

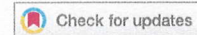
# **Zionism - The Integral Component of Jewish Identity That Jews are Historically Pressured to Shed**

**By Alyza D. Lewin**

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## Zionism - The integral component of Jewish identity that Jews are historically pressured to shed

Alyza D. Lewin

Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, Washington, DC

### ABSTRACT

The yearning and determination of Jews to re-establish their Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel is "Zionism" – an integral component of Jewish identity. It is more than the political movement launched in the 1800's. The deep religious, ancestral, and ethnic connection of Jews to the Land of Israel is as old as Abraham and the Bible. Jewish messianic movements brought Jews to Israel between the 13th and 19th centuries, proving the Jews' historic sense of peoplehood and their belief in the "ingathering of the exiles." Only in the 18th century did Jews first shed this element of Jewish identity because European governments demanded this surrender in exchange for citizenship. Why are Jews demonised and marginalised today when they express support for Israel? It is a modern manifestation of the antisemitic pressure on Jews to shed the national and ethnic part of their Jewish identity. Discrimination against anyone who observes the Jewish Sabbath, wears a *kippah*, or maintains a kosher diet is universally recognised as antisemitism. It is equally antisemitic to marginalise or harass Jews for expressing the Zionist component of their Jewish identity. Isolating and dehumanising Zionists is akin to branding Jews with a virtual "yellow Star of David." To ensure that history does not repeat itself, we must forcefully condemn this modern mode of antisemitism.

**KEYWORDS** Israel; Zionism; antisemitism; anti-Zionism; Aliya; Judaism; Jewish emancipation; Jewish messianism; Jewish identity; Jewish self-determination; Theodore Herzl; International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA); Land of Israel

Jews today are demonised and excluded (particularly from progressive circles) when they express support for the Jewish nation-state of Israel. This phenomenon is the modern incarnation of the age-old antisemitic pressure placed on Jews to shed the national and ethnic component of their Jewish identity. Zionism – the yearning and desire of Jews to re-establish their Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel – is an integral part of Jews' shared ancestry and ethnicity. Zionism as the *political* movement of the Jewish People may have originated in the 19th century, but the desire and

**CONTACT** Alyza D. Lewin ✉ [alewin@brandeiscenter.com](mailto:alewin@brandeiscenter.com) 📍 Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, 1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 1025, Washington, DC 20006, USA

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determination of Jews to return to their ancestral homeland in Israel is thousands of years old, as old as Abraham and the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

This determination to return to Zion is the glue that has kept Jews connected for millenia. For centuries Jews have not only prayed facing Jerusalem, they have prayed to *return* to Jerusalem. '*L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim*' 'Next Year in Jerusalem' is heard each year at the Passover Seder and again at the conclusion of Yom Kippur. Jewish prayer contains a daily explicit appeal for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and for God to 'bring us back in peace from the four quarters of the earth and lead us upright to our land.' At a Jewish wedding ceremony, it is customary to break a glass in memory of Jerusalem and swear not to 'forget thee O Jerusalem . . .'<sup>2</sup> Even in times of great joy, the Jews recall the destruction of Jerusalem and express the desire to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

Judaism and the Land of Israel are completely intertwined. Over half of the 613 commandments in the Pentateuch are connected to the Land of Israel and can only be fulfilled in the Land of Israel.<sup>3</sup> These commandments relate not only to agriculture in Israel but also to the life of the Nation of Israel in the land. They pertain to topics as varied as the Jewish court system (the *Sanhedrin*), Jewish kings, the laws of war, and activities in the Jewish Temple.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, over 70 percent of the Talmud relates to Jewish laws that are connected to the Land of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Judaism as described in the Pentateuch and the Talmud assumes Jewish self-determination and envisions a Jewish nation state, complete with a Jewish government, army, court system, welfare and tax structure.<sup>6</sup>

Zionism is as integral a part of Jewish identity as observing the Jewish Sabbath or adhering to kosher dietary rules. Not all Jews observe *Shabbat* or eat only kosher food. Those Jews who *do*, express their *Shabbat* and *kashrut* observance in a myriad of ways. But all agree that those who observe the Jewish Sabbath and kosher dietary restrictions do so as an expression of their Judaism. Discriminating against Jewish Sabbath observers because they observe *Shabbat* or the Jewish holidays is universally recognised as antisemitism. Similarly, not all Jews are Zionists, and those who *are*, express their Zionism in multiple forms. For Zionist Jews, however, identifying with and expressing support for the Jewish homeland is an expression of their Judaism. Harassing, marginalising or discriminating against Jews for expressing this Zionist component of their Jewish identity is similarly antisemitic.

