

The History of Zionism

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Introduction

One of the most important aspects of modern Jewish life in Europe since the mid-nineteenth century was the development of a variety of Jewish national movements such as Zionists, Bundists and Autonomists that offered competing ideologies and solutions to the issues of Jewish nationhood and individual nationality as well as to problems posed by modernity. Among these problems was the breakdown of the parochial molds of Jewish life and the fragmentation of the traditional Jewish community. This article focuses on [Zionism](#), the most radical of all modern Jewish national movements.

Zionism's revolutionary character stemmed from its emphasis on the need to construct a Jewish national life in response to modernity and to do so only in *Eretz Israel* — the Land of Israel. Additionally, Zionists were the first to believe that policies on the major issues confronting Jewry should be subject to free and open debate. Furthermore, due to the catastrophic condition of East European Jewry, they were the first to assert that the solution to the "[Jewish Problem](#)" hinged on migration to a homeland (Vital, 1998, p. 208-9).

Zionism provides a classic example of the role of nationalism in the reconstruction of nations. According to Smith (2004), nationalism relies on an historical, primordial identity connected with religion, history and territory. As will be demonstrated here, the meaning behind Jewish history, language, tradition and folklore is of central concern to Zionism and the construction of a Jewish identity. Zionism can also be seen in Anderson's (1983) argument that nationalism refers to a dynamic process of remembering and forgetting fundamental concepts of collective identities. A classic example in the case of Zionist thought is the development of concepts such as the negation of exile (*shlilat hagalut*), which are based on the denial of a collective memory.

The article begins by delineating the trigger and the cause for the emergence of Zionism in the nineteenth-century, and then goes on to describe the ideology and solution proposed by each Zionist stream until the establishment of the State of Israel.

The Trigger and the Cause

The most common explanation for the emergence of Zionism is the spread of [anti-Semitism](#). Interestingly, no Zionist movement emerged as a result of anti-Semitic events during the eighteenth century or at any earlier period. The rise of the Zionist Movement following the escalation of anti-Semitism at the end of the nineteenth century implies, therefore, that anti-Semitic events could have been a trigger to the emergence of Zionism but not a cause. Any analysis that makes a cause and effect argument regarding Zionism should look for a factor that operates continually on a given effect for a considerable period of time. In the case of Zionism, this factor was the breakdown of traditional Jewish life and the attempts by Jews to reconstruct their life within European nation states (Eisenstadt, 1992).

During the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century the number of Jews in the world numbered approximately two and a half million; with almost 90% of them living in Europe (Laqueur, 1972). Underlying the Jewish value system and self-consciousness as a group throughout history was the bond between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. This was manifested in the dream of the “End of Days” in which a Jewish leader will emerge to gather Jews from all over the world, bring them to Jerusalem and rebuild the [Temple](#). Traditional Jews prayed three times a day for the deliverance that would transform the world and transport them to Jerusalem. Meanwhile, there remained only a small Jewish community in the Land of Israel and a trickling stream of Jews coming to be buried in the Holy Land (Avineri, 1981). However powerful this bond between Jews and the land may have been for eighteen centuries, it did not lead to any real collective action by Jews, despite the discrimination they faced at the hands of Christians and Muslims.

The Jewish population was routinely persecuted, massacred, expelled, forcibly converted, excluded from public service positions and threatened with physical, spiritual and cultural annihilation. The reasons for these persecutions were diverse and changed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the past, they had been characterized and motivated by sheer hatred and religious zeal. Following the Enlightenment of the nineteenth century, the French Revolution and the [Emancipation](#) that granted full citizenship to Jews in Europe, the reasons for Jewish persecution began to revolve around complaints concerning the Jews’ incomplete assimilation and the inability of modern societies to fully incorporate them. Whatever the reasons for Jewish hatred, most Jews remained in exile, some in more moderate countries, such as the United States, Australia, Canada, South Africa and South American countries while others remained in Europe. Until the nineteenth century, Jews who continued to live in Europe existed at the margins of the society and earned their living as small traders or middlemen between the cities and the villages.

