism as the only way to retain Jewish racial purity from the threat of mixed marriages and assimilation.<sup>55</sup> Zollschan’s description of the phenotypic, and by implication genetic commonality of Jews around the world is striking. He notes that the same Jewish faces can be seen throughout the Jewish world among Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Oriental Jews. He also remarked on the same mix of body types, head shapes, skin, and hair and eye pigmentation in these widely separated groups.<sup>56</sup>

For many Zionists, Jewish racialism went beyond merely asserting and shoring up the ethnic basis of Judaism, to embrace the idea of racial superiority. Consistent with the anti-assimilationist thrust of Zionism, very few Zionists intermarried, and those who did, such as Martin Buber, found that their marriages were problematic within the wider Zionist community.<sup>57</sup> In 1929 the Zionist leaders of the Berlin Jewish community condemned intermarriage as a threat to the “racial purity of stock” and asserted its belief that “consanguinity of the flesh and solidarity of the soul” were essential for developing a Jewish nation, as was the “will to establish a closed brotherhood over against all other communities on earth.”<sup>58</sup>

Assertions of Zionist racialism continued into the National Socialist period, where they dovetailed with National Socialist attitudes. Joachim Prinz, a German Jew who later became the head of the American Jewish Congress, celebrated Hitler’s ascent to power because it signaled the end of the Enlightenment values, which had resulted in assimilation and mixed marriage among Jews:

We want assimilation to be replaced by a new law: *the declaration of belonging to the Jewish nation and the Jewish race*. A state built upon the principle of the purity of nation and race can only be honoured and respected by a Jew who declares his belonging to his own kind.... For only he who honours his *own* breed and his *own* blood can have an attitude of honour towards the *national will of other nations*.<sup>59</sup>

The common ground of the racial Zionists and their non-Jewish counterparts included the exclusion of Jews from the German *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, shortly after Hitler came to power, the Zionist Federation of Germany submitted a memorandum to the German government outlining a solution to the Jewish question and containing the following remarkable statement.

The Federation declared that the Enlightenment view that Jews should be absorbed into the nation state

discerned only the individual, the single human being freely suspended in space, without regarding the ties of blood and history or spiritual distinctiveness. Accordingly, the liberal state demanded of the Jews assimilation [via baptism and mixed marriage] into the non-Jewish environment.... Thus it happened that innumerable persons of Jewish origin had the chance to occupy important positions and to come forward as representatives of German culture and German life, without having their belonging to Jewry become visible. Thus arose a state of affairs which in political discussion today is termed “debasement of Germandom,” or “Jewification.” ...Zionism has no illusions about the difficulty of the Jewish condition, which consists above all in an abnormal occupational pattern and in the fault of an intellectual and moral posture not rooted in one’s own tradition.<sup>61</sup>

### **Zionism As a “Risky Strategy”**

Zionism was a risky strategy—to use Frank Salter’s term<sup>62</sup>—because it led to charges of dual loyalty. The issue of dual loyalty has been a major concern throughout the history of Zionism. From the beginnings of Zionism, the vast majority of the movement’s energy and numbers, and eventually its leadership, stemmed from the Eastern European wellspring of Judaism.<sup>63</sup> In the early decades of the twentieth century, there was a deep conflict within the Jewish communities of Western Europe and the U.S., pitting the older Jewish communities originating in Western Europe (particularly Germany) against the new arrivals from Eastern Europe, who eventually overwhelmed them by force of numbers.<sup>64</sup> Thus, an important theme of the history of Jews in America, England, and Germany was the conflict between the older Jewish communities that were committed to some degree of cultural assimilation and the ideals of the Enlightenment, versus the Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Eastern Europe and their commitment to political radicalism, Zionism, and/or religious fundamentalism. The older Jewish communities were concerned that Zionism would lead to anti-Semitism due to charges of dual loyalty and because Jews would be perceived as a nation and an ethnic group rather than simply as a religion. In England, during the final stages before the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, Edwin Montagu “made a long, emotional appeal to his colleagues [in the British cabinet]: how could he represent the British government during the forthcoming mission to India if the same government declared that his (Montagu’s) national home was on Turkish territory?”<sup>65</sup> Similar concerns were expressed in the United States, but by 1937 most American Jews advocated a Jewish state, and the Columbus Platform of the Reform Judaism of 1937 officially accepted the idea of a Palestinian homeland and shortly thereafter accepted the idea of political sovereignty for Jews in Israel.<sup>66</sup>

In post–World War I Germany, a major goal of Reform Judaism was to suppress Zionism because of its perceived effect of fanning the flames of anti-Semitism due to charges of Jewish disloyalty.<sup>67</sup> In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler argued that Jews were an ethnic group and not simply a religion, which was confirmed by his discovery that “among them was a great movement . . . which came out sharply in confirmation of the national character of the Jews: this was the *Zionists*.”<sup>68</sup> Hitler went on to remark that although one might suppose that only a subset of Jews were Zionists and that Zionism was condemned by the great majority of Jews, “the so-called liberal Jews did not reject Zionists as non-Jews, but only as Jews with an impractical, perhaps

even dangerous, way of publicly avowing their Jewishness. Intrinsicly they remained unalterably of one piece.”<sup>69</sup>

Hitler’s comments reflect the weak position of the Zionists of his day as a small minority of Jews, but they also show the reality of the worst fears of the German Reform movement during this period: that the publicly expressed ethnocentric nationalism of the Zionists would increase anti-Semitism, because Jews would be perceived not as a religious group but as an ethnic/national entity with no ties to Germany. The existence of Zionism as well as of international Jewish organizations such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle (based in France) and continued Jewish cultural separatism were important sources of German anti-Semitism beginning in the late nineteenth century.

