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Introduction

Zionism and Anti-Zionism: Twin Births

There is perhaps no ideology in modern Jewish history more celebrated and contested by Jews than Zionism, although in our time, it is almost impossible to reject it without being accused of betraying the Jewish people.¹ Amidst all the attention, it remains exceedingly difficult to think critically about its meanings and its history and most notably, why Zionism has garnered such impassioned reactions, including both strong support and fierce dissent.

There is little doubt that as an idea and as a practice Zionism was one of the most original and radical interventions of Jewish modernity, born in the mid-nineteenth century in the age of European nationalism and in response to rising antisemitism. Early Zionists argued that Jews must assert their identities as members of a distinct national people and construct a national homeland in Palestine. These thinkers tapped into the millennia-long Jewish connection to the land of Israel, coupled with the need for a solution to what was known as the “Jewish Question” that arose after the emancipation of Jews in Europe: Could European Jews successfully integrate and be accepted into a modernizing Europe? This was a main concern of most of European Jewry in the second half of the nineteenth century.² Leading Jewish thinkers such as Moses Mendelssohn had earlier argued in the eighteenth century that Jews could be accepted as full members of European society. Theodor Herzl’s Zionist idea was based on the premise that they could not. As historian Anita

Shapira puts it in the opening to her book, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948*, “The Zionist movement was born out of a deep disappointment: the dream of the nineteenth century that progress was destined to carry the world forward toward an enlightened future in which the distortions, legal perversions, and discrimination of past eras would appear like a passing nightmare, revealed itself to be nothing but a figment of the imagination by the close of that century.”³

To offer insight into the origins of Zionism, we propose that it is helpful to analyze Zionism less as one singular movement and more as a collection of diverse alternatives and a multivalent intervention into Jewish modernity with both Jewish and non-Jewish dimensions that have been championed and opposed by a variety of different communities. For those interested in learning about Zionism as a Jewish phenomenon, there are many existing works illustrating how and why this once-marginal movement has come to dominate modern Jewish life. In English, the most well-known study may still be Arthur Hertzberg’s 1959 classic, *The Zionist Idea*, which offers an inside view of the major Jewish Zionist thinkers in translation, beginning with the earliest “proto-Zionists,” such as Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, Yehuda Alkalai, and Moses Hess, and continuing through its later years featuring texts by Mordechai Kaplan and Martin Buber. Hertzberg’s still relevant and lengthy introduction provides one of the first and most authoritative overviews of the Zionist idea in English.⁴ For subsequent updates, one can turn to *The Essential Papers in Zionism*, edited by Anita Shapira and Jehuda Reinharz; Walter Laqueur’s *A History of Zionism*; or the more partisan *The Zionist Ideas* by Gil Troy from 2018, which builds on Hertzberg’s 1959 volume.⁵

But if one wants to learn about Zionism as a lived reality—that is, if one wants to understand Zionism as a national project both internal and external to its Jewish context—one cannot do so without grappling with anti-Zionism and non-Zionism.⁶ Anti-Zionism was not solely a response to Zionism: in many ways, Zionism and anti-Zionism constitute a twin birth. Although it is true that the “anti” of anti-Zionism is a reaction to Zionism, anti-Zionism provided the occasion for many Jews to concretize various ideas of Jewish existence in opposition to the

solutions Zionism proposed that had existed in inchoate forms before it came on the scene.

What This Book Is *Not* About

In our turbulent times, especially after October 7, 2023, and the destruction of Gaza, the relationship between anti-Zionism, Zionism, and anti-semitism in the non-Jewish world has become a topic of intense debate. Although this is not the subject of the present study, we note that there are certainly forms of both Zionism and anti-Zionism, today and in the past, that do constitute forms of antisemitism.⁷ In our time, for certain reactionary kinds of antisemitism like those espoused by white nationalist figures Tucker Carlson, Nick Fuentes, or Candace Owens, opposition to Israel takes on at least two forms. First, it articulates a logical extension of American Firstism by arguing that the United States only supports Israel, even against its own interests, because of the influence of Jewish power.⁸ A second form argues that Zionism reflects the latest stage of a Jewish global conspiracy dating to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and earlier medieval Christian forms of anti-Judaism. In short, the antisemitic stereotypes of Jews that flourished in Europe, now largely stripped of their more dominant theological roots, sometimes manifest in more broadly anti-Jewish attitudes on the American Right.

We do not deny any of this: in fact, we firmly agree that certain forms of anti-Zionism in the larger world are indeed articulations of antisemitism. What we challenge is the subsequent *collapse of all forms of anti-Zionism into antisemitism*, sometimes articulated by the removal of the hyphen—for example, making anti-Zionism into “antizionism”—the implication being that the opposition is not to Zionism but instead is a form of hate directed at Jews (“Zionism” as merely a stand-in for Jews). Although it does not mention the word “anti-Zionism,” the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of antisemitism has become a tool to argue that many forms of criticism of Israel are antisemitic, thereby narrowing the ways in which an individual can protest against Israel’s policies and not fall within this category.

This book has a different agenda. We affirm that *some* anti-Zionism is antisemitism but deny that *all* anti-Zionism is antisemitism, just as we deny that *Zionism cannot itself sometimes be antisemitism*.⁹ As you will see in some of the following documents, many liberal Jewish anti-Zionists at the turn of the twentieth century argued that Zionism reflected antisemitism because it suggested that Jews could not live as full and equal citizens in European nation-states. These are important questions, but this book is not about them. Rather, this book moves from the important debate about the nexus of some forms of anti-Zionism and antisemitism to discuss Jewish anti-Zionism as a legitimate and significant intervention into the collective and political future of Jews after emancipation.

“In the Beginning” of Zionism . . . There was Anti-Zionism

From Zionism’s very beginning, Jews have contested it for a variety of political, theological, and ideological reasons. These include traditional theological arguments against returning to the land of Israel before the messianic time, an insistence on the feasibility of emancipation to solve the “Jewish Question,” a radical critique of Zionism as a form of ethnonationalism and settler colonialism, and a theological notion that Jews have a “mission” to the world that requires them to live outside the sphere of their own political nation-state. Although many of these forms of anti-Zionism arose in the decades before there was a state, some continued to exist and even strengthen after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Other forms of anti-Zionism were less focused on the state but contested the hegemony of Zionism as the main standard by which one’s Jewish identity is determined. That is, they seek to identify Jewish existence apart from the support of a Jewish nation-state.

Throughout history, Palestinians have also offered extensive analyses of Zionism, most notably Edward Said’s famous work, *The Question of Palestine*; Walid Khalidi’s *From Haven to Conquest*; Ibrahim Abu-Lughod’s *The Transformation of Palestine*; Sabri Jiryis’s *The Foundations*

of *Zionism*; and Rashid Khalidi's *The Hundred Years War on Palestine*.¹⁰ Anti-Zionism was thus not only a reaction to Zionism: it was also one element in wider arguments for alternative political imaginaries, for both Jews and non-Jews alike. We focus here on the myriad forms of Jewish anti-Zionism.

