**Ahavat Tziyon** – love of the Land of Israel (Zion the hill in Jerusalem on which the Temple stood; Zion later became a name for all of Eretz Yisrael)

Dt. 8.7 – For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with streams and springs and fountains issuing from plain and hill; (8) a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey; (9) a land where you may eat food without stint, where you will lack nothing; a land where rocks are iron and from whose hills you can mine copper. (10) When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to the Lord your God for the good land, which He has given you.

Ps. 137.5 – If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. (6) Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not; if I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy.

Ketubot 112a – Rabbi Abba used to kiss the stones of Akko, while Rabbi Hanina would mend the roads, and Rabbi Hiyya ben Gamda would lie down in the dust of the Holy Land. All this to fulfill the passage, “Your servants take delight in its stones and cherish its dust.” (*Ps.* 102.14)

The Jewish People . . . forced to leave their ancient country, has never abandoned, never forsaken, the Holy Land; the Jewish People has never ceased to be passionate about Zion. It has always lived in dialogue with the Holy Land. (Abraham Joshua Heschel)

*Israel has been the central focus and symbol of Jewish unity and peoplehood throughout the generations.* Archaeological testimony of ancient Jewish roots in Israel. Over 3000 years of Jewish life and history in/on the land. The location of our meta-narrative (the Bible). Biblical memory. Rabbinic longing and love.

Since the first Exile from Israel, 586 B.C.E., we have incorporated longing of the Holy Land into our daily lives. Face Jerusalem in prayer, have a holy day observance and fasting in memory of the destruction of the first and secondTemples (Tisha B’Av), celebrate the creation of the State of Israel (Yom HaAtzmaut)

Ahavat Tzion becomes a nationalist movement in the late nineteenth century. A group of Jews recognize the need for a Jewish state to ensure Jewish liberty. Led by Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), Zionism – a political movement dedicated to establishing a Jewish government on Jewish soil – was created.

*Israel has restored pride and creativity to the entire Jewish people.* Counter to notion of Jews as weak and passive and always the “conquered” people. Zionist wo/men as pioneers. Restored sense of Jewish self-worth and strength.

*Israel as a center of Jewish cultural life.* Rebirth of Hebrew as a modern language. A living laboratory for Jewish expression in the modern world – power, government, literature, music, theater, etc.

*Israel as a haven for Jewish refugees and an advocate for Jewish concerns on the international level.* With Israel, all Jews have a second home. Holocaust, most notably. Ethiopian and Soviet Jews. Etc.

Zionism – initially the movement to establish a homeland for the Jewish people. Now, any variety of support for Israel – from writing a check to moving to Israel to live.

Varieties of Zionism:

 Political Zionism – Establish a state where Jews could be safe. (Uganda?)

 Labor Zionism – Establish a socialist labor state

 Cultural Zionism – a place where Jews would share a language, theater, holidays, literature, etc.

 Religious Zionism – establishment of a Jewish state a religious duty, necessary to the coming of the Messiah (some religious Jews say the opposite; coming of the Messiah shouldn’t be implemented by human/political means – N’turei Karta)

Who are the anti (or, perhaps better: non)-Zionists? See following article, with center, nuanced part of the argument in bold. Others suggest we are safe if dispersed throughout the world rather than located primarily in one place which could be destroyed and thus the Jewish population wiped out. Maybe the goal should be acceptance wherever we live, rather than one “safe state.”



[My Heretical Year](http://forward.com/my-heretical-year/)

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Why I Love Israel But I Am Not a Zionist

* May 15, 2016
* By [Shulem Deen](http://forward.com/author/shulem-deen/)

Last November, on tour for my book, I gave a talk at a temple in Cleveland, after which a man raised his hand: “What are your thoughts on Israel?” I hadn’t come to speak about Israel, so I kept my response brief. “I am not a Zionist,” I said. “And I don’t fetishize the idea of Jewish sovereignty, anywhere.”

Later, I wondered if that was the best way to put it. What I had meant was, I’m American, not Israeli, and to me, Israel is just another country. Like Norway. Or Brazil. I like it well enough, but I don’t need it to be Jewish.

The next day, I got an email from a man in the audience. “Your story is compelling,” he wrote me, “but people were turned off by your position on Israel.”