In the Soviet Union, Stalin regarded Jews as politically unreliable after they expressed “overwhelming enthusiasm” for Israel and attempted to emigrate to Israel, especially since Israel was leaning toward the West in the Cold War.<sup>70</sup> During the fighting in 1948, Soviet Jews attempted to organize an army to fight in Israel, and there were a great many other manifestations of Soviet-Jewish solidarity with Israel, particularly in the wake of Jewish enthusiasm during Golda Meir’s visit to the Soviet Union. Stalin perceived a “psychological readiness on the part of the volunteers to be under the jurisdiction of two states—the homeland of all the workers and the homeland of all the Jews—something that was categorically impossible in his mind.”<sup>71</sup> There is also some indication that Stalin, at the height of the Cold War, suspected that Soviet Jews would not be loyal to the Soviet Union in a war with America because many of them had relatives in America.<sup>72</sup>

In the U.S., the dual loyalty issue arose because there was a conflict between perceived American foreign policy interests that began with the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The U. S. State Department feared that a British protectorate in Palestine would damage commercial interests in the region and that in any case it was not in the interests of America to offend Turkey or other Middle Eastern states.<sup>73</sup> While President Woodrow Wilson sympathized with the State Department position, he was eventually persuaded by American Zionists, notably Louis Brandeis, to endorse the declaration; it was then quickly approved by the British.

The dual loyalty issue was also raised in Britain, most especially after the Second World War, when the Labour government failed to support the creation of a Jewish state. Many British Jews gave generously to finance illegal activities in the British protectorate of Palestine, including the smuggling of arms and refugees and Jewish attacks on British forces.<sup>74</sup> British losses to Jewish terrorism during this period were not trivial: the bombing of the King David Hotel by future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his associates led to the deaths of eighty-three of the British administrative staff plus five members of the public. These activities led to widespread hostility toward Jews, and the Labour government pointedly refused to outlaw anti-Semitism during this period. During the late 1960s and 1970s, charges of dual loyalty appeared in the House of Commons among Labour MPs, one of whom commented that “it is undeniable that many MPs have what I can only term a dual loyalty, which is to another nation and another nation’s interests.”<sup>75</sup>

Attitudes ranging from unenthusiastic ambivalence to outright hostility to the idea of a Zionist homeland on the part of presidents, the State Department, Congress, or the American public persisted right up until the establishment of Israel in 1948 and beyond. After World War II, there continued to be a perception in the State Department that American interests in the area would not be served by a Jewish homeland, but should be directed at securing oil and military bases to oppose the Soviets. There was also concern that such a homeland would be a destabilizing influence for years to come because of Arab hostility.<sup>76</sup> Truman's defense secretary, James Forrestal, "was all but obsessed by the threat to [American interests] he discerned in Zionist ambitions. His concern was shared by the State Department and specifically by the Near East Desk."<sup>77</sup> In 1960 Senator J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, declared in response to attempts to coerce Egypt into agreeing to Israel's use of the Suez Canal, "in recent years we have seen the rise of organizations dedicated apparently not to America, but to foreign states and groups. The conduct of a foreign policy for America has been seriously compromised by this development."<sup>78</sup> Truman himself eventually caved in to Zionist pressure out of desire to ensure Jewish support in the 1948 election, and despite his own recently revealed personal misgivings about Jewish myopia in pursuit of their own interests.<sup>79</sup>

## **Zionist Extremism Becomes Mainstream**

Since the Second World War, there has been a long evolution such that the American Jewish community now fully supports the settler movement and other right-wing causes within Israel. Zionists made a great deal of progress during the Second World War. They engaged in "loud diplomacy," organizing thousands of rallies, dinners with celebrity speakers (including prominent roles for sympathetic non-Jews), letter-writing campaigns, meetings, lobbying, threats against newspapers for publishing unfavorable items, insertion of propaganda as news items in the press, and giving money to politicians and non-Jewish celebrities in return for their support.<sup>80</sup> By 1944, thousands of non-Jewish associations would pass pro-Zionist resolutions, and both Republican and Democratic platforms included strong pro-Zionist planks, even though the creation of a Jewish state was strongly opposed by the Departments of State and War.<sup>81</sup>

A 1945 poll found that 80.5% of Jews favored a Jewish state, with only 10.5% opposed.<sup>82</sup> This shows that by the end of the Second World War, Zionism had become thoroughly mainstream within the U.S. Jewish community. The triumph of Zionism occurred well before consciousness of the Holocaust came to be seen as legitimizing Israel. (Michael Novick dates the promotion of the Holocaust to its present status as a cultural icon from the 1967 Six-Day War.<sup>83</sup>) What had once been radical and viewed as dangerous had become not only accepted, but seen as central to Jewish identity.

