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TWO STREAMS OF ZIONISM AND
THEIR CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

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Zionism in Today's Israel

In today's Israel the term 'Zionism' is not ordinarily used with precision or even seriousness. It may be used simply to conjure up something good like 'Mother and apple pie'; or it may mean old-fashioned and strict, as when a teenager rebuked for overstepping the mark tells Mum or Dad, 'Now you are talking like a Zionist.'

When asked why the new alliance between Labour and Ha'tnuah called itself 'Zionist Camp', Isaac Herzog replied:

Zionism as it was promoted by the founding fathers of our nation was a movement that encompassed all the people of this land, gave ample opportunity for everybody to have a good life and extended our hand in peace to our neighbours. In recent years, certain elements have come to think that they own Zionism. They have taken Zionism far away from what it was meant to be.¹

Here Herzog lays claim to a certain strand of Zionism - essentially that associated with Chaim Weizmann - but distances himself from the militant strand, also bearing the name 'Zionism', that originated with Vladimir Jabotinsky. His reply brings out that differing concepts of Zionism belonging to the past have a bearing on the major questions facing Israel today, in particular, in its dealings with the Palestinians.

Two Streams of Zionism

The modern Jewish Zionist movement began essentially with the French Revolution and the granting of full civil rights to Jews living in France, Germany and the other countries deeply influenced by that Revolution.² This led to widespread Jewish assimilation and the adoption of the cultures of the host countries. From that emerged the 'Jewish problem', namely that however much the Jews tried to become true citizens of their respective nations, they were never truly accepted as such, even where they flourished in literature, music and journalism, as in Austria and Germany.

Moses Hess in his *Rome and Jerusalem* in 1862 was the first to propose that the Jews needed a state of their own for them to be treated as equals in their host countries, a proposal forcibly presented by Theodor Herzl in *The Jewish State* in 1896, a pamphlet, he said, he would not need to have written had he been aware of Moses Hess' work.

But it is well recognized that by the time of the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 two different conceptions of Zionism were on the table: the 'political Zionism' of Herzl which saw the establishment of a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine³ to be achieved through large-scale immigration under the protection of one of the great powers; and the 'cultural Zionism' advocated by Ahad Ha'am which sought a

1 *Daily Telegraph*, 24 February 2015.

2 The best full account of the Zionist movement is Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2nd edn, 2003).

3 The term used before the creation of the state of Israel for broadly the land between the Mediterranean and the river Jordan.

Jewish ‘fixed centre’ in Palestine primarily as an expression of Judaism and its ethical and cultural values; this would be accomplished by continuing to establish settlements eventually resulting in a substantial Jewish presence.

I can only take the most significant and representative figures to illustrate these two divergent streams: Ahad Ha’am and Martin Buber for ‘cultural Zionism’, and Vladimir Jabotinsky for ‘political Zionism’ in the form in which it later took shape.⁴

Ahad Ha’am (1856 – 1927)

The first practical steps towards resettling Jews in their homeland – then part of the Ottoman Empire were taken by the *Hovevei Zion* (Lovers of Zion), an association of Eastern European Jews set up in 1884 by a physician in Odessa, Dr Leo Pinsker. Two years earlier in 1882 Pinsker had issued the brochure *Auto-Emancipation* outlining a blueprint for a Jewish state in Palestine to be accomplished through re-settling oppressed Jews from Eastern Europe in small agricultural colonies.

Asher Ginsberg, more usually known by his pen-name Ahad Ha’am (one of the people), became a member of the Central Committee of *Hovevei Zion* from its inception. Then living in Odessa, he rubbed shoulders with some of the main thinkers and leaders among the Eastern European Jews. Odessa was the only city in the Russian empire in which Jews were allowed to live without special dispensation, and the Jewish community there was one of several large minorities; it was a diverse, culturally vibrant city.

As a boy Asher had a strict Hasidic upbringing but by the mid- 19th century the Hasidic movement was losing its vibrant spirituality, and in his teens he became disillusioned. His early education had been largely confined to Talmudic studies: by the age of 15 he had become expert in the law of the *agunah* (deserted wife). However, by this time he had learned Russian; this was frowned upon by the Hasidim. Other languages and subjects were to follow, and, largely left to himself, he immersed himself in the writings and culture of Western Europe.