I assumed the “people” referred primarily to himself, but still, it struck me: This man was not bothered by my conventional heresies; he was not troubled by my faithlessness, my lack of religious observance, my belief in no deities, my scarcely finding value in Judaism at all. He was not bothered that I could not say, when asked, what my “spiritual life” was like. Only my non-Zionism turned him off.

In my travels across the country over the past year, in speaking to different Jewish communities, I have had a number of such encounters, receiving little to no opprobrium for forsaking religious faith, but getting looks of consternation when confessing to being “not a Zionist.” It is, apparently, the one heresy left among mainstream American Jews.

I’ve been told that my non-Zionism must be due to my sheltered upbringing: While I was able, with little formal education, to read myself into not one but two careers (first computer programming and later writing), a basic history of Zionism, some appeared to say, was probably too far from my reach. “Perhaps you’d consider learning more about Israel,” the man from Cleveland wrote me. It felt pointless to tell him about the years I spent at the public library reading nothing but.

On reflection, it is not quite true that Israel is, to me, no different from Norway or Brazil. For one thing, I have never visited either of the latter, but have been to Israel, where I have many relatives and friends, nearly a dozen times. It is where [over a third of the world’s Jews now live](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/jews/), with whom I feel an instinctive kinship. I have little respect for Israel’s government; its political leaders often strike me as infuriatingly myopic (not to mention, lately, impolitic in their insulting treatment of this country’s president), but as a Jew, I cannot help but feel connected to Israel — the land, the people, the history — even if not to its institutions of state, and to the ideological basis for its existence.

I think about this especially in this month of Iyar, with the sequence of Israeli holidays commemorating Israel’s independence and those fallen in its wars — Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut — and I wonder about this Israel-schizophrenia of mine. I feel connected to Israel, yet distanced from it at the same time.

As a Jew, I feel enormous pride in what Israel has achieved. When I visit Israel, I feel, if not so enthusiastically, “Home!” (the sentiment of so many Facebook friends when their El-Al flights touch down), at least like I’m visiting favorite relatives. I love the sights and sounds of Jerusalem’s Old City, where my mother lives, and feel the tingles anew each time I see the city’s old walls. I love the scattered remnants of antiquity across the land, providing a tactile connection to history: the stones of the Kotel, the ruins of Masada; even the topology invokes the ancients — the Judean desert, the hills of Jerusalem, the Mediterranean coast. It was all there then. It’s all here now.

It’s also the people. I am not inured to the unique charms (as I choose to see it) of the [Israeli taxi driver](http://www.jpost.com/Blogs/Emancipation-becomes-Emancipatzia/The-three-types-of-Israeli-taxi-drivers-366334). I feel oddly connected to Israeli culture, even if I visit only sporadically. I don’t watch a lot of film or TV, but when I do, it is often Israeli rather than American. The only DVD box-set I’ve ever purchased is of *[BeTipul](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0466345/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)*, the hit Israeli TV series about a psychotherapist and his clients. At present, I find the ingenious comedy sketch show *[HaYehudim Baim](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLttfoK87AdWkIef_dW-0bB4GQDMXmjlf" \t "_blank)* — “The Jews Are Coming” — equalled by nothing on American TV.

When Israel is under attack, I am infuriated by those who remain apathetic but who awaken indignantly only when Israel strikes back. On most days, I think the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement is vile, [infested with hatred](http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/BDS-is-the-modern-form-of-anti-Semitism-449415) and [bent on Israel’s destruction](http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.718089). I am alarmed by the [clear strains of anti-Semitism](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/anti-semitism-ken-livingstone-naz-shah-jeremy-corbyn-labour-party-a7005866.html) in much of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric.

In a word, I am an Isra-phile. But I am not a Zionist. I love Israel like I love a good falafel: nonideologically. Not because I *must* — I simply do.

It is a lonely place, though. My friends who were raised among mainstream American Jews often declare themselves Zionists casually, in the way one might be a fan of democracy. What’s to object? They wonder. While I wonder what they find in Zionism so compelling, so obvious, and what makes me so uneasy about it. Have I simply been spared the indoctrination, raised, as I was, among the ultra-Orthodox? Would a [Birthright](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birthright_Israel) trip have helped?