In contrast, the nineteenth century was “the best century Jews have ever experienced, collectively and individually, since the destruction of the Temple” (Avineri, 1981, p. 5). Following the French Revolution, a new approach toward the Jews began to prevail with the spread of the ideas of the [Enlightenment](#). Ghettos were opened, equal individual rights were granted and the occupational range was gradually widened with Jews acquiring a strong position in the professions of wholesale and retail trade (Halpern and Reinharz, 1998). Jewish life began shifting from the periphery to the main metropolises of Europe and a visible Jewish presence was recorded in universities as well as in science and culture. This new and more humane approach toward the Jews led to a process of social and cultural assimilation in European countries.

The assimilation process went beyond the Jews’ speaking and writing in the language of the country in which they resided or the attempt to blend in with their neighbors. It touched at the heart of the prevailing traditional ways of life that had developed in the Middle Ages. Secularization became a cornerstone in the drive of Jews to be part of a society based on equality before the law, separation of church and state and the national loyalty of citizens. Many Jews drifted away from Judaism, some even accepting Christianity in its stead. The decline in religious beliefs had weakened the ties between the European Jewish communities and as more Jews became increasingly patriotic toward what they thought to be secure homelands, close links between individual Jewish communities became nearly impossible (Eisenstadt, 1992).

The derived tension between the personal life of a Jew and the public life amongst secular society was the main challenge facing European Jewry. Zionism was a reaction to the attempts of Jews to bridge this gap. The aforementioned tension was exacerbated by the rise of anti-Semitism as a strong political force following the major financial crisis of the late nineteenth century. Anti-Semitism was felt by those living in Europe who had to cope with pogroms in Russia (1881-82), riots in Kishinev (1903), the murder of Jews throughout western and southern Russia (1905), accusations of betrayal (the Dreyfus Affair in France), the emergence of racist approaches in France and Germany and official anti-Semitic policies in Russia and other Eastern European countries. As a result of the long-term process through which Jews attempted to resolve the tension between their personal and public lives in a secular society wrought with anti-Semitism, the Zionist Movement emerged on the world scene.

The Emergence of Zionist Ideology

The main premise of Zionist ideology was that the solution for a viable Jewish communal existence in modern times could be implemented only in Eretz Israel. Eretz Israel, the land in which the identity of the Jewish people had originally formed,

constituted a continuous component within the Jewish collective consciousness. It was the only place in which a Jewish collective entity and environment could be reconstructed, and the only place in which the Jews could reenter history and become a productive, normal and unified community, responsible for its own destiny.

Rabbi Yehudah Shlomo Alkalay (1798-1878) and Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874) appeared in the mid-nineteenth century and were among the first proponents of Zionism to argue that Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel was a preparatory stage for the coming of the Messiah. A more modern utopian version of Zionism — based on a socialist perspective and framed in terms of moral necessity — was developed by Moses Hess (1812-1875). In his *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862), Hess argued that Jews were not a religious group but rather a separate nation characterized by a unique religion whose universal significance should be recognized. The attempts of religious reformers to mold Jewish ceremonies into a version of Christianity left only the skeleton of a once magnificent phenomenon in world history. The response, according to Hess, should be a political organization of Jews as well as the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine that would act as a spiritual center and a base for political action, embodying socialist principles within its institutions.

The Coalescence of the Jewish National Movement

The Jewish national movement appeared on the stage of history in the 1870s with the emergence of associations for the promotion of immigration of Jews to Palestine — [Hovevei Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) — in a number of Russian cities and later spreading to Poland. The movement adopted three central goals that it saw necessary for a healthy nation and society: Auto-emancipation (i.e., self-action by an organized national body); productivity (i.e., the restructuring of the historical professions of Jews and the utilization of new sources of livelihood such as agriculture) and some measure of home-rule (Ettinger and Bartal, 1996). The attempt to achieve the first two objectives was only partially successful. The goals were undertaken by the most active of the aforementioned associations, *Bilu* (*Beit Yaakov Lechu ve Nelcha* — “Go Forth the House of Jacob”), whose members had immigrated to Palestine and started the first wave of immigration known as the First Aliyah. As very few Jews were willing to translate their nationalistic consciousness into the concrete collective action of emigration, the movement soon receded to the margin of Jewish society in Eastern Europe. The settlement activity in Palestine, however, which was undertaken with the help of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, had created an economic and national infrastructure upon which further immigration waves could build. The third goal, to achieve home-rule, was achieved following the appearance of [Theodor Herzl](#) and the convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, at which the World Zionist Organization (WZO) was established. This organization replaced [Baron de](#)