As to religion Asher was to remain essentially agnostic, but he always respected the rites and traditions of religious Jews, and would not go along with attacks on the Jewish religion. His character, however, was marked by the highest personal integrity. His honesty, no matter however inconvenient, was notorious. In the many controversies in which he would later become engaged he would never allow himself or others to resort to attacks on the personal character of his opponent. He despised and denied himself any form of self-assertion and self-publicity.

In 1889 Asher Ginsberg, using for the first time his pen-name Ahad Ha’am, leapt to fame with his first essay, *The Wrong Way*, in a Hebrew language paper with strong *Hovevei Zion* sympathies. The essay is remarkable for two things. First, the Hebrew

⁴ This paper does not deal with Christian Zionism or the Rabbinic Zionism developed by R. Abraham Kook. For brief introductions, see Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Introduction to Zionism and Israel* (London and New York: Continuum, 2012) pp. 29-46.

style breaks new ground in the regeneration of the ancient language for modern use. Leaving behind the archaisms and ornamental flourishes beloved by the Hebrew writers of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) the author uses straightforward, workmanlike prose to deal with the problem under scrutiny with precision. But second, the essay contains the germ of the Zionist philosophy which Ahad Ha'am was to develop for the rest of his life.

The essay addresses the problems encountered by the new settlements established in Palestine. They were mainly concerned with viniculture, but wine-making was proving uneconomic and the colonies depended on grants made by Baron Edmond de Rothschild which in turn had the effect of discouraging real effort and self-sacrifice. The morale of the settlements and indeed of *Hovevei Zion* was low, and Ahad Ha'am identified the cause of the malaise as the absence of a national vision:

*... we ought to have made it our first effort to bring about a revival ... to inspire men with a deeper attachment to the national life.*⁵

Two years later he was to make his first visit to Palestine and his ensuing essay *The Truth from Palestine* (1891) is noteworthy for his recognition of the existence of the Arabs⁶ already in the Land, and his emphasis on the Jewish presence in the Land being firmly based on the moral values of Judaism as opposed to Jewish ethnicity alone.

His Stance on the Arabs

The early Zionists knew very little about the existing population of Palestine. When Ahad Ha'am arrived in Palestine he found that the first Jewish settlers had been received with friendship. Their new neighbours had even given them assistance with agricultural methods, but now the Jewish settlers had reciprocated with contempt and ill-treatment. He protested:

*We think that the Arabs are savages who live like animals and do not understand what is happening around them. This is, however, a great error ... Yet what do our brethren do in Palestine? ... They treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, deprive them of their rights, offend them without cause and even boast of their deeds; and nobody among us opposes this despicable and dangerous inclination.*⁷

5 Hans Kohn (ed.), *Nationalism and Jewish Ethics: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962) p. 41.

6 The term used in earlier sources and still frequently among Jewish Israelis today. However, the term 'Palestinian' is in my view now preferable because 'Arab' suggests a marked ethnic or racial difference whereas one clear finding from many DNA studies is that the Palestinians are very closely related to both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, while Arabs stand a little apart from this cluster. See the paper 'Jewish and Middle Eastern non-Jewish populations share a common pool of Y chromosome biallelic haplotypes' (*PNAS*, 6 June 2000). The Abstract is on the Internet; see especially Figure 2.

7 *Basic Writings*, pp. 24–25.

On one occasion, in 1913, he was to take up the case of an Arab boy killed in retaliation for an attack on the Jews. He wrote in *Ha'aretz*,

*Is this the dream of the return to Zion which our people dreamt of for thousands of years that we should come to Zion and pollute its soil with the spilling of innocent blood?*⁸

Later still, when he was in London along with Chaim Weizmann negotiating with the British Government the terms of the Balfour Declaration, he commented on the final version:

*But this historic right [of the Jews to resettle in Palestine] does not override the right of the other inhabitants, which is a right based on generation after generation of life and work in the country.*⁹

Thus for Ahad Ha'am the return of the Jews to their land was to be accomplished with respect for the presence of and rights of the existing population.