Since the late 1980s, the American Jewish community has not been even-handed in its support of Israeli political factions, but has supported the more fanatical elements within Israel. While wealthy Israelis predominantly support the Labor Party, financial support for Likud and other right-wing parties comes from foreign sources, particularly wealthy U.S. Jews.<sup>84</sup> The support of these benefactors is endangered by any softening of Likud positions, with support then going to the settler movement. "Organized U.S. Jews are chauvinistic and militaristic in their views."<sup>85</sup>

Within Israel, there has been a transformation in the direction of the most radical, ethnocentric, and aggressive elements of the population. During the 1920s–1940s, the followers of Vladimir Jabotinsky (the “Revisionists”) were the vanguard of Zionist aggressiveness and strident racial nationalism, but they were a minority within the Zionist movement as a whole. Revisionism had several characteristics typical of influential nineteenth-century Jewish intellectual and political movements—features shared also with other forms of traditional Judaism. Like Judaism itself and the various hermeneutic theories typical of other Jewish twentieth-century intellectual movements, the philosophy of Revisionism was a closed system that offered a complete worldview “creating a self-evident Jewish world.”<sup>86</sup> Like the Hasidic movement and other influential Jewish intellectual and political movements, Revisionism was united around a charismatic leader figure, in this case Jabotinsky, who was seen in god-like terms—“Everyone waited for him to speak, clung to him for support, and considered him the source of the one and only absolute truth.”<sup>87</sup> There was a powerful sense of “us versus them.” Opponents were demonized: “The style of communication . . . was coarse and venomous, aimed at moral delegitimization of the opponent by denouncing him and even ‘inciting’ the Jewish public against him.”<sup>88</sup>

Jabotinsky developed a form of racial nationalism similar to other Zionist racial theorists of the period (see above). He believed that Jews were shaped by their long history as a desert people and that establishment of Israel as a Jewish state would allow the natural genius of the Jewish race to flourish. “These natural and fundamental distinctions embedded in the race are impossible to eradicate, and are continually being nurtured by the differences in soil and climate.”<sup>89</sup>

The Revisionists advocated military force as a means of obtaining a Jewish state; they wanted a “maximalist” state that would include the entire Palestine Mandate, including the Trans-Jordan (which became the nation of Jordan in 1946).<sup>90</sup> In the 1940s, its paramilitary wing, the Irgun, under the leadership of Menachem Begin, was responsible for much of the terrorist activities directed against both Arabs and the British forces maintaining the Palestinian Mandate until 1948, including the bombing of the King David Hotel and the massacre at Deir Yasin that was a major factor in terrorizing much of the Palestinian population into fleeing.<sup>91</sup>

Over time, the Labor Party has dwindled in influence, and there has followed the rise and ascendancy of the Likud Party and ultra-nationalism represented by Begin, who came to power in 1977 and began the process of resurrecting Jabotinsky,<sup>92</sup> by Yitzhak Shamir (commander of LEHI [the Stern Group], another pre-1948 terrorist group), and now by the government of Ariel Sharon, whose long record of aggressive brutality is described briefly below. Fundamentalists and other ultranationalists were a relatively weak phenomenon in the 1960s, but have increased to around 25 percent in the late 1990s and are an integral part of Sharon’s government. In other words, the more radical Zionists have won out within Israel. (As Noam Chomsky notes, there has been a consensus on retaining sovereignty over the West Bank, so that the entire Israeli political spectrum must be seen as aggressively expansionist.<sup>93</sup> The differences are differences of degree.)

The connections between Jabotinsky and the current Israeli government are more than coincidental: Just before Israel’s election in February 2001, Sharon was interviewed seated “symbolically and ostentatiously beneath a large photo of Vladimir Jabotinsky, spiritual father of

militant Zionism and Sharon's Likud party. Jabotinsky called for a Jewish state extending from the Nile to the Euphrates. He advocated constant attacks to smash the weak Arab states into fragments, dominated by Israel. In fact, just what Sharon tried to do in Lebanon. Hardly a good omen for the Mideast's future."<sup>94</sup>

Sharon has been implicated in a long string of acts of "relentless brutality toward Arabs," including massacring an Arab village in the 1950s; the "pacification" of the Gaza Strip in the 1970s (involving large-scale bulldozing of homes and deportation of Palestinians); the invasion of Lebanon, which involved thousands of civilian deaths and the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian refugees; and the brutal Israeli response to the recent Palestinian intifada.<sup>95</sup> The Kahan Commission, an Israeli board formed to investigate the Lebanese incident, concluded that Sharon was indirectly responsible for the massacre, and it went on to say that Sharon bears personal responsibility.