[Rothschild](#) as the main funder of settlement activities in Palestine (Ettinger and Bartal, 1996).

Streams of Zionism

Within the new emerging Zionist movement there were many different streams competing for the attention of the Jewish public. Each stream contributed its own ideology regarding the future of the Zionist movement, how it should be built, appropriate goals it should set and the order it should attempt to accomplish these goals. A breakdown of these different ideological views and the main historical figures that played active roles in promoting them is described below.

Practical Zionism

The idea that Palestine was essential to Zionism was not shared by all Jews. At the time of the First Aliyah, only a few agricultural settlements had been established in Argentina by Baron de Hirsch and the Jewish Colonization Association. One of the founders of the Lovers of Zion, Leon Pinsker (1821-1891), articulated the view of practical Zionists in his book *Auto-Emancipation* (1882). Pinsker argued that the Jewish national goal need not be Eretz Israel but rather a land large enough to include Jews who are deprived of their political, economic and social rights. Only later did Practical Zionists shift their stance and begin stressing settlement in Palestine. They refused, however, to embark upon major political offensives aimed at gaining a political commitment from the leading world powers in support of the Jewish national home. In the end, the core idea of Practical Zionism was the creation of a gradual process through which Jews, via immigration and settlement, would gain a large enough foothold in Palestine that world powers would have no choice but to grant them approval to establish a Jewish national home (Berlin, 1996).

Political Zionism

The Zionist movement developed into a politically dynamic force with the meteoric emergence of Theodor Herzl and the convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. In the beginning of his career, Herzl held the conventional view of the Europeanized Jewish intellectuals of the late nineteenth century that the process of assimilation would lead to the full integration of Jews within their home societies. This view, however, was soon revised once he encountered anti-Semitism following the publication of Eugen Dühring's book on the "Jewish Problem" and the [Dreyfus trial](#) in 1894, in which a Jewish captain within the French General Staff was falsely accused of spying for Germany and sentenced to life in prison. Dreyfus was exonerated 12 years after he was first charged, but it was the anti-Semitic environment surrounding his original trial that provoked Herzl, who was covering the event as a

journalist, to realize that assimilation had failed and that it was futile to combat anti-Semitism in Europe. At that moment, the “Jewish Question” was transformed from a social and religious problem to a national one (Friedman, 2004). Herzl subsequently became the founder and leader of the Political Zionists.

Herzl’s ideology, which he explicated in plays, such as *The New Ghetto* (1897), pamphlets and books (e.g., *The Jewish State, 1896*; *Altneuland, 1902*), was based on the revolutionary premise that Jews are a nation like all other nations which is why a sovereign state was a solution to their problem (Avineri, 1981). Herzl believed the “Jewish Question” should be solved politically, by European nations granting sovereignty over a portion of land for the Jews. This solution, he argued, satisfied the interests of Zionists and anti-Semites alike for the Jews to live separately. A Jewish state was therefore perceived by Herzl as a worldwide necessity and responsibility. The great powers, he maintained, should act together to find a “corner” for Jewish masses to emigrate to and live in peace.