His Cultural Zionism

For Herzl the need for the Jews to have a land and state of their own was fuelled mainly by the anti-semitism which the emancipated Jews in Germany and France were experiencing in the last decades of the 19th century. The solution, Herzl argued, was national self-determination, the Jews having a country of their own and no longer being minorities in other states.

With Ahad Ha'am this factor was present too: the Jews in Eastern Europe experienced a more severe anti-semitism in the form of pogroms of increasing intensity. However for him a still more serious danger for the Jews was that of assimilation, which he saw as tantamount to the denial of national identity. For this reason he believed the Jews should have a fixed centre in Palestine which all Jews, whether remaining in the diaspora or not, would look to as their spiritual and cultural home. Hence this kind of Zionism is usually called 'spiritual or cultural' Zionism as opposed to the 'political Zionism' of Herzl.

The concept of this fixed centre is described in many of his writings. Perhaps the best and most precise expression is found in *Summa Summorum* (1912):

*Our national existence requires most of all at present a fixed centre for our national spirit and culture, which will be a new spiritual bond between the scattered sections of the people and by its spiritual influence will stimulate them all to a new national life.*¹⁰

8 *Basic Writings*, pp. 26-27.

9 *Basic Writings*, p. 160.

10 *Basic Writings*, p. 127.

For Ahad Ha'am 'spiritual' did not mean 'religious', but did include the ethics and moral values of Judaism; what we might call 'Jewish values'. So he attacked Herzl's vision of a newly established Jewish state in Palestine as set out in *Altneuland* (1902) because it described a society modelled on an advanced Western European state but having almost no Jewish elements.

Ahad Ha'am's long-term influence would prove to be considerable because Chaim Weizmann who led the Zionist movement for most of the Mandate period was one of his followers. In fact Weizmann who reluctantly sought advice from others would only consult with Ahad Ha'am when he needed another opinion.¹¹

Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky (1880 – 1940)

Jabotinsky was born and brought up in Odessa. When he was only six his father, a grain merchant, died with cancer, the medical treatment for which ate up the family's savings. His mother then had to take on a stationery shop to provide for Vladimir and his older sister, but was able to send him to a Russian high school where his literary gifts became apparent. Although he could have graduated with a valuable diploma, he chose to leave school early at 17 for a career in journalism; he became the foreign correspondent of a newly established Odessa newspaper, first in Bern and then in Rome, later returning to Odessa. To this early period belongs the performance of his second play, *All Right*, in Odessa in 1901. The message is enigmatic but Halkin, his most recent biographer, takes it to refer to the author's resolve to devote himself to an all-consuming cause, the service of the Jewish nation.¹²

Jabotinsky became a Zionist in stages. The Kishinev pogrom of 1903 marked the point of no return. Kishinev (now the capital of Moldova) was only about a hundred miles from Odessa. Over a period of two days, following the publication of hate articles in a local paper, Gentile mobs fell upon the Jewish community, killed 47 Jews, seriously injured 92 others, destroyed about 700 houses and pillaged about 600 stores. Only on the third day did the authorities intervene to restore order. Jabotinsky then took a leading part in the formation of a self-defence force in Odessa. That year he was asked to serve as the delegate from Odessa to the sixth Zionist Congress and thereafter he became a leading voice for the Jews of Eastern Europe.

During the negotiations with the British Government which resulted in the Balfour Declaration, Jabotinsky strongly argued for the formation of a Jewish legion to fight alongside the Allies against the Ottoman Empire. In the end a watered-down version was adopted: a Jewish battalion of 800 men, the 38th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, was allowed to assist General Allenby's forces. Its commander was British but Jabotinsky served as Second Lieutenant. The Battalion was mainly employed in defensive duties, but one incident reveals something about Jabotinsky's complex

¹¹ Laqueur, p. 470.

¹² Hillel Halkin, *Jabotinsky: A Life* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2014) pp. 43-45.

character. On one occasion the Battalion was ordered to escort a group of Turkish prisoners from Es Salt in what is now Jordan to Jericho. One of the Turks collapsed on the way and, being at the end of their strength, his fellow-prisoners refused to carry him. Left by the wayside he would soon have been eaten alive by vultures. Jabotinsky conferred with the Chaplain, a Rabbi from the East End, and the decision was taken to shoot him.