**It came to me on a recent evening, in conversation with a new friend. We’d been acquainted online, and she was visiting from the West Coast, and we met up for drinks. The subject of Israel came up. She loved Israel, she said. I said I did, too, but it was clear she loved it more.**

**“You a Zionist?” I asked. I was teasing, amused by her earnestness. The answer was obvious.**

**“You’re *not*?!” she asked, looking genuinely surprised.**

**My heresy, exposed.**

**What followed was an argument, friendly, playful, but illuminating.**

**“Why Zionism?” I asked.**

**Because Jews need one place they can run to in time of danger, of course.**

**“Imagine a world in which Jews don’t *need* such a place, a world in which there *is* no danger,” I suggested. “Just imagine it. Fantasize it. Would we still need Israel then? A *Jewish* Israel?”**

**She thought for the briefest of moments, then said, “I just can’t give up Israel.”**

**And there it was, the reason for my unease.**

**Zionism dreams of a utopia: Jews in their own land, secure and prosperous, in peace with their neighbors, a nation among the nations — a place for every Jew to run to in time of danger.**

**A utopian future stuck in a nightmare of history. It imagines a world in which Jews are always threatened, and so it insists on an ethno-religious homogeneity that we no longer accept in Western liberal democracies. It is a particularist’s dream, stirring only to those who cannot think beyond the bleakness of the past and the ongoing daily alarm bells, ignoring the dangers of where such a dream might lead.**

**A true utopia, if Zionism were to dream big enough, would be one in which ethnic and religious strife has ceased, and Israel need be neither Jewish nor Arab but a state of all its citizens, when Jerusalem, like New York City or Toronto, belongs to no particular group but is free and open to all. An inspiring Zionism would be only a means to an end: creating, in a region rife with sectarianism, a state in which no ethno-religious group is privileged over another.**

**Yes, it is a fantasy, a dream, but Zionism has always been about a dream, and if it is to dream, it can dream bigger and better. And this, I explained to my friend that night, is why I am not a Zionist.**

**But she only shook her head and smiled: “I can’t give up Israel.”**

**A Jewish Israel.**

**A Jewish flag, a Jewish anthem, a Jewish calendar, a Jewish refuge. Others will be given rights, too, yes. A benevolent Dhimmitude — to borrow a regionalism. A utopia for Jews, mere tolerance for others. A dream of the future that in its grandest form cannot conceive of a world without hatred, or its own tribal interests.**

**This is not a utopia I dream of.**

**Call me a heretic for that, if you must.**

*Shulem Deen is the author of “All Who Go Do Not Return.”*

Some ongoing “Israel issues”:

 Israelism versus Judaism; how do we distinguish anti-Semitism from anti-Israelism from anti-Judaism?

 Israel as a political entity often like any other. How, as Jews, do we deal with unjust governmental policies of the Jewish state?

 Value of Diaspora? To make Aliya or not to make Aliya? (even in terms of Jewish safety and continuation . . . is Diaspora a necessity?)

 Israel and Jewish pluralism -- coalition government & we (liberal Jews) weren’t there at the beginning when the political deals were cut

Do we publicly criticize?

Love Israel . . . but don’t want to live there –

Some Israel sites to google:

ARZA – Reform Jewish Zionist organization

Human rights sites:

B’tzelem

Rabbis for Human Rights

Hiddush

**CCAR RESPONSA**

***American Reform Responsa***

**22. Israeli Flag on a Synagogue Pulpit**

**(1977)**

**QUESTION:**Should an Israeli flag be displayed on the pulpit of an American Reform synagogue? In this case, an American flag is already so displayed. (Rabbi R. Goldman, Chattanooga, Tennessee)

**ANSWER:**The six-pointed Star of David is now commonly recognized as a symbol of Jews and Judaism throughout the world, both by ourselves and by our non-Jewish neighbors. There is no clear distinction between Jews and Judaism, between our religious and our national aspirations.