Since October 7, 2023, there has been renewed attention on Jewish anti-Zionism because of the public activism of groups in the United States such as Jewish Voice for Peace, Rabbis for Ceasefire, and IfNotNow and the widespread visibility of Jewish protesters in campus movements against the war in Gaza. This is not to suggest all these groups are anti-Zionist but rather that the history of opposition to the Zionist project has once again become a subject of interest and attention. Even though Jews were often visibly present at pro-Palestinian demonstrations, many in the media, government, and establishment Jewish organizations sought to paint these protests as antisemitic.¹¹ To defend these protests from often spurious accusations of antisemitism, Jewish progressive voices were then thrust into the difficult place of positioning their Jewish identities as a rebuttal to the widespread conflation of the state of Israel with world Jewry. Yet for all this attention, there remains a critical gap in understanding these ideas on their own terms and making sense of where they fit within the longer continuum of Jewish history.

To address this omission, this book offers the first comprehensive overview and extensive documentation of Jewish anti-Zionist literature; its aim is to illustrate the complex reasons why Jews throughout history have contested or rejected the Zionist idea as a central tenet of their Jewish identities and politics.¹² Why write this history? Because it is there and because its erasure distorts our understanding of Jews and Judaism in modernity.

In his introduction to the recent *The Zionist Ideas*, Gil Troy responds to the question of why he did not include Jewish anti-Zionists in his collection by saying he did not want to include “the enemy.” We contend that this characterization is exactly the problem. Our book is not a testament of “the enemy.” Rather, it is the story of deeply committed Jews worldwide who, for a variety of reasons, rejected the Zionist idea as the

best option for collective Jewish flourishing and refused to cede their Jewishness to ethnonationalism and the nation-state. To showcase the existence of these ideas, we offer a documentary history of this phenomenon as it has appeared in diverse geographic and political contexts throughout history in the hope that it will pave the way for more thorough engagements with these ideas on their own terms.

We contend that since the early 1970s after Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, the part of the Jewish story that includes anti-Zionism has been largely erased—and intentionally so. As one might expect, Jewish resistance to Zionism certainly lessened after the founding of the state in 1948, but it did not disappear. The effort to cement Zionism as a hegemonic ideology of Jewish politics and Jewish existence, particularly but not exclusively for American and Israeli Jewry, marginalized an entire debate—a healthy one in our view—about the nature and fabric of Jewish modernity and its future possibilities.¹³ As people worldwide grapple with the horrific violence engulfing the region, we believe it is time to erase the erasure.¹⁴ This is not necessarily to make a case for non- or anti-Zionism, although we do not hide our own views, but instead to bring to light an important debate about Jewish existence in modernity that has been forgotten because it has been erased and, when not erased, demonized to assert Zionist hegemony in modern Jewish thought.¹⁵ This process of erasing the erasure has already begun with recent books by Geoffrey Levin, Marjorie Feld, Oren Kroll-Zeldin, Jonathan Graubart, and Jack Ross.¹⁶ What this volume seeks to accomplish is to present a plethora of texts constituting a global documentary history, written by Jews over the past 120 years, that resisted, contested, or opposed the Zionist project and, by so doing, to create room to analyze these ideas on their own terms. For those who deny, invalidate, or delegitimize this history, we have brought the receipts.

It is legitimate to ask why we look at this only as a Jewish phenomenon. As mentioned, Palestinians and thinkers worldwide have been engaging with, criticizing, and resisting Zionism for more than a century. As argued by Judith Butler (whose perspective we include in this book), the effort to delineate a Jewish anti-Zionist tradition that speaks only from within Jewishness runs the risk of reproducing a form

of morally exceptional Jewish ethnocentrism. Furthermore, by incorporating only Jewish voices, we risk positioning the conflict as one defined by Jewish identity when instead it is the result of many distinct forces, including US and British colonialism and imperialism, the legacy of European antisemitism, and the geopolitics of the region. Noura Erakat makes this argument powerfully in her introduction to the book, *A Land with a People*. She writes, “Palestinian voices are essential to decolonization, yet they have been suppressed and are often only countenanced if supported by Jewish endorsement. . . . In an environment where they can only be heard if a Jewish ally confirms what they have been saying, Palestinians understandably grow angry.”¹⁷ This anger calls attention to a faulty analysis that marginalizes Palestinian voices from a discussion of their own future and sidesteps the issue of what true justice and accountability could look like in the present moment.

This book seeks to address that concern. Our assumption is that Jews who opposed Zionism did so for a variety of reasons that differed from those motivating non-Jews and spoke distinctively from within Jewish politics and tradition and in dialogue with other communities. When we say *Jewish* anti-Zionism, we offer this qualifier to signify those Jews who thought carefully about the questions of Jewish modernity that informed their robust critiques of Zionism as a political program. The works of some figures in this book present a love and commitment to Jewishness and Judaism that have often been expressed in Jewish anti-Zionist thought, a distinction that has been critically challenged and even erased in attacks against them. Although our book does not engage as a category those Jewish thinkers who abandoned their identity as Jews partly or in whole because of their anti-Zionism, we suggest that this is a worthy endeavor for future scholarship.

Our contention is that the focus on Jewish anti-Zionism should not preclude or take away from scholarship about Palestinian engagements with Zionism.¹⁸ Instead, we hope this book will be one element in wider efforts to understand Zionism and that it will offer insight into the alternative possibilities that were often never realized. It makes the case that one cannot understand Zionism without reviving the legacy of its Jewish dissenters, just as one cannot understand anti-Zionism without

understanding Zionism in all its forms. Contrary to what is often suggested in the public discourse, Jews do not have the exclusive right or privilege of deconstructing and analyzing Zionism. By limiting ourselves to *Jewish* resistance to Zionism, we hope to illustrate how this internal Jewish debate forms one crucial part of how Jews have navigated the complexity of emancipation, antisemitism, tolerance, and sovereignty and how Zionism came to form such a powerful and contested presence in the modern Middle East. We make this choice consciously and sensitively in an environment where Jewish voices are often taken more seriously than Palestinian ones in discussions about the region, an issue we recognize as critical to address.

In this book, we take a different approach from the one taken by Arthur Hertzberg in his introduction to *The Zionist Idea*. Because Hertzberg was interested in presenting Zionism largely internal to itself, his introduction omits any mention of the massive resistance to Zionism throughout its history, certainly in its early forms. If one were to read Hertzberg's introduction to understand the rise and role of Zionism as part of Jewish modernity, one might think that a consensus immediately developed on the idea and that the disputes were about what *kind* of Zionism and not about Zionism itself.¹⁹ We take a different approach here not only because one cannot understand the “anti” of anti-Zionism without understanding Zionism but also because one cannot understand Zionism without understanding the ways Jews resisted it and, in many cases, continue to do so.