The memory was to haunt Jabotinsky. Years later he would write,

It's an awful thing, the life of a nation. It's hard to keep going in the wilderness. You can't? Then lie down and die. Humanity is a battalion too, and no one is going to carry you to Jericho. You either march on with all the cruelty to yourself and others that this calls for, or you give up and are swallowed by oblivion together with all your hopes.¹³

His Militarist Stance – *The Iron Wall*

Chaim Weizmann, who became leader of the Yishuv (the Jewish population of Palestine) during the British Mandate, was a moderate who combined the policy of encouraging immigration, buying land and forming agricultural settlements with the eventual aim of reaching a Jewish majority. He had adopted something of Ahad Ha'am's vision of a Jewish spiritual and cultural centre, and so the term 'synthetic', here meaning 'integrated', is sometimes applied to his brand of Zionism. He was also a socialist and much concerned with the new Kibbutzim and Moshavim and the major role being played by organized labour.

The Arab disturbances of 1920/21 were to cause some in the Yishuv to doubt the ability and willingness of the British to protect them fully. In the aftermath Jabotinsky urged the Zionist Executive to encourage military training in the diaspora communities:

I would like to see military training becoming as common among Jews as lighting Sabbath candles once was. It's needed because the danger zone is rapidly spreading over the globe.¹⁴

It was in this period, in 1923, that he contributed his famous articles *The Iron Wall* and its sequel *The Ethics of the Iron Wall* to the Russian journal *Razvriet* (The Dawn).¹⁵

In the Introduction to *The Iron Wall*, Jabotinsky refers to his contribution to the Helsinki Programme. In 1906 he had taken part in a gathering of Russian Jews in Helsinki to contend for Jewish cultural autonomy and recognition of their minority status with full national rights within the Tsarist Empire. So he begins *The Iron Wall* by denying the suggestion that he is 'an enemy of the Arabs who wants to have them

13 Halkin, p. 111.

14 Halkin, p. 137.

15 English translations are available on the Internet. I cite those on the Jewish Virtual Library website.

ejected from Palestine, and so forth.’ He then affirms that the programme for national rights for all nationalities living in the same state applies as much to the Arabs living in Palestine as to Jews living in Poland or Russia. He clinches this point with a solemn pledge:

I am prepared to take an oath binding ourselves and our descendants that we should never do anything contrary to the principle of equal rights, and that we shall never try to eject anyone.

But the main issue which he argues at length is that no nation settled in a land will willingly consent to another people settling in it and taking it over:

The native population, civilized or uncivilized, have always stubbornly resisted the colonists, irrespective of whether they were civilized or savage.

As an example of civilized settlers, he instances the case of the Pilgrim Fathers: ‘people of the highest morality who did not want to do harm to anyone, least of all to the Red Indians.’ Likewise the Arabs ‘feel at least the same instinctive jealous love of Palestine as the old Aztecs felt for ancient Mexico, and the Sioux for their rolling Prairies.’

So the Arabs will never willingly agree to Jewish immigration to the point that the Jews may become a majority and the Arabs a minority. Zionist colonization, therefore, ‘can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power independent of the native population – behind an iron wall which the native population cannot break’.

The question for all Zionists was whether this Iron Wall should be the Mandate and the British military or an independent Jewish army.

However, Jabotinsky did foresee an eventual agreement with the Arabs once the Jews attained a position of unassailable strength;

Not till then will they dump their extremist leaders whose watchword is ‘Never!’ ... and the leadership will pass to moderate groups who will approach us with a proposal that we should both agree to mutual concessions. Then we may expect them to discuss practical questions, such as a guarantee against Arab displacement, or equal rights for Arab citizens, or Arab national integrity.

In the subsequent article, *The Ethics of the Iron Wall*, Jabotinsky defended himself against the charge that he is seeking to colonize a country against the wishes of its population. The essence of his argument is that the Jews are a small people of ‘15 million scattered throughout the world’ half of whom are ‘now literally homeless, poor hunted wretches’, and therefore there is nothing immoral in compelling the Arabs whose habitable land is relatively lightly occupied to yield part of their territory to the Jews. Twenty years later, when Jews were attempting to escape the Holocaust, such an argument would carry still greater weight.