Since the Babylonian diaspora, our prayers have constantly contained petitions for the return to Zion and the re-establishment of Israel. In the traditional Shabbat morning *Torah* service, we find in addition a prayer (a) for the academies in Israel, Babylonia, and the Diaspora, (b) for the local congregation, and (c) for the Gentile government under which we live (*Abudarham,*47b; *Machzor Vitry;* Rokeach). These prayers have been part of the service either since the Talmudic period or, at the latest, since the 14th century. In other words, the service has for a long time contained side-by-side prayers expressing the desire for a return to the Land of Israel, gratitude for the land in which we live, and hope for the welfare of our own communities. The flags of the United States and Israel on a pulpit might be said to symbolize the prayers which have always been said in the synagogue. For this reason, there is no religious objection to placing an American flag on the pulpit, nor to placing an Israeli flag alongside it. (Of course there are specific secular regulations about the placement of such flags which should be followed.) It might be helpful to look at the historical background, especially as there is no ancient record of a Jewish flag or symbol for the entire people of Israel.

The six-pointed star was rarely used by the early Jewish community. It is found carved on a stone in the Capernaum synagogue and also on a single tombstone in Tarentum, Italy, which dates from the third century. Later Kabbalists used it, probably borrowing it from the Templars (Ludwig Blau, "Magen David," *Jewish Encyclopedia,* vol. 8, p. 252). It is also found in some non-Kabbalistic medieval manuscripts. None of these usages, however, was widespread.

The first time a Jewish flag is mentioned was during the rule of Charles IV of Hungary, who prescribed in 1354 that the Jews of Prague use a red flag with David's and Solomon's seal. Also, in the 15th century, the Jews of that city met King Matthias with a red flag containing two golden six-pointed stars and two five-pointed stars. Aside from this, we have no record of the use of a flag by any Jewish community, and, of course, the six-pointed star now so commonly used was rarely used as a Jewish symbol before the late 18th century and early l9th century. In that period, the newly emancipated Jewish community wished to possess an easily recognizable symbol akin to that of Christianity and so adopted the six-pointed star, which was then used frequently on books, synagogues, cemeteries, tombstones, etc. The star soon became recognized as a sign of Judaism. In 1799 it was already used in anti-Semitic literature. In 1822, the Rothschilds utilized it for their coat of arms, and it was adopted by the Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 as its symbol. Subsequently, the State of Israel has used it in its national flag, although the official symbol of Israel is the *Menora.*Naturally, all of us also remember that the Nazis used the six-pointed star on their badges which identified Jews.

If you wish detailed information about this material see M. Gruenewald, "Ein altes Symbol...," *Jahrbuch fuer juedische Literatur*, 1901, pp. 120ff; L. Blau, "Magen David," *Jewish Encyclopedia,* vol. 8, pp. 25f; and G. Scholem, "Magen David," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 11, pp. 687ff.

Various synagogues have found other solutions to the desire for honoring both the United States and Israel. Thus, some have placed both flags in the foyer of the community hall, but have no flags on their pulpits. In any case, both the loyalty of our communities to the United States and our common concern for Israel are clear with or without the placement or possession of flags.

Walter Jacob, *Chairman*

Stephen M. Passamaneck

W. Gunther Plaut

Harry A. Roth

Herman E. Schaalman

Bernard Zlotowitz

#### Resolution Adopted by the CCAR

#### RESOLUTION ON ISRAEL AT 60 Ben Shishim L'ziknah "Attain sixty years, attain the wisdom of age" -Pirkei Avot

#### Adopted by the 119th Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American RabbisCincinnati, OhioApril, 2008

As we approach the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the modern State of Israel, The Central Conference of American Rabbis once again affirms its commitment and the commitment of its member rabbis to the wellbeing of the State, Land, and People of Israel and to the furtherance of the Zionist dream.

In the last sixty years, the sovereign state of Israel has repelled foreign armies bent on its destruction and has been the target of numberless terrorists attacks on its citizens from within its borders and from without. Yet at the same time, it has absorbed hundreds of thousands of immigrants – Jewish and non-Jewish - seeking refuge, religious freedom and the challenge of building up the Jewish people in its own sovereign land. It has been a world leader in science, technology and medicine and has strengthened the Jewish lives and commitments of Jews across the globe.

We have looked and continue to look at Israel with critical eyes when it falls short of achieving its own stated goals as a democratic, pluralistic Jewish state; and when it institutes what, in our opinion, might be impediments to the achievement of peaceful coexistence with its Arab citizens and neighbors. And yet we look through the eyes of love and commitment, like members of a family who want only the best for those they love.