The intention of the Sharon government is to make life so miserable for the Palestinians that they will voluntarily leave, or, failing that, to simply expel them. Ran HaCohen, an Israeli academic, sums up the situation as of June 2002:

Step by step, Palestinians have been dispossessed and surrounded by settlements, military camps, by-pass roads and checkpoints, squeezed into sealed-off enclaves. Palestinian towns are besieged by tanks and armed vehicles blocking all access roads. West Bank villages too are surrounded by road blocks, preventing the movement of vehicles in and out: three successive mounds of rubble and earth, approximately 6 feet high, with 100 metre gaps between them. All residents wishing to move in and out of the village—old or young, sick or well, pregnant or not—have to climb over the slippery mounds. At present, this policy seems to have been perfected to an extent that it can be further institutionalised by long-term bureaucracy: a permit system, considerably worse than the "pass laws" imposed on blacks in Apartheid South Africa.<sup>96</sup>

Little has changed since this assessment. Recently this state of affairs is being formalized by the construction of a series of security walls that not only fence in the Palestinians but also result in the effective seizure of land, especially around Jerusalem.<sup>97</sup> The wall encircles and isolates Palestinian villages and divides properties and farmland in ways that make them inaccessible to their owners.<sup>98</sup>

The current state of affairs would have been absolutely predictable simply by paying attention to the pronouncements and behavior of a critical subset of Israeli leaders over the last fifty years. Again, they have been the most radical within the Israeli political spectrum. The clear message is that an important faction of the Israeli political spectrum has had a long-term policy of expanding the state at the expense of the Palestinians, dating from the beginnings of the state of Israel. Expansionism was well entrenched in the Labor Party, centered around David Ben-Gurion, and has been even more central to the Likud coalition under the leadership of Menachem Begin and, more recently, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon. The result is that the Palestinians have been left with little hope of obtaining a meaningful state, despite the current "road map to peace" efforts. The next step may well be expulsion, already advocated by many on the right in Israel, although the strategy of oppression is in fact causing some Palestinians to leave voluntarily.<sup>99</sup> Voluntary emigration has long been viewed as a solution by some, including

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (on the more “liberal” end of the Israeli political spectrum), who urged that Israel “create...conditions which would attract natural and voluntary migration of the refugees from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to Jordan.”<sup>100</sup>

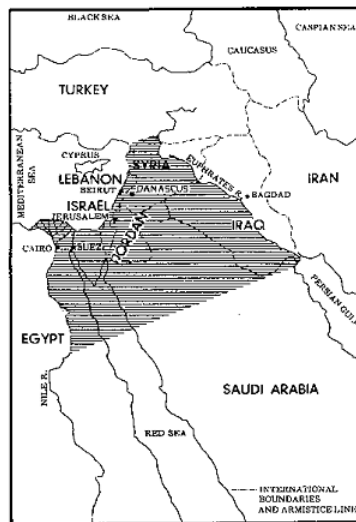
“Transfer,” whether voluntary or involuntary, has long been a fixture of Zionist thought going back to Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion.<sup>101</sup> Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary in 1937: “the compulsory transfer of the Arabs from the valleys of the projected Jewish state . . . we have to stick to this conclusion the same way we grabbed the Balfour Declaration, more than that, the same way we grabbed at Zionism itself.”<sup>102</sup> A prominent recent proponent of expulsion is Rehavam Zeevi, a close associate of Sharon and Israel’s Minister of Tourism as well as a member of the powerful Security Cabinet until his assassination in October, 2001. Zeevi described Palestinians as “lice” and advocated the expulsion of Palestinians from Israeli-controlled areas. Zeevi said Palestinians were living illegally in Israel and “We should get rid of the ones who are not Israeli citizens the same way you get rid of lice. We have to stop this cancer from spreading within us.” There are many examples, beginning no later than the mid-1980s, of leading Israeli politicians referring to the occupied territories on the West Bank as “Judea and Samaria.”<sup>103</sup>

The point is that movements that start out on the extreme of the Jewish political spectrum eventually end up driving the entire process, so that in the end not only American Jews but pro-Israeli non-Jewish politicians end up mouthing the rhetoric that was formerly reserved for extremists within the Jewish community. In 2003, at a time when there are well over one hundred Israeli settlements on the West Bank and Gaza filled with fanatic fundamentalists and armed zealots intent on eradicating the Palestinians, it is revealing that Moshe Sharett, Israeli prime minister in the 1950s, worried that the border settlements were composed of well-armed ex-soldiers—extremists who were intent on expanding the borders of Israel. Immediately after the armistice agreement of 1948 Israeli zealots, sometimes within the army and sometimes in the nascent settler movement, began a long string of provocations of Israel’s neighbors.<sup>104</sup> An operation of the Israeli army (under the leadership of Ariel Sharon) that demolished homes and killed civilians at Qibya in 1953 was part of a broader plan: “The stronger the tensions in the region, the more demoralized the Arab populations and destabilized the Arab regimes, the stronger the pressures for the transfer of the concentrations of Palestinian refugees from places near the border away into the interior of the Arab world—and the better it was for the preparation of the next war.”<sup>105</sup> At times the army engaged in provocative actions without Prime Minister Sharett’s knowledge,<sup>106</sup> as when David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, led a raid in 1955 which resulted in a massacre of Arabs in Gaza. When confronted with his actions by an American Jew, Ben-Gurion “stood up. He looked like an angry prophet out of the Bible and got red in the face. He shouted, ‘I am not going to let anybody, American Jews or anyone else, tell me what I have to do to provide for the security of my people.’”<sup>107</sup>

