

In Conjunction with the



Zionism in Thought, Culture, and Literature: From Inception to the State

Instructor: Professor Rachel Feldhay Brenner

Course Description

Modern Zionism has transformed the Jewish world; it has also had a profound and irreversible impact on the international community at large. This course intends to explore the intellectual roots of the movement and its complex ethical, political, and sociological evolution. Our investigation will focus on the movement's ideological diversity as represented by Zionist thinkers and as reflected in the fictional and documentary literature of the time. While both Zionist men and women thinkers/ideologues/writers will be discussed, proper attention will be paid to the egalitarian tenet of Zionism as reflected in women's contributions to Zionist ideology and culture.

At the heart of modern Zionism emerges a paradox. While declaring itself revolutionary, Zionism is inseparable from the theological concept of the Promised Land that shaped the long history of the Diaspora. We shall trace the origins of the Zionist idea in biblical times and explore the motif of longing for Zion in the Jewish Law (*halakha*), mysticism (*kabbalah*), liturgy, medieval literary representations, and finally in the modern, political revision of Zion.

Our discussion of the Enlightenment and the subsequent emancipation of European Jews will show the dramatic change of the image of the Jew in Gentile society. For a brief historical moment it seemed that the memory of Zion had transformed into a vestige of cultural-religious tradition. However, the faith of the Jews in full emancipation and social

acceptance was consistently shattered by continuing pogroms, blood libels and discrimination as well as by the rise of nationalist movements in Europe. The recognition of Jewish helplessness by some *maskilim* [enlightened Jews] created a powerful need for self-empowerment, which engendered the desire to actualize the centuries-old dream of return to Zion.

The precursors of modern Zionism sought to reconcile the idea of the national return to the Land with, on the one hand, European secularism, liberalism and socialist universalism and, on the other hand, with the rabbinic injunctions of passive waiting for the Messiah. This ambivalent position foretells the ideological diversity that characterizes Jewish modern nationalism. As our study demonstrates, the evolution of modern Zionist thought presents a fascinating amalgam of diverging concepts and projections of Jewish national future. The Zionist thinkers and men/women of letters envisioned Zion in many ways: a purely political entity, a cultural center of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, a Jewish state grounded in the socialist ideal, the site of revitalizing reconnection with nature, a militant state, and the locus of messianic redemption. These orientations and their sometimes difficult, even hostile co-existence will be examined with special emphasis on the issue of the Arab population in Palestine. We shall demonstrate the role which the Zionist ideology played in the rise of Arab nationalism and, subsequently, in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is important to realize, however, that modern Zionism should not be exclusively identified with Zion. The Zionist idea has been enormously important to the world Jewry, especially to the American Jewish community. The concluding segment of the course will focus on the American perception of Zionism and on the extent to which the Zionist idea has shaped and defined American Jewish identity.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to read assigned texts carefully.

Texts:

Arthur Hertzberg, ed. *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Atheneum, 1986).

David J. Goldberg: *The Promised Land: A History of Zionist Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996)

Background Reading

Joyce Antler, "The Dream of a Jewish Homeland," in *The Journey Home: Jewish Women and the American Century* (New York: The Free Press, 1997): 98-136.

Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry Before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993)

____ *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project 1914-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

Michael Brown, *The Israeli-American Connection: Its Roots in the Yishuv, 1914-1945* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1996)

Martin Buber, *On Zion: The History of an Idea* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, the 1997 edition)

Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Siege: The Saga of Israel and Zionism* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1986)

Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993)

Yosef Salmon, *Religion and Zionism: First Encounters* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2002).

Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1966)

Gershon Shfir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)

David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment* (Berkeley: California UP, 1966)

Robert Wistrich & David Ohana, *The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma* (London: Frank Cass, 1995)

Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

Syllabus

Course Sections

I. Biblical Zionism

Harry Orlinsky, "The Biblical Concept of Israel: Cornerstone of the Covenant Between God and Israel,"

Psalms, 137, 126.

II. The Land of Israel in the Pre-Modern Period

Shalom Rosenberg, "The Link to the Land of Israel in Jewish Thought: A Class

of Perspectives,”.