Herzl was a man of action and a great diplomat, shifting his focus from one capital to another in response to political opportunities. He first turned to several prominent Jewish figures, including Baron de Hirsch (the founder of Jewish settlements in Argentina), the Chief Rabbi of Vienna and the Rothschild family, in the hope that they would be receptive to his ideas. Following these failed attempts, he later founded *Die Welt*, the Zionist Movement's weekly newspaper, the financial arm of the movement known as the Jewish Colonial Trust, and, in August 1897, the Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. In the diplomatic arena, Herzl negotiated with Kaiser Wilhelm, the Sultan of Turkey, the King of Italy, Pope Pius X, the Russian Minister of the Interior and many other gentile leaders. It was the first time in history that a Jewish national program was placed on the international political agenda (Avineri, 2007). In these meetings, Herzl presented the fundamental ideas of Zionism and the necessity to apply a *Realpolitik* view to constructively solve the “Jewish Problem.”

Perhaps Herzl’s most controversial move was his support of the British proposal in 1903 for a Jewish settlement in Uganda under the British flag. Herzl justified his move on the grounds of political pragmatism by claiming it politically unwise to reject an offer made by a great power that recognized the Zionist movement. Furthermore, the acceptance of the British offer would bring about the realization of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine nearer as the great powers began to comprehend the futility of this idea.

Following the Kishinev pogroms of 1903, Herzl foresaw further persecutions. In fact, he predicted that a Jewish catastrophe was imminent — a prediction that was tragically realized during the Second World War. Herzl sought, therefore, a “temporary haven” in Uganda as an emergency measure and not as a rejection of a

territorial base in Eretz Israel. His wish, however, never came to fruition. Although he won support at the sixth Zionist Congress to dispatch an investigation commission to East Africa, Russian Zionists, led by Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), lined up against him. The blow to Herzl's prestige, as well as the attempted murder of Max Nordau (co-founder of the WZO along with Herzl), left Herzl profoundly depressed. A year later, the British government withdrew its offer. Herzl's health deteriorated considerably during 1903, and he died the following year.

After Herzl's death, there was no hope for a breakthrough for the Zionist movement until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which at that time included Palestine. The leadership of the Zionist movement, therefore, moved from the hands of those who sought a political solution to those who supported a more practical orientation in the form of the steady immigration of Jews to Palestine and the development of the infrastructure for a Jewish homeland.

Spiritual and Cultural Zionism

The history of Zionism before the First World War is reflected in the multitude of themes that ran across the Zionist Movement, such as the secular, political and social emphases on national reconstruction and renaissance, and the capacity of Jews to transform themselves into autonomous agents of history, as well as Jewish solidarity. These themes were interwoven into the principle of *shlilat ha'galut* and were intended to be molded, once a Jewish nation in Eretz Israel was established, into a new Jewish collective identity (Eisenstadt, 1992). This utopia is found in the literary masterpieces of [Ahad Ha'Am](#), who was Herzl's ideological opponent.

Ahad Ha'Am was a prolific Zionist writer and a political actor. He contributed more than any writer to the creation of modern Hebrew prose and, at the same time, supported the Lovers of Zion, attended the first Zionist congress and was elected as a member of the Odessa central committee which was the center of the Lovers of Zion organization. Later, Ahad Ha'Am became Chaim Weizmann's confidant during the negotiations over the Balfour Declaration. He attempted to influence the course of Zionism by emphasizing that Zionism should be a cultural movement, not just a political force. It should attempt to solidify the spiritual content of Jewish existence and reconstitute Jewish national culture so that, upon the acquisition of a state, Jews would continue to be guided by their historic quest for spiritual greatness.

Ahad Ha'Am presciently realized the establishment of a Jewish state would cause only a small portion of the Jewish people to immigrate to Israel. This implied that the Diaspora would continue to house the majority of the Jewish population. Since a newly established Jewish state would not solve the economic problems of Jews who

continued to reside abroad, its responsibility toward their vitality would exist through spiritual and cultural spheres.

Spiritual and Cultural Zionism was meant to offer spiritual Jewish values to both the individual Jew in Western Europe who was unable to integrate into the liberal culture of his home country and the East European Jew unable to identify with the nationalist culture of his home country. Not surprisingly, after the publication of Herzl's *Altneuland*, Ahad Ha'Am published a scathing critique of Herzl's vision of the Jewish state because it ignored the spiritual dimension. In addition, Ahad Ha'Am was among the first writers to emphasize the necessity of confronting the Arab problem in Palestine, first and foremost, by changing the attitudes of the first settlers toward the Arab population. He also warned of the potential emergence of an Arab Palestinian national movement that would eventually confront the Zionist movement.