The war to occupy the West Bank did not take place until 1967, but Sharett describes plans by the Israeli army to occupy the West Bank dating from 1953. Throughout the period from 1948–1967 “some of the major and persistent accusations” by the Israeli right were that the Labor-dominated governments had accepted the partition of Palestine and had not attempted to “eradicate Palestinian boundaries” during the 1948 war.<sup>108</sup> The annexation of East Jerusalem and the settlement of the West Bank began immediately after the 1967 war—exactly what would be

expected on the assumption that this was a war of conquest. Menachem Begin, who accelerated the settlement process when he assumed power in 1977, noted, “In June 1967, we again had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that [Egyptian President] Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him.”<sup>109</sup>

## The Land Promised to Abraham: Genesis 15: 18–20



Given the tendency for Jewish radicals to carry the day, it is worth describing the most radical Zionist fringe as it exists now. It is common among radical Zionists to project a much larger Israel that reflects God’s covenant with Abraham. Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, maintained that the area of the Jewish state stretches: “From the Brook of Egypt to the Euphrates.”<sup>110</sup> This reflects God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15: 18–20 and Joshua 1 3–4: “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.” The flexibility of the ultimate aims of Zionism can also be seen by Ben-Gurion’s comment in 1936 that

The acceptance of partition [of the Palestinian Mandate] does not commit us to renounce Transjordan [i.e., the modern state of Jordan]; one does not demand from anybody to give up his vision. We shall accept a state in the boundaries fixed today. But the boundaries of Zionist aspirations are the concern of the Jewish people and no external factor will be able to limit them.<sup>111</sup>

Ben-Gurion's vision of "the boundaries of Zionist aspirations" included southern Lebanon, southern Syria, all of Jordan, and the Sinai.<sup>112</sup> (After conquering the Sinai in 1956, Ben-Gurion announced to the Knesset that "Our army did not infringe on Egyptian territory.... Our operations were restricted to the Sinai Peninsula alone."<sup>113</sup> Or consider Golda Meir's statement that the borders of Israel "are where Jews live, not where there is a line on the map."<sup>114</sup>

These views are common among the more extreme Zionists today—especially the fundamentalists and the settler movement—notably Gush Emunim—who now set the tone in Israel. A prominent rabbi associated with these movements stated: "We must live in this land even at the price of war. Moreover, even if there is peace, we must instigate wars of liberation in order to conquer [the land]."<sup>115</sup> Indeed, in the opinion of Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, "It is not unreasonable to assume that Gush Emunim, if it possessed the power and control, would use nuclear weapons in warfare to attempt to achieve its purpose."<sup>116</sup> This image of a "Greater Israel" is also much on the minds of activists in the Muslim world. For example, in a 1998 interview Osama bin Laden stated,

[W]e know at least one reason behind the symbolic participation of the Western forces [in Saudi Arabia] and that is to support the Jewish and Zionist plans for expansion of what is called the Great Israel.... Their presence has no meaning save one and that is to offer support to the Jews in Palestine who are in need of their Christian brothers to achieve full control over the Arab Peninsula which they intend to make an important part of the so called Greater Israel.<sup>117</sup>

To recap: A century ago Zionism was a minority movement within Diaspora Judaism, with the dominant assimilationist Jews in the West opposing it at least partly because Zionism raised the old dual loyalty issue, which has been a potent source of anti-Semitism throughout the ages. The vast majority of Jews eventually became Zionists, to the point that now not only are Diaspora Jews Zionists, they are indispensable supporters of the most fanatic elements within Israel. Within Israel, the radicals have also won the day, and the state has evolved to the point where the influence of moderates in the tradition of Moshe Sharett is a distant memory. The fanatics keep pushing the envelope, forcing other Jews to either go along with their agenda or to simply cease being part of the Jewish community. Not long ago it was common to talk to American Jews who would say they support Israel but deplore the settlements. Now such talk among Jews is an anachronism, because support for Israel demands support for the settlements. The only refuge for such talk is the increasingly isolated Jewish critics of Israel, such as Israel Shamir<sup>118</sup> and, to a much lesser extent, Michael Lerner's *Tikkun*.<sup>119</sup> The trajectory of Zionism has soared from its being a minority within a minority to its dominating the U.S. Congress, the executive branch, and the entire U.S. foreign policy apparatus.