Throughout this history, Jewish anti-Zionism is often reflected in deep conversations with Palestinian partners. As we will illustrate, this interaction never disappeared. Nearly all contemporary Jewish critiques of Zionism grapple with Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and argue against Zionism's hold on modern Jewish life for a variety of ethical, political, and religious reasons. Knowing that Jewish voices are too often taken more seriously in Jewish communities when the subject concerns Israel-Palestine, we want to put these voices in their wider context, particularly in their dialogue with Palestinians.²⁰ For decades, Jewish Zionists have systematically marginalized Palestinian and pro-Palestinian voices from Jewish schools, camps, and mainstream

institutions while pushing a one-sided narrative of Jewish identity and Middle East history.²¹ This not only erases any Palestinian claim to land or identity and delegitimizes their political aims and goals; in a different and more subtle way, it works to banish alternative Jewish perspectives from the wider Jewish community and undermine a robust debate about the meaning and possibilities of the Jewish future.

Another key reason why we qualify our approach in speaking about *Jewish* anti-Zionism is to complicate the notion that Zionism is only a Jewish phenomenon. As recent scholars have noted, Christian Zionism has become one of the driving financial and ideological forces behind support for Israel in the United States and in many countries around the world. One could relatedly ask why Arthur Herzberg chose to exclude Christian Zionism from his *The Zionist Idea*, especially given that forms of Christian Zionism preceded the advent of Jewish Zionism in the mid-nineteenth century, existed when he wrote the book, and continue today.²² For example, Irish philosopher John Toland (1670–1722) advocated for Jews to return to the Holy Land in the 1710s, and Joanna Southcott (1750–1814) founded a millenarian movement to promote similar ideas. The most well-known example may be Anthony Ashley-Cooper, better known as Lord Shaftesbury (1801–1885), who spearheaded a movement for the return of the Jews to the land of Israel.²³ Another example is Ernest Laharanne (1840–1897), a French Catholic who published a pamphlet in 1860 titled *The New Eastern Question: The Egyptian and Arabian Empires: Restitution of the Jewish Nation*: it called for a Jewish state to replace the Ottoman Empire. Too often, Jewish studies has been unable to account for the diversity of these early Zionist perspectives, particularly as they emerged outside the questions of Jewish modernity. Some scholars do address more diverse forms of Zionism. For example, Shalom Goldman argues that a “wider and more inclusive history of Zionism . . . cannot be understood in isolation from Christian culture generally and Christian Zionism in particular.”²⁴ Brian Klug goes even further to claim, “You could perhaps argue on this basis that Jews appropriated Zionism from Christians.”²⁵

One key difference between Jewish Zionism and Jewish anti-Zionism is that anti-Zionism has no central figure like Theodor Herzl who

represented the movement, even symbolically, although in his time Herzl's popularity was hardly universal among Zionists.²⁶ We argue that this is partially the reason why Jewish anti-Zionism has been so hard to analyze without invoking polemics and generalizations. Particularly in its early years, anti-Zionism was often a subset of completely alternative political programs that took little interest in Zionist ideas and often little interest in each other. For much of the early twentieth century, Zionism was a nonfactor in Jewish politics—it was seen as unrealistic, illogical, and, in some cases, even dangerous. But this started shifting after the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and offered institutional affirmation and support of the Zionist movement. In response, Jewish organizations began emerging around the world that took opposition to Zionism as a starting point for their wider political perspectives. Although some like the League of British Jews are no longer in existence, others such as the American Council for Judaism, founded in New Jersey in 1942, are experiencing a revival today.²⁷

Until the past three or four decades, Jewish anti-Zionism was never really a “movement”; instead, it was a disparate set of reactions to Zionism, each coming from different corners of the Jewish world. Our approach offers insight into the diversity of these responses by including texts from significant figures and groups across disparate geographies, political backgrounds, and time periods. Rather than offering a “great man view of history,” these excerpts point, we hope, to trends that developed in relationship with broader movements and never in isolation from the other thinkers in the collection. We chose to situate collectively written documents within the body of the text to signify how movement-oriented thinking affects the wider ideology of any moment.

In this volume, we begin our textual trajectory near the end of the nineteenth century. We did not include early critiques of Hovevei Tzion (“Lovers of Zion”) an early proto-Zionist group in Eastern Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, nor do we include Jews who opposed a national Jewish project before the emergence of Zionism. Figures such as Moses Mendelssohn may have offered invaluable insights into the nature of Jewish politics, but he, as did others like him, spoke outside

our scholarly purview. Notably, in response to an anonymous letter proposing the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel, Mendelssohn responded that the nature of “our people” is one of “monkish piety” and not “political activity.”²⁸ Although these sentiments are of critical importance, we focus our attention and analysis on Zionism as a political and ideological reality and do not engage wider arguments of whether the pre-Zionist Jewish tradition condones or opposes the creation of a Jewish state. This historiographic project seeks to engage a diversity of voices to complicate the flattening impact that Zionism has had on the study of modern Jewish history.

In more recent decades, some have suggested that the state of Israel has become the “collective Jew” in our time, with the implication that anything that is anti-Israel is also antisemitic.²⁹ In 1974 Arnold Forster and Benjamin Epstein published *The New Antisemitism* that focused on antisemitism on the Left and in the Muslim world, arguing that a new antisemitism was emerging through anti-Israel advocacy alongside the more classic antisemitism of far-right groups.³⁰ This book sparked a veritable cottage industry that has blossomed over the last half-century, in which spurious accusations of antisemitism are unleashed on social justice activists, particularly those involved in pro-Palestine activism. Both Forster and Epstein were major figures in the Anti-Defamation League, Forster as its associate director and general council from 1946 until 2003 and Epstein as its national director from 1947 until 1978.

Many of the arguments made in *The New Antisemitism* have continued to percolate and indeed have been amplified in the present iteration of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), where its CEO Jonathan Greenblatt has stated unequivocally, “Anti-Zionism is Antisemitism: full stop.”³¹ Many ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionists continue to pay little attention to such statements, while progressive non- or anti-Zionists, as well as some liberal Zionists, have begun to push back against such sweeping and politically charged assertions.³²

For too long, Jewish anti-Zionists have been demonized as “self-hating,” as traitors, and, more recently, as “Un-Jews” rejecting a supposedly monolithic Jewish Zionist consensus.³³ This is more than just slander: it is a form of tacit dehumanization, even of internal antisemitism, that

deliberately marginalizes non- and anti-Zionist Jews from any legitimate claim to Jewish identity and politics. It speaks to the wider supersession of Jewish identity to further a certain kind of right-wing politics, particularly through the adoption of IHRA's working definition on anti-semitism and its weaponization to attack free speech.³⁴ These attacks help fuel far-right figures such as Republican operative Steve Bannon who suggested that the Jewish Left is the main enemy of the state of Israel, and it delegitimizes a robust internal debate about the Jewish future.³⁵ Given Israel's destruction of Gaza and the moral and political abyss we now find ourselves in, we need bold visions from the past to bring about a more livable future. In this book, we are elevating these anti-Zionist traditions from the dustbin of Jewish history to make room for a more robust debate.