The experience of the Ethiopian Jews demonstrates how inherent Zionism is to Judaism. In the 1980s and 1990s, thousands of Ethiopian Jews returned to Israel. These Jews endured tremendous hardship during their journey. Some literally walked hundreds of miles across the desert.<sup>7</sup> Throughout their ordeal, these Ethiopian Jews were motivated by a compelling personal determination, passed down from parent to child, to reach Zion – their Jewish homeland. When they finally arrived in Israel, many were shocked to discover that the Jewish

Temple had been destroyed.<sup>8</sup> Ethiopian Jews, who lived in villages removed from modernity, were completely unaware of Zionism, the *political* movement. It was their *religious* and *ethnic* devotion to the Land of Israel – an integral component of their historic Jewish identity – that motivated them to persevere and eventually reach Israel.

It is important to distinguish between Zionism that is a fundamental component of Jewish identity (namely, support for the right of Jewish self-determination in the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people) and political support for the policies of the current government of Israel. The former is an expression of the Jews' shared ethnic and religious heritage. The latter is an expression of political preference. Today, antisemites and those who oppose the Jewish nation state of Israel conflate the two. They treat all expressions of support for the Jewish homeland as expressions of support for the policies of the current government. The three national elections held in Israel this year conclusively negate that proposition. Jewish Israelis overwhelmingly support the right of Jewish self-determination (they believe the right to a Jewish homeland is self-evident), yet their support for the policies of the Likud government is divided. One can be a Zionist and criticise specific government policies. It is not possible, however, to demonise Zionists without demonising Jews.

The Jewish messianic movements that repeatedly brought Jews to the Holy Land over the centuries demonstrate that the Jewish people's yearning to return to Zion is an inherent component of Jewish identity. These messianic movements reflected the Jews' deep religious, spiritual, historical and ethnic belief that (a) all Jews – including the Ten Lost Tribes – are part of a Jewish nation dispersed around the globe; (b) the Jewish nation will one day return to Zion and re-establish a Jewish homeland there; and (c) Jews can hasten the coming of the Messiah, the ultimate redemption and the restored Jewish homeland by re-establishing the Jewish legal framework that applied before the Jews were forced into exile, in particular by re-creating the *Sanhedrin*.

### **Jewish messianic movements and the historic yearning to return to Zion**

Between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, successive Jewish messianic movements sought to turn Jewish prayers into action. Rather than passively waiting for God to return the Jews to their ancestral homeland, Jews who supported these movements believed they could hasten Jewish redemption and the coming of the Messiah by re-establishing a Jewish presence in the Land of Israel. Most of these waves of immigration centred around dates when Jewish mystical texts predicted the Messiah would arrive: 1240, the period leading up to the year 1440, the period between 1540 and 1575, the years

approaching 1640, the period between 1740 and 1781, and the years before and after 1840.<sup>9</sup> These movements were condemned at the time by mainstream Jewish leaders who feared community members would become disillusioned with Judaism when the Messiah failed to materialise.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the messianic movements demonstrate that the yearning of Jews to see the 'ingathering of the [Jewish] exiles' and their return to Zion has been an integral component of Jewish identity for centuries.

### ***The Aliya of the 300 Rabbis (1210-40)***

During the Crusader period, Jews were forbidden to live in Jerusalem. In 1187, when the Muslims conquered the city and permitted Jews to return, Jews viewed this positive development as part of the divine promise to return the Jews to Zion.<sup>11</sup> A letter from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century sent to the Jews of Egypt (and subsequently found in the Cairo Geniza 600 years later) described a 'prophecy' regarding the ingathering of the exiles and the coming of the Messiah.<sup>12</sup> In 1211, the belief that Jewish redemption was forthcoming inspired Jews from France, England, North Africa and Egypt, including leaders of the French school of the Tosafists, to move to Israel.<sup>13</sup> Historians call this the 'Aliya of the 300 rabbis.'<sup>14</sup>

### ***Aliya between 1400 and 1440***

At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Jews from North Africa, Spain, France, Italy and German lands participated in messianic movements to the Land of Israel.<sup>15</sup> In the late 1300s and early 1400s Jews suffered severe persecution across Europe including in Spain, France and Austria.<sup>16</sup> The violence against Jews in Spain and Portugal in 1391 destroyed seventy Jewish communities and killed approximately 50,000 Jews.<sup>17</sup> Jews were expelled from France in 1391 and from Austria in 1421. This persecution coupled with rumours that the ten lost tribes of Israel had been discovered, and mystical literature that suggested the Messiah would arrive in 1440, fuelled speculation that God was on the verge of reuniting all the world's Jews. R. Elijah of Ferrara, a leading Italian Rabbi, for example, recorded that he made the journey to the Land of Israel (arriving in 1435) in order to verify rumours that the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel had been discovered.<sup>18</sup> His journey prompted others, who believed Jewish redemption was imminent, to follow. So many Jews embarked on the journey, Italian authorities felt compelled to stop the flow of Jews to the Holy Land. Between 1428 and 1455, the governments in Venice and Sicily, and the Vatican issued orders prohibiting sea captains from ferrying Jews to the Land of Israel and prohibiting the use of the Italian ports for such transport.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Aliya and the flourishing community in Safed (1492-1575)***