And because the Israeli occupation and large-scale settlement of the West Bank unleashed a wave of terrorist-style violence against Israel, Jews perceive Israel as under threat. As with any committed group, Jewish commitment increases in times of perceived threat to the community. The typical response of Diaspora Jews to the recent violence has not been to renounce Jewish identity but to strongly support the Sharon government and rationalize its actions. This has been typical of Jewish history in general. For example, during the 1967 and 1973 wars there were huge upsurges of support for Israel and strengthened Jewish identity among American Jews: Arthur Hertzberg, a prominent Zionist, wrote that "the immediate reaction of American Jewry to

the crisis was far more intense and widespread than anyone could have foreseen. Many Jews would never have believed that grave danger to Israel could dominate their thoughts and emotions to the exclusion of everything else.”<sup>120</sup> The same thing is happening now. The typical response to Israel’s current situation is for Jews to identify even more strongly with Israel and to exclude Jews who criticize Israel or support Palestinian claims in any way.

This “rallying around the flag” in times of crisis fits well with the psychology of ethnocentrism: When under attack, groups become more unified and more conscious of boundaries, and have a greater tendency to form negative stereotypes of the outgroup. This has happened throughout Jewish history.<sup>121</sup>

Several commentators have noted the void on the Jewish left as the conflict with the Palestinians has escalated under the Sharon government. As noted above, surveys in the 1980s routinely found that half of U.S. Jews opposed settlements on the West Bank and favored a Palestinian state.<sup>122</sup> Such sentiments have declined precipitously in the current climate:

At a progressive synagogue on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, Rabbi Rolando Matalo was torn between his longtime support for Palestinian human rights and his support for an Israel under siege. “There is a definite void on the left,” said Matalo.... Many American Jewish leaders say Israel’s current state of emergency—and growing signs of anti-Semitism around the world—have unified the faithful here in a way not seen since the 1967 and 1973 wars.... These feelings shift back and forth, but right now they’re tilting toward tribalism.<sup>123</sup>

Note that the author of this article, Josh Getlin, portrays Israel as being “under siege,” even though Israel is the occupying power and has killed far more Palestinians than the Palestinians have killed Israelis.

“I don’t recall a time in modern history when Jews have felt so vulnerable,” said Rabbi Martin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.... This week, the center will be mailing out 600,000 “call to action” brochures that say “Israel is fighting for her life” and urge American Jews to contact government leaders and media organizations worldwide.... Rabbi Mark Diamond, executive vice president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California, said debate over the West Bank invasion and the attack on the Palestinian Jenin refugee camp is overshadowed by “a strong sense that Israel needs us, that the world Jewry needs us, that this is our wake-up call.” He said he has been overwhelmed in recent weeks by numerous calls from members of synagogues asking what they can do to help or where they can send a check.... “I have American friends who might have been moderate before on the issue of negotiating peace, but now they think: ‘Our whole survival is at stake, so let’s just destroy them all,’” said Victor Nye, a Brooklyn, N.Y., businessman who describes himself as a passionate supporter of Israel.

In this atmosphere, Jews who dissent are seen as traitors, and liberal Jews have a great deal of anxiety that they will be ostracized from the Jewish community for criticizing Israel.<sup>124</sup> This phenomenon is not new. During the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* criticized the Begin government and was inundated with protests from Jews. “Here dissent becomes treason—and treason not to a state or even an ideal (Zionism), but to a people. There is tremendous pressure for conformity, to show a united front and to adopt the

view that what is best for Israel is something only the government there can know.”<sup>125</sup> During the same period, Nat Hentoff noted in the *Village Voice*, “I know staff workers for the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress who agonize about their failure to speak out, even on their own time, against Israeli injustice. They don’t, because they figure they’ll get fired if they do.”<sup>126</sup>

Reflecting the fact that Jews who advocate peace with the Palestinians are on the defensive, funding has dried up for causes associated with criticism of Israel. The following is a note posted on the website of *Tikkun* by its editor, Michael Lerner:

*TIKKUN Magazine* is in trouble—because we have continued to insist on the rights of the Palestinian people to full self-determination. For years we’ve called for an end to the Occupation and dismantling of the Israeli settlements. We’ve called on the Palestinian people to follow the example of Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and Gandhi—and we’ve critiqued terrorism against Israel, and insisted on Israel’s right to security. But we’ve also critiqued Israel’s house demolitions, torture, and grabbing of land. For years, we had much support. But since Intifada II began this past September, many Jews have stopped supporting us—and we’ve lost subscribers and donors. Would you consider helping us out?”<sup>127</sup>

Another sign that Jews who are “soft” on Israel are being pushed out of the Jewish community is an article by Philip Weiss.<sup>128</sup>

The refusal of liberal American Jews to make an independent stand has left the American left helpless. American liberalism has always drawn strength from Jews. They are among the largest contributors to the Democratic Party; they have brought a special perspective to any number of social-justice questions, from the advancement of blacks and women to free speech. They fostered multiculturalism.... The Holocaust continues to be the baseline reference for Jews when thinking about their relationship to the world, and the Palestinians. A couple of months ago, I got an e-mail from a friend of a friend in Israel about the latest bus-bombing. “They’re going to kill us all,” was the headline. (No matter that Israel has one of largest armies in the world, and that many more Palestinians have died than Israelis). Once, when I suggested to a liberal journalist friend that Americans had a right to discuss issues involving Jewish success in the American power structure—just as we examined the WASP culture of the establishment a generation ago—he said, “Well, we know where that conversation ends up: in the ovens of Auschwitz.”