The Zionist Idea

Nathan Birnbaum (1864–1937) first coined the term “Zionism” in 1890 to describe the growing movements to build a Jewish state in Palestine—what for Jews was known as the land of Israel—which at the time was located in the Ottoman Empire.³⁶ Although Birnbaum later abandoned Zionism to help create the ultra-Orthodox group Agudat Yisrael that he served as general secretary from 1919 to 1922, his term captured the energy of earlier movements such as Hovevei Tzion (Lovers of Zion) that were working to foster a Jewish national movement.³⁷ When Herzl convened the First Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland, hundreds of delegates gathered for what amounted to the beginning of the most revolutionary idea in modern Jewish history: that Jews constituted a political nation and would organize themselves to financially and politically support the colonization effort in Palestine to turn the land into a Jewish commonwealth. We explicitly emphasize the word “colonization” because that was the historical process pursued in these early efforts. Although today the word rightly carries certain negative political and moral judgments, colonialism was an accepted part of nineteenth-century European politics; Zionist leaders worked to use this model to resolve what they argued was the existence of Jews as a separate

nationality in European lands. The seed of this idea was clear: their plan was to increase the *Jewish* presence in a land that had always been home to many cultures and religions, including many Jews who were skeptical of the early Zionist movement. Even though various schools of Zionism emerged to advance competing issues and agendas within the broader national movement, the insistence on building a Jewish homeland was paramount.

It is often assumed that Zionism always sought the founding of a Jewish nation-state, but the story is more complicated. As Dmitry Shumsky shows in his book *Beyond the Nation-State*, many early Zionists who later advocated for a nation-state did not initially envision one but instead fought for some form of Jewish political autonomy.³⁸ What became known as statist or political Zionism sought to fulfill Zionist aspirations through the creation of a sovereign state. This ideology drew earlier forms of Zionism—cultural, religious, linguistic, and even socialist—into its statist orbit. Today the statist project has overwhelmingly won. Almost all conceptions of Zionism today are constructed through a statist lens and understand the ideology of the state of Israel as nearly synonymous with Zionism.

It must be noted at the outset that Zionism and anti-Zionism were originally European phenomena. Both ideologies reacted to changes in Europe—with Zionism suggesting that Jews should consider themselves a separate nation and anti-Zionism proposing that Jews define themselves differently in a post-emancipation state, such as “Germans of the Mosaic persuasion” or, in Palestine, simply as Jews who were Ottoman subjects. As such, most of the pre-Holocaust figures in this volume were from Europe, albeit from many different contexts. German Jewish leaders fiercely opposed Zionism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because it put at risk the entire project of considering themselves full German citizens of the Jewish religion. Other groups like the Alliance Israelite Universelle, founded in Paris in 1860, provided European-style education for Arab Jews and actually opposed the spread of Zionism to Jews in Arab countries.³⁹ Although the Alliance later sometimes backtracked on that position and supported Zionism as we will see in this book, both their own advocates and many Arab

Jewish leaders spoke out quite vociferously *against* Zionism before and, in some cases, after the founding of the state. Some viewed it as a Jewish assimilatory transplant of colonial ideas. Some rejected its Eurocentrism and its program to de-Arabize the Arab Jews by forcing them to stop speaking Arabic and practicing their culture and values.⁴⁰ In a reversal of the problem, for some Iraqi Jews like Yusuf Harun Zilkha and Hakham Sasson Khadouri, Zionism jeopardized their status as free and accepted people in Arab lands and later nation-states, thus creating a new Jewish Question that had never before existed in those places.⁴¹

Turning to Zionism itself, there are two fundamental principles that almost all Zionists agreed on, even as they disagreed about much else. First, they agreed that the Jews are not only a “people” (*Am Yisrael*, the Jewish people) but also a “nation” (*le’um*). This transference from people (*am*) to nation was not unique to the Jews but was part of an ongoing project of post feudal Europe by which empires morphed into what we now call nations. This was captured in Ernest Renan’s 1882 essay “What Is a Nation?” that articulated the contours of a nation and became a template for emerging nation-states in the turn of the century. In that same year, Leo Pinsker published *Autoemancipation*, which some scholars consider to be the first Zionist text.⁴² Some Zionist historiographers such as Ben-Zion Dinur argued that Jews were *always* a nation (as described by Renan) and were not created by European nationalism, a point made somewhat differently by Moses Hess.⁴³ The argument that Jews were a “nation before nationalism” was one part of a broader case for Jewish exceptionalism in the nation-state era. It was also a rebuttal to Jewish anti-Zionists who claimed that Jewish nationalism was itself a form of assimilation to European political norms.⁴⁴

In any case, this transition to nation-states was not universally accepted but was hard-won. Revolutions from the failed German revolution of 1848–1849 to those in Austria, Denmark, and Italy helped forge a new Europe. Many in Europe rebelled against the absolutism of imperial rule as industrialization and urbanization spread across the continent. Populist movements gained power, and national identity matured and was translated into new nation-state projects. Although these events deeply influenced European Jewry, many Jews were more concerned

with another European project of the times—emancipation. For centuries Jews had constructed their collective identities apart from the Christian societies in which they lived, and now they had to reconceive of themselves in light of inclusion into those societies.⁴⁵

After a bitter debate at the Sixth Zionist Congress in 1902 over whether to accept a British proposal to create a Jewish homeland in British East Africa, the Zionist movement agreed that the land of Israel was the Jewish homeland to which Jews aspired to one day return. The principle that a Jewish state could only be founded in the Jewish homeland made the land of Israel, then known as Palestine, the ultimate and exclusive destination of the Zionist project. The short-lived project known as “Territorialism,” supported by Israel Zangwill among others, sought the establishment of Jewish autonomy elsewhere, whether in Uganda, Argentina, East Texas, or earlier, in Niagara Falls: ultimately, it failed to compete with the Jewish promise of a return to a homeland (*eretz moledet*) that sparked feelings of redemption and national revival, even among many secular Jews.⁴⁶ These two elements—nationhood and homeland—form the cornerstone of Zionist political ideology and help explain how the state of Israel has positioned itself as synonymous with Jewish people worldwide.

Almost all other aspects of Zionism were hotly debated. Like most ideologies, Zionism was never a consensus movement nor really one movement at all; it was constantly at war with itself. As Jews navigated the new vistas made possible by having been granted emancipation in Europe, Zionism was only one of many options and initially not a very popular one. France emancipated its Jews in 1791, and the Netherlands soon followed in 1797, leading to larger waves of emancipation across other emerging European nation-states. Emancipation held so much promise for Jews that in 1917, when the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, only 10 percent of Mandatory Palestine was Jewish, and among Jews who moved to Palestine during the Second Aliyah, more than half returned to Europe or emigrated elsewhere within a few years.⁴⁷ Zionism’s spread was thus as unlikely as its success; from the very beginning, it was fostered and supported by the European powers over and against other forms of Jewish politics.