The messianic movement and related wave of immigration to Land of Israel that took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century had a long-lasting impact on Judaism. Scholars that settled in Safed during this period authored some of Jewish history's most significant texts and transformed Safed into the spiritual centre of the Jewish world.<sup>20</sup>

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 prompted renewed messianic expression. Numerous rabbis viewed the severe persecution of Jews as part of a divine plan to return the Jewish people to Zion and bring about the redemption.<sup>21</sup> R. Isaac Abravanel, for example, interpreted the passage from Isaiah (43:6) that says: 'I will say to the north, Give; and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth' as meaning God caused the expulsion from Spain to propel Jews towards Zion.<sup>22</sup>

When the Land of Israel was conquered by the Ottomans in 1517 and Jews were permitted to immigrate, messianic dreams were fuelled once again.<sup>23</sup> Dovid Reuveni, an enigmatic figure of the period, claimed to be a member of the lost tribe of Reuven and a king of a portion of the ten lost tribes.<sup>24</sup> He sought to create a Christian-Jewish military alliance against the Moslems believing that it would lead to the creation of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.<sup>25</sup>

R. Jacob Berab sought to re-establish the ancient *Sanhedrin* (Jewish court). He believed reviving the Jewish tribunal would serve not only a practical need but would also fulfill a key step in the messianic process by restoring the key legal and legislative body necessary for resumption of the Jewish state.<sup>26</sup> Membership in the *Sanhedrin* required *semicha* (ordination), a practice that had been passed on by rabbinic leaders for generations but had ceased around the fifth century.<sup>27</sup> R. Berab renewed the ancient practice and granted *semicha* to four leading rabbis in Safed, including R. Joseph Karo (author of the *Shulhan Aruch*, the most widely accepted code of Jewish Law). Leading rabbis in Jerusalem and around the world, however, challenged R. Berab's actions, claiming that *semicha* could only be reinstated with the complete agreement of all rabbinic leaders in Israel.<sup>28</sup>

Rabbi Solomon Alkabetz composed religious poems that captured the Jews' yearning for redemption.<sup>29</sup> His most famous poem, *Lecha Dodi* ('Come, My Beloved'), became part of the Sabbath evening service. In one of R. Alkabetz's prayers, he called upon God to redeem the Jewish people while describing the deep devotion and determination the community had shown in returning to Zion.<sup>30</sup>

The Messiah did not arrive in 1540 (the date that had been predicted) and by the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the once flourishing community in Safed came to an end due to economic crisis and the increased hostility of the Ottoman government towards the Jews.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Aliya to Jerusalem in the years preceding 1648***

A new messianic movement began in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century based on a passage from the Zohar<sup>32</sup> that suggested that the dead would be resurrected (a key stage in the redemption process) in 1648. R. Isaiah Horowitz, author of the *Shnei Lufot Habrit* (and known as the 'Shelah') came to the Land of Israel during this period. In one of his letters, he described the rapid growth and development he witnessed in Jerusalem, and conveyed his belief that the days of the Messiah were approaching. 'We consider all this a sign of the approaching redemption quickly in our days, amen,' he wrote.<sup>33</sup> He added:

Every day we see the ingathering of the exiles. Day by day they come. Wander about the courtyards of Jerusalem; All of them, praise God, are filled with Jews, may their Rock and Redeemer protect them, and with houses of study and schools filled with small children.<sup>34</sup>

In 1625 the Turkish *Ibn Farukh* family purchased control of Jerusalem from the Ottoman government and for the next two years, they persecuted the Jews.<sup>35</sup> Of the 2,500 to 3,000 Jews who lived in Jerusalem in 1624, only a few hundred remained at the end of Farukh's rule in 1627. An anonymous report printed in 1631, titled 'The Ruins of Jerusalem,' described as a temporary set-back the horrors inflicted on the Jews in Jerusalem during this period.<sup>36</sup> The report was written to strengthen the resolve of the Jews who had remained in Jerusalem during the difficult years that the city was governed by the Farukh family. The description, however, confirms that throughout the century, Jews were determined to return to Zion. According to the report: '[B]efore the coming of Ibn Farukh, children from the four corners of the earth fluttered like birds in their eagerness to settle in Jerusalem. And to us, this was an evident sign of the beginning of the ingathering of the exiles . . . All the more so, now that God has remembered his people and his land and expelled before our eyes the enemy Ibn Farukh; they hover like an eagle, and the children will return to their borders.'<sup>37</sup>