Because of Jewish ethnocentrism and group commitment, stories of Jews being killed are seen as the portending of another Holocaust and the extinction of the Jewish people rather than a response to a savage occupation—a clear instance of moral particularism writ large.

The same thing is happening in Canada where Jews are concerned about declining support by Canadians for Israel. “The past three years have been extraordinarily tough on Jews in Canada and around the world,” said Keith Landy, national president of the Canadian Jewish Congress. “Every Jew has felt under attack in some form.”<sup>129</sup> The response has been increased activism by deeply committed wealthy Jews, including, most famously, Israel Asper, executive chairman of CanWest Global Communications Corp. Asper has used his media empire to promote pro-Likud policies and has punished journalists for any deviation from its strong pro-Israel editorial

policies.<sup>130</sup> The efforts of these activists are aimed at consolidating Jewish organizations behind “hawkish” attitudes on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Older Jewish organizations, such as the Canada-Israel Committee and the Canadian Jewish Congress, would be remodeled or driven out of existence to exclude Jews less committed to these attitudes.

## Conclusion

An important mechanism underlying all this is that of rallying around the flag during times of crisis, a phenomenon that is well understood by social psychologists. Group identification processes are exaggerated in times of resource competition or other perceived sources of threat,<sup>131</sup> a finding that is highly compatible with an evolutionary perspective.<sup>132</sup> External threat tends to reduce internal divisions and maximize perceptions of common interest among ingroup members, as we have seen among American Jews in response to perceived crises in Israel, ranging from the Six-Day War of 1967 to the unending crises of the 1990s and into the new millennium.<sup>133</sup> Jewish populations also respond to threat by developing messianic ideologies, rallying around charismatic leaders, and expelling dissenters from the community. Traditionally this has taken the form of religious fundamentalism, as among the Hasidim, but in the modern world these tendencies have been manifested in various forms of leftist radicalism, Zionism, and other Jewish intellectual and political movements.<sup>134</sup> Throughout Jewish history, this siege mentality has tended to increase conflict between Jews and non-Jews. In the context of the intense ethnic conflict of nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, the conflict was exacerbated by an enormous increase in the Jewish population.

And in all cases, the leaders of this process are the more ethnocentric, committed Jews. They are the ones who donate to Jewish causes, attend rallies, write letters, join and support activist organizations. As J. J. Goldberg, the editor of the *Forward*, notes, Jews who identify themselves as doves feel much less strongly about Israel than those who identify themselves as hawks. “Jewish liberals give to the Sierra Fund. Jewish conservatives are Jewish all the time. That’s the whole ball game. It’s not what six million American Jews feel is best — it’s what 50 Jewish organizations feel is best.”<sup>135</sup> In other words, it’s the most radical, committed elements of the Jewish community that determine the direction of the entire community.

As a European in a society that is rapidly becoming non-European, I can sympathize with Jabotinsky’s envy of the native Slavic peoples he observed in the early twentieth century:

I look at them with envy. I have never known, and probably never will know, this completely organic feeling: so united and singular [is this] sense of a homeland, in which everything flows together, the past and the present, the legend and the hopes, the individual and the historical.<sup>136</sup>

Every nation civilised or primitive, sees its land as its national home, where it wants to stay as the sole landlord forever. Such a nation will never willingly consent to new landlords or even to partnership.<sup>137</sup>

It is the memory of this rapidly disappearing sense of historical rootedness and sense of impending dispossession that are at the root of the malaise experienced by many Europeans, not only in the U.S. but elsewhere. The triumph of Zionism took a mere fifty years from Herzl’s inspiration to the founding of the state of Israel. There is a tendency to overlook or ignore the

powerful ethnocentrism at the heart of Zionism that motivated people like Jabotinsky, especially on the part of the American Jewish community, which has been dedicated throughout the twentieth century to pathologizing and criminalizing the fragile vestiges of ethnocentrism among Europeans.<sup>138</sup>

But the bottom line is that the Zionists were successful. Israel would not have become a state without a great many deeply ethnocentric Jews willing to engage in any means necessary to bring about their dream: a state that would be a vehicle for their ethnic interests. It would not have come about without the most radical among them—people like Jabotinsky, Begin, Shamir, Sharon, and their supporters—a group which now includes the entire organized American Jewish community. The impending dispossession of Europeans will only be avoided if people of their ilk can be found among the political class of Europeans.