Revisionist Zionism

During the Arab disturbances of 1920/21, the Yishuv gave Jabotinsky command of a small self-defence force, the forerunner of the *Haganah*. The British authorities arrested and tried him with some other Jews for their part in the disturbances, but after three months he was released from prison. By 1923 he had become convinced that a more active form of Zionism was needed and he began to form a number of military-style youth organizations which came together to form *Betar* in 1927. They were strongest in Poland and the Baltic states.

In April 1925, Jabotinsky with a group of supporters formed the Union of Zionist Revisionists. Its programme included the goal of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine and Jordan with a Jewish majority enjoying 'self-rule', and Jewish control over all immigration to the Mandated territory which originally included the territory of Jordan. To begin with, the new movement functioned as a party within the world-wide Zionist Organization, but in March 1933 the tensions proved too great and Jabotinsky founded a rival, the Union of Revisionist Zionists. In the meantime, in 1929, a riot occurred over access to the Wailing Wall in which 133 Jews were killed and 339 injured. The Mandatory authority held that Jabotinsky was implicated in deliberately inflaming religious emotions; the liberal paper *Ha'aretz* agreed. He had written before the riot: 'One thing is necessary; that we rise and take action!' The result was that the British High Commissioner banned Jabotinsky from returning to Palestine; so began his permanent exile from the Land.

Thereafter Jabotinsky was to remain in charge of the new Union of Zionists but had little influence over what went on in Palestine. The Arab Revolt of 1936-39 was far more serious than the earlier disturbances, but the Yishuv adopted the policy of *havlagah* (self-restraint). By contrast, the break-away *Irgun*, which was formed mainly out of members of the *Betar* in Palestine, took the approach: 'when attacked, hit back hard.' In due course the actions of *Irgun* became cruel and disproportionate. But Jabotinsky could exercise no control over the militia he had spawned, he simply did not want to know. So the saying went round among the *Irgun* leaders, 'Don't tell Papa.'

His Legacy

In 1936 when the seriousness of the Arab Revolt that began that year became apparent, David Ben-Gurion, the new leader of the Yishuv, wrote to the Jewish Agency Executive:

*It is not in order to establish peace in the country that we need an agreement [with the Arabs]. Peace is indeed a vital matter for us. It is impossible to build a country in a permanent state of war, but peace for us is a means. The end is full and complete realization of Zionism. Only for that do we need an agreement.*¹⁶

Avi Shlaim who cites this letter notes the striking similarity between Ben-Gurion's thinking here and *The Iron Wall* published 13 years earlier. Ben-Gurion, who became Israel's first Prime Minister, was later to pursue the policy maintained by all successive Israeli governments of being able to negotiate from a position of maximum military strength.

But the weakness of seeking to make peace from a position of unassailable strength, *The Iron Wall* doctrine, is that the party who holds all the cards will be tempted to impose a settlement rather than to seek a 'warm peace' in which each side comes away having many of its legitimate concerns met.

In his second term as Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin 'realized that that the iron wall of Jewish military power had achieved its purpose and that the time had come to negotiate an end to the conflict with Arab States and with the Palestinians'. So he began the negotiations which led to the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995.¹⁷

The Oslo Accords began a peace process intended to create an independent Palestinian state. However, following Rabin's assassination in 1995 and the short-lived administration under Yitzhak Shamir that ensued, Binyamin Netanyahu came to power for the first time in 1996. A year later he undermined the peace process by giving the go-ahead to the Har Homa project to provide housing for 30,000 Jewish Israelis in annexed East Jerusalem. The expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank together with Jewish-only connecting roads and protecting security walls, but accompanied by little or no progress in the peace negotiations has characterized all later Israeli governments until today.

This endlessly drawn-out peace process is hardly what Jabotinsky envisaged: the negotiation of 'honestly practical questions such as a guarantee against Arab displacement or equal rights for Arab citizens or Arab national sovereignty'.

Martin Buber (1878 – 1965)

When he was only three, his mother suddenly left the family home. About a year later, a girl several years older was looking after him, and in response to something he said, the older girl replied firmly, 'No, she will never come back'; Martin then realized she had spoken the truth.