### ***Aliyot in 1740-81***

Messianic fervour in the years leading up to and following 1740 inspired thousands of Jews to immigrate to the Land of Israel from all over the world but particularly from within the Ottoman Empire and Italy.<sup>38</sup> The Jews who moved to the Land of Israel during this time period settled primarily in Tiberias and Jerusalem, two cities that, according to the Talmud, were to play a role in the redemption.<sup>39</sup> The Jewish community in Jerusalem expanded significantly. Eight new yeshivot were established, several synagogues were repaired and expanded, and new synagogues were built.<sup>40</sup>

In 1740-81, students and associates of the Ba'al Shem Tov also immigrated to the Land of Israel. The largest of these Hasidic groups arrived

in 1777.<sup>41</sup> A Karaite<sup>42</sup> who spoke with these immigrants shortly before their arrival described how belief in the redemption inspired these Jews:

May it be remembered by the later generations what happened in the year 5537 (1777), how a rumor came about that the Messiah son of David had come. Then the rabbis living abroad began to go up to the city of Jerusalem, may it speedily be rebuilt ... And they thought that this was the time of the end of days, as promised by the prophets.<sup>43</sup>

Jews during the 18<sup>th</sup> century were motivated to immigrate to the Land of Israel for the same reasons that had motivated Jews for centuries – to rebuild Jerusalem and celebrate the ingathering of the exiles in preparation for ultimate redemption in the Holy Land.

### **Aliya around 1840**

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century it was predicted, based on a source in the Zohar, that the Messiah would arrive in 1840.<sup>44</sup> This inspired thousands of Jews to immigrate to the Land of Israel.<sup>45</sup>

Anglican missionaries who interacted with Jews in the Land of Israel and around the world in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century reported that between 1809 and 1811 hundreds of Jewish families from Russia immigrated to the Holy Land.<sup>46</sup> The Jews informed these missionaries that the reason for their trip was ‘hope that the words of the prophets will soon be realized, that God will gather his dispersed people from all corners of the earth.’<sup>47</sup> These missionaries noted that the immigrants ‘wish[ed] to see the appearance of the Messiah in the Land of Israel.’<sup>48</sup>

The most significant community that immigrated to Israel during this period were the students of the Vilna Gaon. Although R. Elijah of Vilna (the ‘Vilna Gaon’) attempted unsuccessfully to reach the Land of Israel in 1778, shortly after his death, nearly all of his students emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael*. Their Aliya was directly inspired by the Vilna Gaon.<sup>49</sup>

Students of the Vilna Gaon who immigrated to the Land of Israel in the early 1800s sought to re-establish the *Sanhedrin* as a catalyst to the ultimate redemption.<sup>50</sup> One of the Vilna Gaon’s students in Safed sent an envoy to Yemen to locate the ten lost tribes.<sup>51</sup> It was believed that the lost tribes had preserved the *semicha* practice and could assist in renewing the ancient tradition for the remainder of the Jewish world.<sup>52</sup> In this way, the students of the Vilna Gaon hoped to avoid the Jewish law challenges that had been levied against R. Berab when he had sought to reinstitute the *semicha* practice hundreds of years earlier in Safed.

Just as Jews in prior centuries who had immigrated to the Land of Israel sought to locate the lost tribes, renew the ancient *semicha*, and revive the



*Sanhedrin* in the belief that these steps would hasten the coming of the Messiah, so too did Jews in the nineteenth century take these same steps.<sup>53</sup>

The messianic aliyot between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries demonstrate that Zionism – the yearning of Jews to re-establish a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel – has historically been an integral component of Jewish religious and ethnic identity. Jews first began to shed this element of Jewish identity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when compelled to do so by Western European governments that demanded Jews abandon the national and ethnic component of Judaism in exchange for citizenship.

### **West European emancipation compels Jews to shed the national component of their Jewish identity**

In 1789, inspired by enlightenment ideals and the new United States Constitution, the National Assembly in France issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen which stated that all men ‘are born and remain free and equal in rights’ and that ‘No person shall be molested for his opinions, even such as are religious, provided that the manifestation of these opinions does not disturb the public order established by the law.’<sup>54</sup>

When the question arose as to whether the declaration applied to women and to non-Catholics, the National Assembly ignored the gender issue but fiercely debated the religion question.<sup>55</sup> Three years earlier, when a royal commission proposed that King Louis XVI grant equal citizenship to protestants, the king agreed. When the same commission proposed that citizenship be granted to the Jews, the king refused.<sup>56</sup> In 1789, therefore, the National Assembly had to decide whether or not to overrule the king and grant French citizenship to the Jews. The Count of Clermont-Tonnerre told the members of the Assembly:

The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals. They must be citizens ... It is intolerable that the Jews should become a separate political formation or class in the country. Every one of them must individually become a citizen; if they do not want to do this, they must inform us and we shall then be compelled to expel them. The existence of a nation within a nation is unacceptable in our country.<sup>57</sup>