But the emancipation of the Jews in Europe over the course of the nineteenth century was not always viewed positively because it provoked anxieties about whether it could truly resolve the Jewish Question or sustain meaningful modes of Jewish living.⁴⁸ Importantly, the promise of inclusion came at the cost of Jews understanding themselves as comprising a separate collective. Thus, Clermont-Tonnerre's famous line, "To the Jews everything as a religion, nothing as a people," illustrated the dilemma facing European Jewry.⁴⁹ Should they sacrifice their communal bonds and reconceive of their Jewishness as a religion, or should they continue insisting on their essential separateness to preserve some measure of communal autonomy?⁵⁰ Jewish reformers such as Abraham Geiger responded by creating a liberal form of Judaism that was compatible with the obligations of European citizenship. In response, traditionalist Jews created emerging forms of Jewish Orthodoxy, which varied between those that sought to integrate observant Jews into the new political system and early forms of ultra-Orthodoxy that sought to preserve separate Jewish collectivities outside mainstream society.⁵¹ Implicit in emancipation was the promise of Jewish normalization, certainly regarding the social, religious, and, to some extent, the political realities of Jews. But it was also the occasion for the rise of antisemitism—and arguably the origin of antisemitism—that sought to racialize Jews as fundamentally other and incapable of ever fully integrating into European society.⁵² Antisemitism sparked the realization among many, including a young journalist named Theodor Herzl, that emancipation was a fool's errand or, worse, a failed project.

But while Zionism positioned itself as an alternative to the impending failure of emancipation, many Jews in Germany, France, Austria, Hungary, and even in Poland and Russia were not convinced and remained committed to emancipation while resisting both antisemitism and the Zionist alternative. This continued through the pogroms in Eastern Europe in the 1880s and 1890s and the steady rise of antisemitism across Europe. Hayyim Nahman Bialik's poem, "The City of Slaughter," about the pogrom in Kishinev in 1903 became a signpost of what was to come.⁵³ Until the rise of Nazism in 1933, many of these

communities were committed to remaining in Europe before beginning to seek refuge elsewhere. At that point, given the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 that limited immigration to the United States, Zionism offered a ready-made alternative to the coming catastrophe of European Jewry, even as many who emigrated to Palestine in the 1920s and certainly by the 1930s did so not for ideological reasons but for practical ones. For them, Zionism was less an ideological choice than an escape from likely death.

It must be noted that most European Jews, even in the heyday of pogroms, did not emigrate to Palestine. Jewish communities existed throughout the Diaspora—of course, in the United States but also in Argentina and Brazil and other parts of South America, in Mexico, in Australia and New Zealand, in South Africa and Rhodesia, in Ethiopia, India, and many other locales. Some of these communities remained diasporist and even anti-Zionist, whereas others, such as in South Africa, adopted Zionism and supported immigration to Israel after the founding of the state. But although Jews sometimes found refuge, strict quotas sought to regulate the amount of Jewish immigration to other countries. Zionism, then, was presented to the European powers as the perfect alternative. Palestine was the only place in the world where a political movement wanted Jewish immigration without quotas or restriction, its impact on the Palestinian Arabs notwithstanding.

Like Reform and some sectors of Orthodoxy, Zionism was also a product of emancipation, yet the movement nonetheless argued that emancipation was a failure. Hannah Arendt put it this way in her unfinished essay on antisemitism: “For Zionism, the history of emancipation is the prelude to a catastrophe that had to attend the development of national awareness. According to this view, things went well for so long because of liberal illusions and the individualistic biases of the Enlightenment.”⁵⁴ Although no one could have predicted the extent of the catastrophe that devastated Jewish Europe, Zionist leaders had long been preparing for the failure of emancipation by building an alternative national project. Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau called this “catastrophic Zionism,” which for them would solve the existential dilemma of Jews as empires gave way to nation-states. For us, this remains Zionism’s

most compelling argument. For a movement premised on the idea that the Diaspora is a fundamentally dangerous condition for Jewish life, the Holocaust was a moment that seemed to vindicate their concern.⁵⁵ Although the Zionists' analysis focused almost entirely on Europe and did not accurately reflect the reality in other places in the Jewish Diaspora, the movement that cried that the sky was falling managed to create an alternative that could absorb some of the rupture.

By supporting a version of nationalism recognizable to the great powers of Europe, Zionism sought to normalize the Jewish condition in the eyes of the world. That is, instead of being considered outsiders to European society and the nation-state system, the Jews could resolve the Jewish Question by becoming “like all the nations.” Normalization was a problematic formulation for many, not only because it *was not* true but also because it *was*. For those who held onto this sense of exceptionalism, Jewish national collectivity was never distinct from religion: thus, they argued, as odd as it sounds, that Zionism's origins did not lie in European nationalism but in the Hebrew Bible. Zionism was thus never a solution to a problem as it was for Herzl and others who problematized the diasporic condition: for many nationalist religious Jews, it was the very fulfillment of Jewish destiny. For them, Zionism should not be about normalization; rather, as Ben-Zion Dinur famously put it, Zionism was “Jewish historiography.” In the secular Zionist mindset, however, Zionism both sought to assimilate European nationalism as a new *Jewish* project—that is, to integrate Jews into this emerging system of nation-states—and to create a “New Jew,” an idealized new understanding of Jewish identity that had redemptive components.⁵⁶

Throughout its early years, Zionism, founded as a secular movement, was defined by many of these tensions. It posited that Jews could survive if they reconstituted themselves as a nation in their national homeland, ideally through the formation of a nation-state. The question of cultural flourishing concerned many early Zionists such as Ahad Ha'am and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, and each sought different ways of imagining Jewish cultural revival in a new Jewish commonwealth. Early forms of Jewish anti-Zionism shared many of these concerns. Orthodox, Reform, and politically radical Jewish anti-Zionists put forward alternative

imaginaries for Jewish survival and flourishing. That is why in this book we argue that Zionism and anti-Zionism, in all their myriad forms, were twin births as distinct approaches to the issues of Jewish modernity. This is because anti-Zionism was not only an “anti” movement. For example, the noted Jewish historian Simon Dubnov referred to it as “Diaspora Nationalism.”⁵⁷ In its earliest years, its opposition to Zionism ran alongside other affirmative solutions to the status of Jews in modernity.

Ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionism often views Zionism as a false messianism, which as we will illustrate later, was perceived as embodying the prohibition of “forcing the end.”⁵⁸ Thus, for many leading ultra-Orthodox thinkers, their anti-Zionism would preserve a true messianism that remained faithful to waiting for the messiah in exile, adhering to Torah and mitzvot, and not forcing the messianic era.⁵⁹ Many left-wing anti-Zionists of the pre-state period also had a messianic ethos that opposed nationalism and viewed their conception of liberatory politics through a messianic lens.⁶⁰

Yaakov Yagdar goes even further by claiming that Zionism is a form of Jewish “supersessionism,” a kind of soft replacement ideology for the exilic nature of Judaism. Yagdar writes, “The concept of supersessionism can help us better understand the relation between Zionism and its own Jewish history—or its claim to Jewish identity.”⁶¹ That is, by severing Zionism from Judaism, by making it either its substitution or fulfillment, Zionism folded Jewishness into a European Weberian secular paradigm that enabled Jews to survive in a register foreign to Judaism—that is, as a pure national entity without Judaism—fulfilling its *raison d’être* to be “like all the other nations,” of becoming normal within the context of secular modernity. This was common among early Zionists, although some, like Aaron David Gordon, Martin Buber, and Gershom Scholem, never accepted “like all the other nations” as an appropriate moniker for Zionism.⁶² One example is the character Yudke in Chaim Hazaz’s essay, “The Sermon,” who states, “I believe that Erez Yisrael is *already* something other than Judaism.”⁶³