The final paper in this series will discuss neo-conservatism as a Jewish intellectual and political movement. A main point of that paper will be that Jewish neo-conservatives are the current radicals who are charting the direction of the entire Jewish community.

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## **Endnotes**

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- [2.](#) Podhoretz 2002.
- [3.](#) Sacks 1993, ix–x.
- [4.](#) 1 Maccabees 1:11–15; <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/011>
- [5.](#) Jubilees 32:18–19.
- [6.](#) MacDonald 1994/2002, Ch. 3.
- [7.](#) Meyer, 1988, 388.
- [8.](#) MacDonald 1994/2002, Ch. 5.
- [9.](#) See MacDonald 1998/2004, preface to the paperback edition.
- [10.](#) Alderman 1992, 112; Frankel 1981, 103; Lindemann 1991, 28–29, 133–135.
- [11.](#) E.g., For example, Scholem 1971; MacDonald 1994/2002, Ch. 3.
- [12.](#) Lewis 1984, 164.
- [13.](#) Aschheim 1982.
- [14.](#) MacDonald 1998/2002, especially Ch. 3.
- [15.](#) MacDonald 1997, 2002.
- [16.](#) See MacDonald (1998/2002), 2003.
- [17.](#) Bookman 1997; Teitelbaum & Winter 1997; Parsons, 1998; MacDonald, 2000.
- [18.](#) Bookman 1997, 89.
- [19.](#) Bookman 1997; MacDonald 2000.
- [20.](#) Vital 1975, 28.
- [21.](#) The following relies on Mahler 1985.

- [22.](#) Vital 1975, 46.
- [23.](#) Mahler 1985, 16.
- [24.](#) Mahler 1985, 17.
- [25.](#) Mahler 1985, 17.
- [26.](#) MacDonald 2003; Shahak & Mezvinsky 1999, 58–60.
- [27.](#) MacDonald 1998/2002.
- [28.](#) Ruppin 1971, 69.
- [29.](#) In Mahler 1985, 8.
- [30.](#) In Mahler 1985, 249.
- [31.](#) Mahler 1985, 251.
- [32.](#) MacDonald 1998/2002.
- [33.](#) Shahak & Mezvinsky 1999, 37.
- [34.](#) In Mahler 1985, 21.
- [35.](#) In Mahler 1985, 21.
- [36.](#) See summary in MacDonald 1998/2004.
- [37.](#) Lindemann 1991, 17.
- [38.](#) Vital 1975, 65ff.
- [39.](#) Vital 1975, 314.
- [40.](#) See Frankel 1981.
- [41.](#) Alderman 1983, 47ff; MacDonald 1998/2002, Ch. 3.
- [42.](#) Alderman 1983, 60; MacDonald 1998/2004, Ch. 8.
- [43.](#) MacDonald 1998/2002, Ch. 3; Vital 1975, 313.
- [44.](#) Vital 1975, 117.

- [45.](#) Kornberg 1993, 183; inner quote from Herzl's diary.
- [46.](#) Niewyk 1980, 94.
- [47.](#) In Frommer 1978, 118.
- [48.](#) In Lilienthal 1953, 165.
- [49.](#) Endelman 1991, 196.
- [50.](#) Herzl 1970, 76.
- [51.](#) In Neusner 1987, 203.
- [52.](#) Efron 1994; Endelman 1991, 196.
- [53.](#) Efron 1994, 136.
- [54.](#) Efron 1994, 155.
- [55.](#) Gilman 1993, 109; Nicosia 1985, 18.
- [56.](#) See Efron 1994, 158.
- [57.](#) Norden, 1995.
- [58.](#) In Niewyk 1980, 129–130
- [59.](#) Prinz 1934; in Shahak 1994, 71–72; italics in text.
- [60.](#) Nicosia 1985, 19.
- [61.](#) In Dawidowicz 1976, 150–152.
- [62.](#) Salter 2002b.
- [63.](#) Laqueur 1972; Vital 1975.
- [64.](#) Frommer 1978; Alderman 1983
- [65.](#) Laqueur 1972, 196; see also John & Hadawi 1970a, 80.
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- [68.](#) Hitler 1943, 56.
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- [74.](#) Alderman 1983, 129.
- [75.](#) In Alderman 1983, 151.
- [76.](#) Goldman 1978, 31; Lilienthal 1978, 50, 61; Sachar 1992, 580.
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- [82.](#) Wheatcroft 1996, 226.
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- [103.](#) Aruri 1986
- [104.](#) Chomsky 1999, 101.
- [105.](#) Rokach 1986.
- [106.](#) Wheatcroft 1996, 249.
- [107.](#) In Findley 1989, 277.
- [108.](#) Shavit 1988, 243.
- [109.](#) Chomsky 1999, 100; see also <http://www.cactus48.com/truth.html>.
- [110.](#) Herzl 1960, 711.
- [111.](#) Chomsky 1999, 161; see also <http://www.cactus48.com/truth.html>.

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- [122.](#) Findley 1989, 265.
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