Jews could only become French citizens as ‘individuals,’ not as a ‘nation.’ If they wanted citizenship, they would have to shed their sense of Jewish peoplehood or risk being expelled from France. In response to Count Clermont-Tonnerre, the Bishop of Nancy, Monsieur de la Fare, responded:

The Jews certainly have grievances which require redress ... It is necessary to grant them protection, security, liberty; but must one admit into the family a tribe that is a stranger to oneself, that constantly turns its eyes toward [another] homeland, that aspires to abandon the land that supports it.<sup>58</sup>

Abbe Jean Siffrein Maury, who represented the interests of the Catholic Church (and later went on to become Archbishop of Paris and a French Cardinal) added during the National Assembly debate:

I observe first of all that the word Jew is not the name of a sect, but of a nation that has laws which it has always followed and still wishes to follow. Calling Jews citizens would be like saying that without letters of naturalization and without ceasing to be English and Danish, the English and Danish could become French . . . The Jews have passed through seventeen centuries without involving themselves with other nations . . . They should not be persecuted: they are men, they are our brothers; and a curse on whomever would speak of intolerance! No one can be disturbed for his religious opinions; you have recognized this, and from that moment on you have assured Jews the most extended protection. Let them be protected therefore as individuals and not as Frenchmen for they cannot be citizens.<sup>59</sup>

These statements reaffirmed that Jews would be protected as individuals, provided they disavowed the notion of a Jewish 'nation' and swore allegiance only to France. In January 1790, France extended citizenship to Sephardic Jews.<sup>60</sup> After the Constitution of France was adopted in September 1791,<sup>61</sup> French citizenship was finally extended to all Jews. Emancipation applied to 'individuals of the Jewish persuasion,' who were required to take a 'civic oath' to ensure that they would 'fulfill all the duties prescribed by the constitution.'<sup>62</sup> This way the French National Assembly made clear that to be a citizen of France, the Jew had to forgo his sense of Jewish peoplehood.

The same day that the National Assembly announced the emancipation of the Jews of France, Berr Isaac Berr, a merchant and banker who was one of the leaders in the effort to gain civil equality for the Jewish community, disseminated a letter to all the Jewish congregations in Alsace and Lorraine. He wrote:

We are now, thanks to the Supreme Being, and to the sovereignty of the nation, not only Men and Citizens, but we are Frenchmen! . . . The name of active citizen, which we have just obtained, is, without a doubt, the most precious title a man can possess in a free empire; but this title alone is not sufficient; we should possess also the necessary qualifications to fulfill the duties annexed to it . . . I cannot too often repeat to you how absolutely necessary it is for us to divest ourselves entirely of that narrow spirit, of Corporation and Congregation, in all civil and political matters, not immediately connected with our spiritual laws; in these things we must absolutely appear simply as individuals, as Frenchmen, guided only by a true patriotism and by the general good of the nation.<sup>63</sup>

Concerned that the community might undermine its new emancipated status which Berr had worked so hard to attain, he urged French Jewry to shed any trappings of 'Corporation and Congregation.' He admonished the Jews, 'we must absolutely appear simply as individuals, as Frenchmen, guided only by a true patriotism and by the general good of the nation.' Community members

complied, rapidly shedding their sense of Jewish peoplehood and ancient yearning for Zion. One Jew wrote to a Paris newspaper: 'France ... is our Palestine, its mountains are our Zion, its rivers our Jordan. Let us drink the water of these sources; it is the water of liberty'.<sup>64</sup> In order to be accepted as full French citizens, many French Jews shed the Jewish nation part of their identity.

In 1806, two years after proclaiming himself Emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte called for an assembly of 80 Jewish 'notables' to confirm the Jews' loyalty to France. Count Molé explained the role of the Assembly of Jewish Notables in the instructions he delivered to the group:

[O]ur most ardent wish is to be able to report to the Emperor, that, among individuals of the Jewish persuasion, he can reckon as many faithful subjects, determined to conform in everything to the laws and to the morality, which ought to regulate the conduct of all Frenchmen.<sup>65</sup>

Napoleon's instruction emphasised once again that citizenship had been afforded to Jews as 'individuals' (not as a people). The notables were asked to answer questions such as 'In the eyes of Jews, are Frenchmen considered as their brethren?' and 'Do Jews born in France, and treated by the laws as French citizens, consider France their country? Are they bound to defend it?' The Notables responded by stressing that French Jews follow all French laws and if the Jewish 'religious code' were to ever conflict with the 'French code,' the Jews would cease to be governed by their religious law, 'since they must above all, acknowledge and obey the laws of the prince.'<sup>66</sup>

In response to Napoleon's specific questions, the Assembly of Jewish Notables said:

In the eyes of Jews Frenchmen are their brethren, and are not strangers ... And how could they consider them otherwise when they inhabit the same land, when they are ruled and protected by the same government, and by the same laws? ... Yes, France is our country; all Frenchmen are our brethren, and this glorious title, by raising us in our own esteem, becomes a sure pledge that we shall never cease to be worthy of it.