The ultra-Orthodox rebuttal, as argued most vociferously by Yoel Teitelbaum of Satmar (1897–1979), Aaron Shmuel Tamares (1869–1931),

and other important figures in this volume, was that this “normalcy” amounted to the heretical rejection of the “covenant of exile.” By rejecting the exile, Teitelbaum argued that Zionism was a fundamental rebellion against, and not the fulfillment of, thousands of years of Jewish history and thought. Even more notably, his rebuttal was not rejected by some early Zionist ideologues such as Jacob Klatzkin, Yosef Hayyim Brenner, and Yosef Micha Berdichevsky, who readily acknowledged the accusation of heresy as a badge of honor.⁶⁴ In a predictable quasi-Sabbatian and supersessionist register, they argued that in the new European world of secular nationalism, it was Judaism itself that was heretical, as Berdichevsky famously coined it, “I am the last Jew and the first Hebrew.” For these thinkers, to remain loyal to Judaism in a world of nation-states was a flagrant violation of the new world order. A bit later, Yonatan Ratosh, founder of the Young Hebrews (or Canaanites), who is included in this volume, makes a similar claim in his 1944 programmatic essay “Opening Discourse” arguing for Hebrew nativism in opposition to Judaism.

As already mentioned, a variety of ideologies emerged with different understandings of Zionism. Although these ultimately coalesced around a statist vision, it is helpful to offer a brief overview of these early competing visions.⁶⁵ Political Zionism, the strand already discussed that was promoted by Herzl, focused on securing international recognition for a future Jewish state. In a diary entry from the First Zionist Congress, Herzl famously predicted that in fifty years there would be a Jewish state. He offered an analysis in his most well-known work, *The Jewish State*, which suggested that antisemitism was an inescapable part of Jewish life in Europe and that Jews needed to secure a sovereign state to be safe.⁶⁶ Although he was initially indifferent to where this state would be located, he eventually concluded with the rest of the Zionist movement that it should be in Palestine. In his imagined Jewish state, Jews would speak German, the Arabs would welcome Zionist colonization for its Western technological advances, and there would be a rebuilt cultural Temple in Jerusalem.⁶⁷ But Herzl’s political vision was countered by another competing vision of what Zionism should look like: what became known as cultural Zionism led by the Jewish thinker

Asher Ginzburg, more commonly known as Ahad Ha'am, or "one of the people."⁶⁸

Ahad Ha'am's vision of cultural Zionism was considerably more nuanced than what evolved into political Zionism. Born largely out of the experiences of Eastern European Jews, cultural Zionism promoted the creation of a Jewish homeland to serve as a cultural and spiritual center for all of world Jewry. In contrast to Herzl, Ahad Ha'am did not think the state should primarily exist to resolve the issue of European anti-semitism. Instead, he argued that Zionism should inaugurate a new Jewish cultural era that moved Jewish creativity from the container of Jewish religion into a wider cultural movement. He believed that this cultural revival must happen slowly through the renewed use of the Hebrew language, a shift in Jewish education, and the creation of Israel as a spiritual center for all world Jewry.⁶⁹ He was also concerned that a focus on the building of a Jewish state would run roughshod over the rights of Palestine's indigenous inhabitants.⁷⁰

In his essay, "Truth from the Land of Israel" (1891), Ahad Ha'am wrote about his disappointment with the early Zionist movement.⁷¹ He recognized that the early Zionist settlers were treating the Arabs poorly and that the Arabs were aware of the political impacts of Zionist immigration. Ahad Ha'am warned that unless the Zionist settlers grappled with the reality that the land was already occupied, conflict was imminent. His warning went largely unheeded. We argue that the cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'am became much less relevant to Jewish politics after the establishment of the state of Israel. Certainly since 2018, when the Israeli Knesset adopted the Nation State Basic Law in 2018 that affirmed Israel as the nation-state *only* of the Jewish people, forms of non-statist Zionism such as Ahad Ha'am's cultural Zionism no longer remain operative because they do not account for the politics of the state as it exists.

Although Zionism was initially mostly a secular movement, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935) was one of the most prominent Jewish thinkers to offer it religious grounding.⁷² Most of his traditionally observant contemporaries opposed Zionism, yet Kook argued that the Zionist return to the land of Israel was the beginning of a divinely

ordained process to hasten the coming of the messiah. More so than any other early Zionist thinker, Kook emphasized the sacredness of the land of Israel and urged Jews to settle it. In response to the broadly secular goals of the early Zionist movement, Kook argued that secular people, unbeknownst to themselves, were able to fulfill deeper religious purposes through their actions. Although most secular Jews obviously rejected this idea or were uninterested in it, Kook's discursive shift paved the way for greater religious involvement in the Zionist movement. Kook eventually became the first chief rabbi of Mandatory Palestine, and his ideas became a political force after Israel's victory in 1967 and, under the tutelage of his son Zvi Yehuda Kook, the beginning of the settlement movement in the West Bank shortly thereafter.

Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880–1940), the leader of Revisionist Zionism and the founder of the Jewish Legion in the British Army, saw the issue differently.⁷³ What was at stake was not the messianic fulfillment of Jewish destiny or the cultural revival of the Jewish people. It was instead the creation of a strong Jewish state that would function as a bulwark against antisemitism and foster the creation of a new Jewish masculinity.⁷⁴ For Jabotinsky, Jewish militarism and the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine were essential for Jewish safety in the world. After leaving the mainstream Zionist movement in 1923, he founded the Alliance of Revisionist-Zionists and the youth group Betar, which competed with the mainstream Zionist movement for loyalty and followers. Betar emphasized discipline and Jewish pride, and his followers created the two more radical Jewish militia groups that fought in 1948, the Irgun and the Stern Gang, and were responsible for some of the most violent episodes of the *Nakba*—which is the Arabic word for catastrophe and is how Palestinians refer to the establishment of Israel—including the massacre at Deir Yassin in 1948.

Unlike the other early Zionists, Jabotinsky was unusually forthright about the impact that Zionism would have on the native Arabs. In one of his most oft-quoted essays called “The Iron Wall” (1923), Jabotinsky wrote, “Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonised. That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they

will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of ‘Palestine’ into the ‘Land of Israel.’”⁷⁵ Jabotinsky argued that the Iron Wall would break the Arab connection to the land and ultimately force the native Palestinians to accept the reality that the Zionists were there to stay. Once they accepted that they were second-class citizens, they could then negotiate to create a system of measured autonomy that would not threaten the inherent Jewishness of the state and its majority. Jabotinsky’s Zionism played a pivotal role in the creation of the state and the evolution of its foreign policy, and it informed the ideologies of Menachem Begin and of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud Party today.⁷⁶

As you will see throughout this book, pre-state Jewish anti-Zionist thinkers offered novel responses to the problems of Jewish sovereignty and to these early Zionist ideas. Jewish thinkers such as Hermann Cohen, Simon Dubnov, and Moritz Gudemann offered robust defenses of Jewish diasporic life, insisting that Zionism was only valid because of antisemitism and that Jews must recommit to their messianic vocation of spreading truth and justice in the Diaspora. Ultra-Orthodox Jews like the Chabad Rebbe Sholom Dovber Schneersohn of Lubavitch and Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter (author of the *Sefat Emet*) condemned Zionism as a modern-day Sabbateanism that would jeopardize Jewish observance and profane the holy land of Israel. Bundist leaders such as Vladimir Medem and Henryk Ehrlich condemned Zionism for its ethnonationalism and asserted that Jews are not a chosen people, arguing instead for Jewish solidarity with leftist movements across Europe. Other non-European Jews such as Hayim Nahum, David Fresco, and Yusuf Harum Zilkha attacked Zionism for its Eurocentric “Orientalist” character and its condescending attitude to other regions of Jewish life.