Religious Zionism

The roots of Religious Zionism can be traced back to the establishment of the Lovers of Zion. Prominent rabbis recognized the need to take part in the national reawakening process and influence the reconstruction of a new Jewish identity. Most important, however, was their decision to remain members of the Lovers of Zion, side by side with secular leaders – a move that resulted in a crucial turn in the history of Religious Zionism. Later, differences of opinions between Shmuel Mohilever (1824-1898), who established the Warsaw section of Lovers of Zion, and the largely secular main office of the movement, led to the establishment of the religious Zionist party known as the Mizrahi (an abbreviation of *merkaz ruhani* meaning “spiritual center”) between 1902 and 1905.

The establishment of the Mizrahi party early in the history of the Zionist Movement signified the entry of the religious and rabbinic world into the realm of institutionalized politics. In contrast to the Lovers of Zion, wherein secular and religious members worked side by side, the establishment of Mizrahi signaled the emergence of a religious-political body within a secular movement. The founder of Mizrahi, Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines (1839-1915), defined boundaries between the domains of legitimate Zionist activity performed by flesh and blood in the present and that of the messianic hope, which was ideal and distant. This separation enabled him to envisage complete Jewish national redemption as coming only after the reforming of humanity as a whole, and especially the elimination of human corruption (Ravitzky 1993, p. 33). Until redemption, the proper path to follow was Herzlian Zionism. This decision left two options for the Mizrahi movement to choose from: (1) To act as a watchdog within the larger Zionist movement or (2) to engage in activities related to the physical and cultural infrastructure in Eretz Israel; namely Jewish settlement and the religious education of Zionist society (Laqueur, 1972, p. 482). Once the advocates

of the latter option won, there was a need to formulate the ideological justification for this constructive attitude. This was done by translating national content and spirit into traditional religious terms.

The resulting ideology of these Religious Zionists was based on the claim that a Jewish nation without adherence to religion is a body without a soul; that religion and nation constitute an indissoluble unity. The Jewish religion is national in character and the national reawakening of the Jews is a fulfillment of God's will. Furthermore, there exists a shared interest by both secular and religious Jews in defending their national and religious existence (Schwartz, 2003). This joint interest was instrumental to Zionism and the Jewish state. A classic example is the decision that Hebrew would be the language of both spiritual and daily life. In this decision, the basic aim of Mizrahi was apparent: The assurance that the Zionist movement and institutions would have religion at their core. Despite valiant attempts, this goal never materialized. The religious Zionists were always a minority within the Zionist Movement, even when combined with the radical religious Zionists, the disciples of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), who regarded the history of Zionism as a messianic process and claimed that the success of Zionism was guaranteed in advance despite temporary setbacks.

Labor Zionism

Although there was no mention of socialism during the [first Zionist Congress](#), socialist Zionist parties had become an integral part of the movement within a few years of the first meeting. Three decades later, this ideological stream emerged as the strongest political force within the Zionist movement and the main engine in the construction of the State of Israel. One year after the first Zionist Congress, Nahman Sirkin (1867-1924) established the *Bund*, the largest Jewish socialist organization. Contrary to Pinsker's view of anti-Semitism as being derived from an abstract fear of Jews, Sirkin's explanation was based on the emergence of populist socio-economic anti-Semitism.