The love of the country is in the heart of Jews a sentiment so natural, so powerful, and so consonant to their religious opinions, that a French Jew considers himself in England as among strangers, although he may be among Jews; and the case is the same with English Jews in France.<sup>67</sup>

Under pressure from the French government, and in order to protect their new found equality and civil rights, Jews in France abandoned the nationalist and ethnic component of Judaism – the yearning of the Jewish people to return to their ancestral homeland – that had been an integral part of Jewish identity for centuries.

The Dutch National Assembly of Batavia conducted a similar debate on Jewish emancipation from August 22–31, 1796. The arguments made by the Citizen Representatives who participated in this Dutch Assembly were

remarkably similar to the views expressed during the French National Assembly debates. Jacob Hendrik Floh proposed that 'Jewish inhabitants of the Netherlands, who have resided in the Republic for more than one year,' be granted Dutch citizenship on condition they first make the following declaration:

I, so-and-so, declare that I do not belong to any other people, nor any part of a people, but solely and only to the people of the Netherlands, whose supreme power I acknowledge and respect, without expecting any other supreme rule on earth. And I promise to conduct myself, always and in everything, conforming to its principles, as a good and faithful citizen of the Netherlands.<sup>68</sup>

Statements made during the Dutch debate demonstrate that participants in the National Assembly believed Jews should be denied Dutch citizenship specifically because Jews viewed themselves as part of the Nation of Israel with a special connection to the Land of Israel. Citizen Representative Jan Bernd Bicker remarked:

I have always pictured the Jewish nation, and have heard it defined thus, as a separate nation dispersed over the entire earth, which is not mixed with the Dutch people and which properly belongs in Palestine. Their national longing extends to Palestine, where they hope to return, led by a triumphant king. I have always heard it said that a sincere Jew considers himself in alliance with all the Jews spread over the entire earth, and that they expect a messiah who will restore them in Canaan, who will raise them again above all peoples as God's favored people, after so many centuries of oppression, and who will revenge them on their enemies ... . If it is true (and according to my information, it admits of no contradiction) that a sincere Jew considers himself a member of a separate nation that is dispersed over the entire earth, it means that as an individual he is a fellow member, fellow citizen, brother, part of a nation which finds itself in Asia, Europe, Africa and America. It also means that he cannot be at the same time a separate, individual member of a nation which calls itself the Dutch nation.<sup>69</sup>

The pressure put on Jews in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to renounce the national and ethnic component of their Jewish identity in exchange for citizenship, prompted many Jews to shed their Zionism. As historian Leora Batnitzky notes in *How Judaism Became a Religion*, 'citizenship meant the subordination of any communal identity to the state and the relegation of religion to the sphere of private sentiment.'<sup>70</sup> This pattern was repeated in Germany, where, Batnitzky explains:

[E]mancipation meant that Jews were free as individuals, but that Jewishness and even a full embrace of Judaism could not be freely expressed within German culture. The notions of being German and citizenship in the modern state excluded the possibility of other types of collective belonging.<sup>71</sup>

The phenomenon of Jews disavowing a sense of Jewish peoplehood spread from Western Europe to America. Reform Judaism began in Germany in the mid-1800s. In 1885, the United States branch of the movement adopted the 'Pittsburgh Platform' which declared:

We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.<sup>72</sup>

In 1907, the Reform movement in the United States published a Passover Haggadah that removed the language 'Next year in Jerusalem' from the end of the Passover seder.<sup>73</sup> It was not until 1937 that the movement formally endorsed establishing a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel.<sup>74</sup>

To be considered 'good citizens,' and not jeopardise their status, many emancipated Jews abandoned their Zionism and sought to distance themselves from Jews who continued to embrace the national and ethnic component of Jewish identity. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, for example, Western European Jews, sought to distance themselves from their Eastern European counterparts, referring to Eastern European Jews as unenlightened, uncouth and uneducated. As Batnitzky explains, 'German Jews [] depicted their eastern European brethren in negative terms because they sought to deemphasize any national aspect of the Jewish religion. Portraying eastern European Jews negatively suggested that German Jews had more in common with their fellow German citizens than with other Jews.'<sup>75</sup>

### **Eastern European Jews Maintain the Jewish love of Zion**

In Eastern Europe, where the Jewish community did not experience the same pressure to assimilate, Jews retained the national and ethnic component of their Jewish identity. A Russian Jewish movement, *Hibat Zion*, arose in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Adherents of the movement – *Hovevei Zion* – Lovers of Zion – supported Jewish emigration from Russia to the Land of Israel twenty years before Theodor Herzl established political Zionism.<sup>76</sup> As historian Rabbi Berel Wein explains,