In many respects, these Jewish alternatives dissuaded Jews from giving up their Jewishness in response to emancipation and were profound answers to the questions of Jewish modernity. These ideas all drew on distinct traditions to conceptualize their vision of Jewish flourishing within wider societies and historical contexts. Anti-Zionism had its own agenda for Jewish collective life. In many different ways and for many different reasons, it viewed Zionism as flawed and offered distinct

possibilities for the future of Jewish life. For some, this meant fostering Jewish cultural autonomy in a wider struggle against capitalism; for others, it meant securing Jewish communal boundaries by preserving Orthodox religious observance.

Defining Terms: Non-Zionism, Post-Zionism, Counter-Zionism

Jewish opposition to Zionism has taken many forms throughout its history. Very often these oppositional voices have been viewed under the umbrella of anti-Zionism, but doing so overlooks the diversity of how Jews think about Jewish nationalism. In the process of collecting and choosing materials for this volume, we had to make hard choices about what to include. Some figures in this book, such as Nathan Birnbaum and Hannah Arendt, were Zionists before abandoning it. Others, like Simon Dubnov and Joseph Nehama, took the opposite route: they opposed Zionism for a number of practical reasons but softened that stance in response to rising antisemitism and changing historical circumstances. Dubnov proposed a notion of “autonomism,” suggesting that Jews could establish autonomous settlements through a nonterritorial form of nationalism that was quite different from the territorial nationalism of political Zionism.⁷⁷ There were still others who met Zionism with both criticism and praise, like the noted Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, whose letter to Gertrude Oppenheim about the need to maintain a strong diasporic life we feature in this book.⁷⁸ Groups such as Agudat Yisrael or the American Jewish Committee (AJC) were certainly not Zionist but eventually mobilized support for the state after its founding; for example, the AJC embraced Zionism after Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War. Even more notably, there are figures who do not define themselves as anti-Zionist, but we will later explain by what criteria we include them here.

Observant Jewish leaders such as Samson Rafael Hirsch are even more complicated. Although Hirsch died in 1888 just as the Jewish national movement was getting underway, he was already very ambivalent

about it. Israeli figures such as Yeshayahu Leibowitz and Rav Shagar (Shimon Gershon Rosenberg) both identified as Zionists even as they offered fierce critiques of Israeli and even Zionist policies. In this anthology, we do not include them or other important Jewish figures such as Yehoshua Radler-Feldman (known more commonly by his pen name Rav Binyamin), Martin Buber, Esther Moyal, or Simon Rawidowicz who considered themselves Zionist, despite their criticisms not only of the policies of the Jewish state in its first decades but also of the way it was structured. Some of these Zionists advocated for a binational (Jewish–Arab) state or came out in opposition to the militarism of what Rav Binyamin called “the state of David Ben Gurion.” Some of these thinkers have already been explored in a variety of well-known works, including Jacqueline Rose’s *The Question of Zion* and Noam Pianko’s *The Roads Not Taken*.

We want to emphasize that the categories under discussion were often more fluid than they appear. The affirmation of the Diaspora was not by definition a non-Zionist position, although “negation of the Diaspora” was indeed a centerpiece of the Zionist project. There were Zionists such as Simon Rawidowicz who refused to negate the Diaspora, and there were others such as Aaron David Gordon who negated it in the strongest terms.⁷⁹ As an alternative to Ahad Ha’Am’s insistence on Israel as a spiritual center for world Jewry, Rawidowicz proposed a dual-centered ideology in his Hebrew book, *Babylon and Jerusalem*.⁸⁰ Because he identified as a Zionist, albeit one who criticized some central Zionist tenets, we could not include him in this collection.

Let us begin by offering some general parameters for non-Zionism without a firm definition because we believe that this term is too broad to be definitively defined. It is our view that non-Zionism expressed the once-prevalent position among Jews that, even though they were willing to philanthropically support Jewish life in Palestine, they were opposed to the creation of a political Jewish state. For many in the pre-state and immediate post-state period, non-Zionist Jews insisted on defining Jewish identity outside the parameters of a Jewish state and within the contexts of the countries where they lived. Non-Zionist organizations such as the American Jewish Committee were not

opposed to a Jewish state, but they did not place it at the center of their Jewish program. AJC leaders like Jacob Blaustein believed the Diaspora remained a crucial place for Jewish flourishing and one that should retain autonomy from the Jewish national project in Israel.⁸¹

Non-Zionism was a much more operative category before the state than after 1948 and certainly after Zionism took on hegemonic power in the Six-Day War in 1967.⁸² Since the emergence of what is known as the Zionist consensus in the early 1970s, non-Zionism ceased to work as an operational category for contemporary Jewish politics. In other words, Zionism has become so pervasive in world Jewry that to be a Jew who cares about Jewish identity one cannot avoid or circumvent Zionism but must weigh in on it one way or the other. One can be a Zionist in a variety of ways, even as today Zionism has become less the multi-valent and complex fabric it once was and has settled into pure statism, or pro-Israelism.⁸³ One can be critical of Israeli state policies and still be a Zionist, as is illustrated by the massive protests in Israel by Israeli Jews against the Netanyahu government's proposed judicial reform in 2023 and by those liberal Zionists, many of whom called for a ceasefire in the war in Gaza after initially supporting the war. But if one abandons belief in the Jewish character of the state as a central tenet of one's politics, one has broken with the Zionist consensus.

Another alternative to Zionism is known as post-Zionism, which arose in Israel in the 1980s from the research and publications of the so-called Israeli New Historians. After accessing previously classified documents about the conduct of Israeli militias and the military (Palmach) in the 1948 war, historians such as Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappé conducted extensive research on Israel's expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians in what became known among Palestinians as the *Nakba*, or catastrophe. Although Palestinian scholars and writers had been publishing work on the Nakba for decades, the New Historians were the first to access Israeli archives illustrating the inside perspective of what happened: these primary sources complicated and then discredited the mainstream Israeli narrative that the Palestinians simply fled unprovoked during the founding of the state of Israel.