Sadly, sixty years since its first struggle for existence, Israel still faces intractable enemies who envision a world without the Jewish State.  Thus, our celebration mixes joy and sorrow, great pride in Israel and great disappointment that, despite Israel’s efforts, peace has not yet come.

We are disappointed as well that Israeli society has yet to realize the justice and freedom of religion envisioned in its Declaration of Independence; for so long as an Orthodox religious monopoly is maintained and perpetuated by the state itself, neither justice nor freedom of religion can obtain in the Jewish state. We demand that government subsidies be given to all rabbis and all synagogues, regardless of Jewish stream, or to none at all. We demand that non-Orthodox rabbis in Israel have the same rights as Orthodox rabbis to officiate over conversions, weddings and funerals, and have an equal place on local and national rabbinic councils.

And yet, despite the lack of equal treatment by the state, we look with awe and admiration upon the tremendous achievements of Reform/Progressive Judaism in Israel, chief among them being:

the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism and its family of congregations which have brought so many Israelis into meaningful Jewish religious life;

The Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, which has, through its Year in Israel program, has brought more than a generation of American rabbinic, cantoral, educational, and communal service students to Israel to strengthen their connection with the Land, Language, Culture and People of Israel, through its Israeli Rabbinic Program, has raised up generations of devoted rabbis who have and continue to transform religious life in Israel,

the Israel Religious Action Center which has not only asserted and defended religious pluralism in Israel and the rights of the non-Orthodox streams but has also furthered the cause of social justice for so many of Israel’s citizens across religious, ethnic, and social lines;

The Leo Baeck Institute through its school and its many arms which have created and implemented progressive, innovative, yet deeply and Jewishly rooted Jewish educational curricula which are used around the globe.

Kibbutz Yahel, Kibbutz Lotan and Har Halutz, which have served as models for Reform Jewish communal living; and which, each in its own way, has served as a light unto the nations;

If Progressive Judaism fails to flourish in Israel, it will not be due to the intransigence of the Orthodox, but rather the unwillingness of North American Reform Jews to give the support that is needed to allow Progressive Judaism in Israel to seize this historic opportunity.

Likewise, we give due honor to members of the North American Reform movement who, through the years, have made aliyah, for the commitment they have shown to the state of Israel and the Jewish People and for the tremendous contributions they have made both to our Movement there as well as to Israeli society as a whole.  As stated in the Platform on Reform Judaism and Zionism of 1997, we again encourage North American Reform Jews to make aliyah, while at the same time affirming the authenticity and necessity of a creative and vibrant Diaspora Jewry.

We note with pride the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of ARZA, the Zionist arm of the American Reform Movement and the 50th anniversary of the Reform Movement’s NFTY in Israel program:

We commend ARZA on its many achievements and recommit ourselves to the common goal of strengthening the Israeli Progressive Movement and furthering the values of Reform Judaism in Israel, while strengthening the bonds between Israel and Reform Jews everywhere.

We commend NFTY as well for fifty years of devoted service and innovative Israel programming, which have planted within thousands of our young people an enduring connection to the Land and State of Israel, the Reform Movement, and the Jewish People.

Finally, on this important milestone in the history of the State of Israel, the Reform Movement, and the Jewish People, we once again call upon members of our Conference and our Movement to renew and increase their efforts

to bring members of our communities to Israel for meaningful experiences of Jewish/Israeli engagement and study,

to strengthen the ties between Israel and North American Jewry,

to increase support for our Movement in Israel, including MARAM, through CCAR’s Rav L’Ravinitiative

to encourage our communities – Jewish and non-Jewish – to give Israel the utmost moral, political, spiritual and material support.

We are privileged to live in a world of which most Jews throughout history could only dream – a world in which the Jewish People is living in its sacred and historic homeland as a free and sovereign nation, speaking the holy language of Hebrew in its everyday life, providing a haven for the oppressed, and rewriting Jewish history – indeed rewriting Torah - for our own age and for ages to come.

We thank and praise the Holy One of Israel for the blessing which are ours and for the dreams left together to pursue.