The starting point of Sirkin's explanation was the importance of the religious dimension as the main dividing line between Jews and non-Jews. Christians despised the non-conformist character of the Jewish minority and its rejection of any integration within the native culture. Subsequently, their relationships with Jews mutated from passive to physical hatred by means of persecution and coercion. The French revolution and its subsequent religious emancipation led to the integration of Jews into social, economic and political life. Nevertheless, this integration did not derive from the power of Jews, but rather from the victory of the principles of liberty and self-determination (Avineri, 1981, p. 128). The problem was that this victory contradicted the inner conviction of large segments of society. As Jews rapidly

acquired a dominant position in the modern economic and commercial life of bourgeois society, a connection between capitalism and Judaism was created. The emergence of economic and financial crises – an integral part of the capitalist system – contributed to a new kind of populist anti-Semitism that blamed the Jews for the society's economic and financial malaise. Furthermore, social classes whose power appeared to be declining (i.e., the lower middle and peasant classes) demonstrated a more intense brand of anti-Semitism than the working class. Sirkin's conclusion was stark: As long as power was not equally dispersed among segments of society, and as long as Jews were perceived weak, anti-Semitism would continue to exist.

An additional premise of Sirkin's approach was related to the justification of the fusion of socialism with Zionism. According to Sirkin, capitalism evolved through a historical process during which no one was asked whether he wishes to live in a socially and economically unequal society. In contrast, the Jewish national movement provided the opportunity to reach a consensus over a socialist vision before the establishment of a Jewish state. An agreed-upon attempt to implement a socialist vision, combined with the necessity for social planning of the Jewish settlements in Palestine, as well as the establishment of an economic regime to cater to the masses of the Jewish proletariat expected to immigrate to Palestine, required the fusion of socialism with Zionism.

This challenge faced by socialist Zionism was also justified on the basis of Marxist methods of reasoning, formulated by Ber Borochov (1881-1917), and was very popular among young Russian Jewish intellectuals. Borochov's argument revolved around the fact that many socially oppressed segments of society were also oppressed because of their nationality. Class and national emancipation were, therefore, mutually linked to each other rather than stand-alone processes. The fusion of Jewish nationalism with orthodox Marxist doctrine emphasized the futility of assimilation attempts by the Jewish proletariat, the central social class of Zionism in the Diaspora, and the necessity, therefore, of settling Palestine. On these grounds, Sirkin and Borochov founded, in 1906, the first Labor Zionist Party called *Poalei Zion* (the Workers of Zion). Among its members was [David Ben-Gurion](#) (1886-1973), the first Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

Around this period, Zionist leaders in Palestine came to realize that mere ideas were not a substitute for political power. Aharon David Gordon (1856-1922) emphasized the need for an effective political organization to defeat the capitalist ethos of the First Aliyah to Palestine. This organization would establish collectives, promote workers' self-management, and support the formalization of Hebrew education (Avishai, 2002).

In 1919, *Achdut Ha'Avoda* (the Unity of Labor) was established as a merger of *Poalei Zion*, then led by Ben-Gurion, and non-political workers, led by Berl Katzenelson

(1887-1944). *Achdut Ha'Avoda* eventually became the core of the Mapai political party. Mapai absorbed the religious Zionists and became the dominant political force in the Zionist Movement and then became the most influential part in the State of Israel from 1948 until 1977.

In 1920, Labor Zionists, which included all Jewish workers parties in the pre-state Jewish community of Israel (Yishuv), established the *Histadrut* (the General Federation of Hebrew Workers). The Histadrut called strikes, provided services, negotiated workers' contracts and working conditions, settled land along collective lines, established vocational training programs, supported Hebrew education and provided for security through participation in the *Haganah*, the unified defense organization (Avishai, 2002).

Zionist Revisionism

The main opposition to Labor Zionism came from Zionist Revisionism. A key player in this movement was [Ze'ev \(Vladimir\) Jabotinsky](#), whose status and image as a hero during his lifetime were unparalleled in any other Zionist organization (Shavit, 1988). Jabotinsky became an active Zionist in 1903 when he helped to organize a Jewish self-defense corps in Odessa, Russia. Unlike many currents of Labor Zionism, Jabotinsky never had faith in the vision of the “New World” brought about by the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. He regarded the Revolution as the biggest threat to the Jewish minority because of the powerful degree of anti-Semitism inherent in East European nationalism. As new nation states in Eastern Europe emerged, two organizations – *Betar* (Berit Trumpeldor youth organization, established 1924-1927) and *Berit Ha-Zohar* (the Union of Zionist Revisionists political party, founded in Paris in 1925) – gained momentum. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, *Berit Ha-Zohar* grew into a mass movement with an ideology that revolved around the claim that Zionism must consist only of a bold, Herzlian political and military struggle for a state.