The true strength of the idea [behind *Hibat Zion*] and its public popularity rested on a spiritual and traditionally religious foundation. It was the Torah of the Jew, its commandments and customs that made Jerusalem and the Land of Israel central and unique to Jews in distant exiles. It was the mystery, the spirituality, the supernatural character of Jerusalem that drove Jews towards it.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, Theodore Herzl's primary support came from Eastern Europe. Political Zionism resonated with Jews who had not shed the national and ethnic component of Judaism. As Wein notes:

[A]t the heart of the Zionist movement, even in its inception and certainly throughout its history, were the plain, simple, visionary Jews of Eastern Europe. Herzl deprecatingly called them his “army of schnorrers (beggars),” but they, more than the assimilated, wealthy, sophisticated leaders of the Zionist movement, grasped the opportunity of Zionism. By combining this new political venture with their ancient belief in Zion and restoration, they eventually gave the Zionist movement its success.<sup>78</sup>

The political Zionist movement spearheaded by Herzl was, at its essence, an expression of the Jews’ ancient, historic yearning and determination to return to the Jews’ ancestral homeland in the Land of Israel – a yearning that had been an integral component of Jewish identity for centuries.

### **Denying the right of Jewish self-determination is akin to demanding Jews shed an integral component of their identity**

The pressure imposed on Jews today to shed their support for the Jewish homeland is a contemporary form of the historic demand that Jews discard their sense of Jewish peoplehood and yearning to return to Zion – essential elements of the Jews’ religious and ethnic identity. Judaism is unique. Adherents share both religious faith and membership in the Jewish nation (*Am Yisrael*). Demanding that Jews disavow any part of their Judaism as the price for admission into society is antisemitic.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of antisemitism recognises that ‘denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination’ is a contemporary example of antisemitism.<sup>79</sup> Denying the right of Jewish national self-determination is antisemitic, not only because those who deny this right single out the Jews by supporting self-determination for all other groups but deny it only to the Jews. It is also antisemitic because it demands that Jews shed this key component of their identity as Jews.

To be a Zionist means to support the right of Jewish self-determination in the ancestral homeland of the Jews. Those who celebrate the fact that the Jews have returned once again to the Land of Israel, those who celebrate that the Jewish state of Israel exists, are Zionists. Those who oppose Zionism, deny Jews this right. Judea Pearl, the father of the slain journalist Daniel Pearl, coined a term for this. He calls it ‘Zionophobia:’ an irrational fear or hatred of a homeland for the Jewish people.<sup>80</sup>

Demanding that Jews closet or shed their Zionism to participate in progressive circles mirrors the demands put on Jews during the Enlightenment. To be considered a good citizen of today’s world, Jews are told they must disavow this essential element of Judaism. In April 2018, for example, 53 student organisations at New York University (NYU) signed an agreement to boycott not only the State of Israel but to boycott all pro-Israel

student groups on campus.<sup>81</sup> These student organisations resolved that they would not cosponsor events or engage in dialogue with any pro-Israel organisations. The message to pro-Israel students at NYU was clear. The organisations were in effect saying *'If you want to join our progressive community on campus, if you want to demonstrate with us on issues such as climate change, immigration, women's rights or LGBTQ rights, we'll accept you on one condition. Check your support for Israel at the door. You will only be fully accepted as a member of the university community when you shed that part of your Jewish identity.'*

Similarly, in November 2019, the University of Toronto Graduate Student Union (GSU) refused to support a campaign initiated by the university's Hillel to make kosher food more accessible on campus. A Student Union representative explained that the GSU Executive Committee would not support the campaign because 'the organisation hosting it (Hillel) is openly pro-Israel.'<sup>82</sup> In 2012, the University of Toronto GSU adopted a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) resolution that precluded it from supporting pro-Israel organisations on campus. As a result, in 2019, Hillel leaders were told that support for the 'Kosher Forward' campaign would contradict the 'will of the [GSU] membership.'<sup>83</sup> In other words, the GSU could not support providing kosher food, because Hillel (the organisation representing Jewish students on campus) did not disavow Zionism, a key component of Jewish identity.

Such pressure is not reserved for the university campus. In Chicago in June 2017<sup>84</sup> and again in Washington, DC in June 2019,<sup>85</sup> Jewish participants in the 'Dyke March' in those cities were permitted to wear religious paraphernalia, such as a *kippah* or a *tallit*, but denied the right to carry items that reflect support for Israel, such as the Jewish pride flag – a rainbow flag with a Star of David at its centre. The Dyke March was designed to celebrate diversity and inclusion, but its leaders directed that Jewish participants hide or shed this essential component of their Jewish identity. No other group was charged such a high price for admission.