In response to these new archival findings, post-Zionists put forward ideas that were not anti-Zionist per se but that clearly subverted standard Zionist narratives of the state's origins and practices. They argued that the formation of the state of Israel had fulfilled Zionism and that it was time to make the transition to new ideological frameworks.⁸⁴ Some post-Zionists such as Benny Morris eventually embraced right-wing politics, especially after the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000, whereas others such as Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, Tom Segev, and Shlomo Sand ended up rejecting Zionism entirely.⁸⁵

Another more recent contribution to the debate is Shaul Magid's notion of a diasporic post-Zionism called counter-Zionism. As articulated in *The Necessity of Exile*, counter-Zionism is anti-Zionism that is not necessarily anti-Israel. As opposed to other forms of anti-Zionism, counter-Zionism claims that there need not be a fusion between a state and its founding ideology. Zionism created the material and ideological conditions for the founding of the state; now that the state is in existence, there is no reason for Israel to retain its foundational ideology. Zionism created a colonial ethnostate at a time when colonialism and ethnonationalism were central to the international order.⁸⁶ Yet, decades after its founding, the state remains committed to promoting a colonial ethnonational project (which Magid believes lies at the core of Zionism) at the expense of Palestinian self-determination and the rights of Arabs in neighboring countries. To build a stable democracy that ensures the equality of all, counter-Zionism argues that Jews should abandon Zionism to find a new ideology to guide the state toward an equitable binational reality.

To create this new ideology, Magid explores a variety of alternative pathways for theorizing Jewish flourishing. He examines the radical anarchism of Aaron Shmuel Tamares (1869–1931), the anti-Zionist political theories of Judith Butler and Hannah Arendt, and the religious post-Zionism of the aforementioned Rav Shagar. By reviving these voices, Magid offers an alternative vision for how Jews can think about their identities in the land of Israel and in the Diaspora, hoping to imagine a shared future between Jews and Palestinians in a recalibrated and, indeed, transformed new state.

Jewish Anti-Zionism: A Missing Part of Modern Jewish History

What is Jewish *anti-Zionism*? Unlike other alternatives, Jewish anti-Zionism is a distinct articulation of opposition to the Zionist project that balances both a commitment to addressing the questions of Jewish existence in modernity with a rejection of Zionism from many different angles and perspectives. Although some Jewish anti-Zionists may find inspiration from pre-state Zionist alternatives, such as those suggested by Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, Hans Kohn, Rav Binyamin, and other such thinkers, Jewish anti-Zionism rejects the Zionist project and its ongoing impact in the Middle East. Sometimes it opposes the state project; at other times it opposes Zionism as determining the acceptable parameters of Jewish identity. Its roots from within the questions of Jewish modernity, broadly construed, are what distinguishes Jewish anti-Zionism from other forms of anti-Zionist ideology. Although it is often in dialogue with non-Jewish forms of anti-Zionism, particularly as promoted by Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim thinkers, it also draws from a distinctive Jewish heritage that has existed since the beginning of Zionism itself.⁸⁷

We do not offer a thorough genealogy of the term “anti-Zionism” throughout history but instead provide operative categories for how this phenomenon has shown up in diverse geographies and time periods. Jews have expressed opposition to Zionism through a variety of branches and iterations as long as Zionism has existed, many of which share little in common with one another. It is noteworthy that just several generations ago, Jewish critiques of Zionism were not considered anomalous: they were simply legitimate expressions of an alternative Jewish political vision and a rejection of ethnonationalism as the best mode for Jewish flourishing. The historian Walter Laqueur, for example, in his critically acclaimed and widely read book, *A History of Zionism*, opens his section on Jewish anti-Zionism by writing, “The opposition to Zionism is as old as Zionism itself. It has come from many directions, Jewish and non-Jewish, left and right, religious and atheist. It has been asserted on the one hand that the Zionist goal was impossible to achieve,

on the other hand that it was undesirable, and by some that it was both illusory and undesirable.”⁸⁸ Laqueur presents three categories of Jewish anti-Zionist dissent: left-wing revolutionary anti-Zionism, religious-Orthodox anti-Zionism, and liberal anti-Zionism.

In the following sections, we will broaden Laqueur’s still-relevant categories even as we alter his labels. Since Laqueur’s time these categories have become even more fluid. Today, for example, there are many non-Orthodox theological critiques of the Zionist movement, and Orthodox anti-Zionism sometimes includes radical critiques of mandatory Israeli conscription and Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians. Although liberal Jewish anti-Zionism is no longer as popular as it once was, it remains a distinct position that sometimes combines a theological embrace of Jewish diasporic life with a commitment to liberal ideals of Western citizenship and the maintenance of the liberal international order. Because Zionism was initially conceived of in Europe and many early Jewish anti-Zionists were European, we include thinkers with roots in a variety of distinct geographies, including the United States, Israel, Iraq, Iran, the late Ottoman Empire, Ethiopia, and Algeria. We hope this breadth encourages future scholarship that engages a more global analysis of Zionism’s impact on modern Jewish life, a point this anthology makes but looks to others to address more thoroughly.

Radical Jewish Anti-Zionism

Radical Jewish anti-Zionism refers to Jews who integrate a radical critique of Zionism into their understandings of Jewish politics. For pre-state Jewish thinkers such as the Polish Bundist leader Henryk Ehrlich and the Jewish anarchist Emma Goldman, Zionism represented both a distraction from the wider issue of class struggle within European societies and an impediment to their socialist or anarchist visions. For more contemporary Jewish radicals such as the activist and writer Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz and the scholar Naomi Klein, Zionism has overemphasized nationalism as a core Jewish value and undermines a commitment to collective liberation.

Although the radical position varies, most radical Jewish anti-Zionists have criticized the Zionist movement as an ethnonational, settler-colonial project that must be rejected in favor of a leftist vision for the future of the Middle East, whether through a binational state or in a decolonized multiethnic Palestine. In more recent decades, such thinkers have also committed to working within Palestinian-led movements; for example, Ilan Halevi, who served as the only Jewish senior member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or Orly Noy and Jonathan Pollack, two Israelis who organize alongside Palestinians to oppose the Israeli occupation.⁸⁹ Many radical Jewish anti-Zionists couple a critique of Zionism with positive visions of the Jewish Diaspora and its possibilities.

Although opposition to Zionism is more well known among American and European Jewish thinkers, many Arab Jews have articulated these radical positions as well. In past generations, many Jews from Arab lands resisted Zionism because they believed it was a European colonialist project that attempted to strip them of their culture and identity. For example, an Iraqi organization active in the mid-1940s, the League for Combating Zionism, sought to dispel the notion that all Jews supported Zionism; according to British intelligence sources, it had hundreds of active members.⁹⁰ Led by Yusuf Harun Zilkha, the League critiqued British and American imperialism and worked to oppose the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine in favor of a wider class struggle. Similar movements emerged in Egypt during that era.⁹¹

Many Arab Jews in the pre-state period opposed Zionism because they determined that it would undermine Jewish inclusion in those societies. Some associated Zionism with Orientalism and an attempt to de-Arabize and Europeanize their communities.⁹² In one of her most famous comments, Ella Shohat reverses Psalm 138 to write: “By the waters of Zion, where we sat down, and there we wept, when we remembered Babylon.”⁹³ Avi Shlaim also writes poignantly about the identity of being an Arab Jew:

The story of my family in Iraq—and that of many forgotten families like mine—points to a dramatically different picture. It harks back to

(continued...)

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