Jabotinsky believed that Revisionism would never succeed in implementing an independent policy as long as it remained subject to the constraints imposed on its members by the Zionist Organization (Shavit, 1988, p. 58). This divergence led, in 1925, to the establishment of the Revisionist Zionist Organization within the Zionist Movement and, in 1935, led to its withdrawal from the Zionist movement and the creation of the New Zionist Organization (*Ha'Zach*). Confronted with the influences of the Arab riots of 1929, the Arab revolt during the years 1936-1939, the promulgation of the White Paper of 1939 and Great Britain's policies toward the Yishuv during World War II and the [Holocaust](#), Jabotinsky developed a political ideology based upon two pillars: An insistence on maintaining the territorial integrity of Eretz Israel (i.e., establish a state in all of the historic homeland) and the

determination to establish a sovereign state in Eretz Israel by political and military means.

Jabotinsky's insistence on using force to accomplish the movement's goals led him to participate in establishing the First Zion Mule Corps, become active in the formation of a Jewish Regiment in the British Army, and demand a permanent Jewish armed force under British guidance. As Arab violence escalated, and the British reacted by placing greater restrictions on the Zionists, Jabotinsky concluded that the only way to establish a Jewish state was to create a regular Jewish military force that would force out the British and defeat the Arabs. Toward that end, the National Military Organization (*Irgun Zeva'i Le'umi* or IZL) was established. In the face of Arab terrorism, this organization initiated retaliatory actions, facilitated illegal Jewish immigration into Palestine during the 1930s and directed actions against the British until September 1948 when the IZL was dissolved and its members integrated into the Israel Defense Forces.

The Success of Zionism

The Zionist Movement insisted that the reconstruction of the Jewish collective identity in response to the challenge of modernity was possible only through the creation of a Jewish state in Eretz Israel. This vision materialized following the Balfour Declaration, a sweeping commitment from Great Britain to [Chaim Weizmann](#) made on November 2, 1917. The Declaration endorsed the aim of the first Zionist Congress to secure a "national home" for Jews in Palestine. This endorsement, given while Palestine was under the Ottoman Empire, meant that Weizmann had, in fact, secured the political charter for Zionism that Herzl had failed to obtain. The Balfour Declaration was later incorporated into the Mandate for Palestine granted to Great Britain by the Council of the League of Nations on July 24, 1922. The Mandate agreement required Britain to prepare the necessary conditions to secure the establishment of a Jewish national home. Judaism was thus recognized, for the first time by major world powers, as a nationality and Zionism was seen as its legitimate expression.

At the end of World War II, when the magnitude of the Holocaust became clear, the shock it created amongst world powers led to the emergence of a dominant view that the Jewish Problem must finally be solved. In September 1947, representatives to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) made far-reaching recommendations for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. A similar proposal for dividing the country between Jews and Arabs was suggested in the 1937 [Peel Commission](#) Report. In both cases, only the Zionist leadership accepted this idea, whereas the Palestinian leadership historically rejected all proposals for partition.

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly ratified the UNSCOP recommendation and, on May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion announced the founding of the State of Israel.

The pioneering faction of Labor Zionism gradually exited the stage of Jewish history while Mapai, the larger faction of [Labor Zionism](#), became the ruling party in the newly established state. The creation of the Law of Return (1950) by the Mapai-led government affected the status and condition of Jews worldwide by allowing them to acquire citizenship in Israel. Jews could now choose whether to stay in their present countries or immigrate to Israel. The mass immigration that ensued upon the establishment of the State of Israel emphasized the success of the Zionist movement. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, Zionism still remains Israel's official ideology. The question now is what Zionism means in view of this success.

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Ahad Ha'am was the pseudonym of Asher Ginsburg, 1856-1927. The meaning of the name is "One of the People."