Vilifying, marginalising, demonising, boycotting and excluding Jews because they express support for Jewish self-determination in the Jews' ancestral homeland is antisemitic harassment. Discriminating against individuals who observe the Jewish Sabbath, wear a *kippah* or maintain a kosher diet is universally recognized as antisemitism. Similarly, demanding that a Jew abandon any part of his or her Jewish identity is antisemitic. One does not need to wear religious apparel or symbols to understand that targeting a person because he appears from his dress to be Jewish, is antisemitic. Similarly, one does not have to personally observe the Jewish Sabbath to recognise that discriminating against a person because they observe the Jewish Sabbath is antisemitic. So too, one does not have to be a Zionist to agree that harassing a Jew for expressing the Zionist part of his or

her Jewish identity is antisemitic. To ensure that history does not repeat itself, we must acknowledge that isolating and dehumanising Zionists is akin to branding Jews with a virtual 'yellow Star of David.' Society must recognise and forcefully condemn this modern incarnation of an age-old hatred.

## Notes

1. Gordis, *Israel*, 2, 31.
2. Kaplan, *Made in Heaven*, 201-5.
3. Eliach, *Judaism, Zionism and the Land of Israel*, 6.
4. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
5. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
6. *Ibid.*, 7.
7. Somfalvi and Lukash, "Unsung Hero."
8. Samuel, "We Did Not Know."
9. Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion," 312.
10. Wein, *Herald of Destiny*, 184, 201.
11. Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion," 312.
12. *Ibid.*, 313.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, 315.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Wein, *Herald of Destiny*, 192.
18. Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion," 318.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, 320, 323.
21. *Ibid.*, 320.
22. *Ibid.*, 320.
23. *Ibid.*, 321.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Wein, *Herald of Destiny*, 214.
26. Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion," 324.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Wein, *Herald of Destiny*, 272-73.
29. Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion," 325.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, 326.
32. The Zohar is the primary text of Jewish mystical thought known as kabbalah.
33. Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion," 328.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, 329.
36. *Ibid.*, 330.
37. *Ibid.*, 331.
38. *Ibid.*, 333.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, 335.



42. The Karaites belong to a Jewish religious movement that views the Hebrew Bible as the sole source of religious doctrine and rejects the oral tradition (Talmud) as a source of Jewish law. Barnavi, "The Karaites."
43. Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion," 335.
44. Ibid., 337-8.
45. Ibid., 338.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Morgenstern, "An Attempt to Hasten Redemption."
50. Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion," 339.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., 342-3.
54. "Declaration of the Rights of Man," Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789. Accessed March 31, 2020. [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/rightsof.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp).
55. Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred*, 171.
56. Ibid.
57. Clermont-Tonnerre, "Speech on Religious Minorities and Questionable Professions," December 23, 1789. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/284/>.
58. Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 124.
59. Abbé Maury, "Speech," December 23, 1789. <https://revolution.chnm.org/items/show/565>.
60. Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 126.
61. Ibid., 127.
62. Ibid., 127-8.
63. Ibid., 128-9.
64. Barnavi, "Jewish Emancipation in Western Europe."
65. Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 149-50.
66. Ibid., 152.
67. Ibid., 153-4.
68. Ibid., 136.
69. Ibid., 137-8.
70. Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*, 33.
71. Ibid., 49.
72. Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 521.
73. Hoffman and Arnov, *My People's Passover Haggadah*, 57.
74. Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 575.
75. Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*, 76.
76. Wein, *Triumph of Survival*, 223.
77. Ibid., 227.
78. Ibid., 238.
79. *Working Definition of Antisemitism*, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>.
80. Pearl, "Inspiration and A Rallying Cry for Jewish Students and Graduates."
81. See NYU Students for Justice in Palestine, *50+ NYU Student Groups Endorse Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement for Palestinian Human Rights* (April 9, 2018), <https://medium.com/@nyusjp/50-nyu-student-groups->

endorse-boycott-divestment-and-sanctions-movement-for-palestinian-human-c27786ddc233.

82. *Kosher Food Drive Violates "Will of the Membership" Student Union Suggests.* November 17, 2019. [https://www.bnaibrith.ca/kosher\\_food\\_drive\\_violates\\_will\\_of\\_the\\_membership\\_student\\_union\\_suggests](https://www.bnaibrith.ca/kosher_food_drive_violates_will_of_the_membership_student_union_suggests).
83. *U of Toronto Graduate Student Union opposes campus kosher food as "pro-Israel."* November 18, 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/u-of-toronto-student-union-boycotts-kosher-food-on-campus-over-israel-divestment/>.
84. Weiss, "I'm Glad the Dyke March Banned Jewish Stars."
85. "DC Dyke March Bans Jewish Pride Flags." *JTA*, June 6, 2019. <https://www.jta.org/quick-reads/dc-dyke-march-bans-jewish-pride-flags>.

## Disclosure statement

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## Notes on contributor

*Alyza D. Lewin* is President and General Counsel of the Louis D. Brandeis Centre for Human Rights Under Law, and co-founder and partner of Lewin & Lewin, LLP.

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