Yehuda Halevi, Poems,
Maimonides, “The Epistle to Yemen,”

III. The Modern Period: Enlightenment, Emancipation and the Jews

Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, “Introduction,” 22-32;
“The Emancipation of the Jews of France,”
“Letter of a Citizen to His Fellow Jews,”

Robert M. Seltzer, “Enlightenment,”
“Search for Light and Right: An Epistle to Moses Mendelssohn;”
Moses Mendelssohn, “Judaism Is the Cornerstone of Christianity;” “Judaism as Revealed Legislation,”

IV. Eastern Europe: Haskalah

Howard Sachar, “The Rise of Jewish Nationalism,”
Judah Leib Gordon, “Awake My People!”
Hayyim Nachman Bialik, “Surely the People is Grass,”
Sha’ul Tchernichovsky, “Before the Statue of Apollo,”
Mendele Mokher Sefarim, “Burned Out,”
Sarah Hamer-Jacklyn, “My Mother’s Dream,”
Yosef Hayyim Brenner, “Travel Notes,”

V. Harbingers and Founders of Modern Zionism

Hertzberg, “Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai, (103-107);
“Rabbi Zvi Hirsch
Kalischer,”(108-114)
“Moses Hess,” (117-139)
Hertzberg, “Leo Pinsker,” (179-198)
Hertzberg, “Herzl,” (204-231); “Dreyfus,”
Goldberg, “Herzl - Paying Court to the Powerful”
(57-74).
Herzberg, “Nordau,” (233-241);
Goldberg, “Achad Ha-Am - Zionism for the Elect,” (92-113)
Herzberg, “The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem,”
(262-269); “The Wrong Way,”

VI. Transformations of the Jewish Image: Zionist Perspectives

“Religion of Labour;”
Goldberg, “A. D. Gordon - The Religion of Labour,” (137-146);
Hertzberg, “A. D. Gordon,” (369-379);
Hayyim Nachman Bialik, “To a Bird,”
Techiah Liberson, “Those First Years,
Deborah Dayan, “My Coming to Palestine,”
Judith Edelman, “In the War Years,” “Hebrew Humanism” and Religious Zionism

Goldberg, "Recognizing the Arab Problem," (158-173);
Hertzberg, "Martin Buber: Hebrew Humanism," (451-453; 457-463).
Martin Buber, *The Land of Two People*
Hertzberg, "Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook," (417-431)

Revival of Hebrew

Avineri, "Eliezer Ben Yehuda,"
Judah Leib Gordon "For Whom do I Toil?"
Rachel Katzenelson, "From Language to Language," "New Muscle-Jews:"
Max Nordau, "Jewry of Muscle,"
Goldberg, "Vladimir Jabotinsky – From Liberalism to Fascism" (173-186);
Vladimir Jabotinsky, "What the Zionist-Revisionists Want,"
Yitzhak Lamdan, "A Prayer for Masadah," "The Jewish Revolution"
Rachel Katzenelson, "A Word to the Legionaries,"
Manya Shochat, "The Collective," "'The Worker's Wife': A Public Trial,"
Hertzberg, "Ben Gurion," (605-619); "On the Arab Question," .
Goldberg, "David Ben Gurion - From Class to Nation," (205-216);
Tchernichovski, "Credo,"
Goldberg, "Ben-Gurion - The Primacy of the State," (217-233);
Excerpts from Golda Meir, *This is Our Strength: Selected Papers of Golda Meir*.
Hannah Senesh, Excerpts from her *Diary* and Selected Poems

VII. American Zionism

Hertzberg, Richard James Horatio Gottheil, "The Aims of Zionism" (494-496);
Solomon Schechter, "Zionism: A Statement," (503-513).
Hertzberg Louis Dembitz Brendais, "The Jewish Problem and How to Solve It,"
(515-523);
Mordecai Kaplan, "The Future of the American Jew" (535-544).
Henrietta Szold, "Selected Letters," "The Birth of Hadassah,"; "The First Eighty-Five
Years," (Hadassah Magazine)