Martin Buber was brought up and educated by his grandparents on his father's side. Both his grandfather and grandmother were highly educated. His grandfather, Solomon Buber, was an authority on the *Midrashim* and produced critical editions of them. As a boy Martin learnt many languages. He could speak in German, Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, English, French and Italian. Of ancient languages, Greek was his favourite; in later life he and his wife Paula would read the New Testament together in the original Greek.

When he was 17 Martin witnessed his uncle being killed as he fell from a horse.

17 Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p. 521.

In the aftermath of the tragedy he spent time in a secluded place in the mountains, and there had his first mystical ecstasy when he stared for a long time at a piece of mica glinting on the ground. Thereafter Martin could easily be taken up in ecstasy following quite simple meditations.¹⁸

These personal experiences may help to explain why, following a very full university education in Vienna, Leipzig and Berlin, Buber became attracted to the teachings of the early Hasidism, a revivalist movement within Orthodox Judaism. His *Tales of Rabbi Nachman* (1906) and *The Legend of the Baal-Shem* (1908) made him famous while still in his thirties. His later, more mature, *Tales of the Hasidim* (1947)¹⁹ should be read by all who want to understand something of the history and spirituality of Hasidic Jews.

Buber is best-known for his *I and Thou* (1923). It would take us too far to open up or try to evaluate this slim but important and influential book. Suffice it to say that the book deals with how a human being relates to another creature, and the difference between seeing the other as an object, an 'it', and seeing him or her as a personal being, a 'Thou', someone to whom I lay myself open and whose being I affirm. Where the relationship is reciprocated, there is true dialogue: 'gazing and being gazed upon, knowing and being known, loving and being loved'.²⁰ For Buber, God is the 'Eternal Thou', who though 'wholly other' becomes present to me as I make myself open to His being.

Some practical applications to everyday life are now so familiar that they are seldom attributed to Buber. For example, in personal discourse, we generally recognize the difference between treating the dialogue partner as an 'it' - a point of view to be affirmed or, if seen as a threat, to be knocked down - as against, a 'Thou': someone to whom I relate as a fellow human-being, whose experiences and acquired factual base differ from mine but who asks me to listen, whose thinking I am invited to enter into, even if in the end I may have to disagree.

Buber the Zionist

When studying at Leipzig University in 1898, Buber was introduced to Zionism by a friend, and on reading Matthias Acher's *Modern Judaism*, he became a convinced Zionist and founded a local chapter of the Zionist Convention. One year later he was a representative at the Third Zionist Congress in Basel, and in 1901 he became editor of the official Zionist journal *Die Welt*. That same year he played a major role in leading the 'Democratic Faction' that, despite opposition from Herzl, gained official recognition for 'cultural Zionism' and the commitment to found a Hebrew University.

Buber's cultural Zionism could be better termed 'spiritual Zionism'. Ahad Ha'am

18 For these and other biographical details I am indebted to Martin Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge* (New York: Paragon House, 1993).

19 Re-published with a foreword by Chaim Potok (New York: Schocken Books, 1991).

20 Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (ET Ronald Gregor Smith; New York: Scribner Classics, 2000) p. 99.

tended to dismiss the idea of a Jewish mission to the world, then usually taken as no more than to be a silent witness to the one true God. By contrast, Buber saw the call of the Jewish people as not to be 'like the other nations' (see 1 Samuel 8:5) but by living righteously according to the standards set by God to be an example and challenge to the nations:

The Lord expects that Israel should live a life of justice before itself and the world – such is the content of its mission ... He demands just relationships between the people of Israel and other peoples ... This means that the Lord expects Israel to begin the realization of justice on earth ('The Children of Amos', April 1949).²¹

Consequently Buber was very concerned about the necessity for and degree of injustice inevitably incurred by the migration and resettlement of the Jewish people in the land of Israel. His article '*Politics and Morality*' (April 1945) sets out his core thinking on this question and should be read in full.²² On the one hand the 'penetration' of the Jews into *Eretz Israel* is not 'an immoral action' because 'large portions of our people's expanse were shattered', a reference to the Holocaust. On the other hand,

*A person commences to be truly human when he pictures to himself the results of his actions and, accordingly attempts to encroach upon other creatures as little as is necessary.*²³

So, as regards the Palestinians,

*Here we confront an inalienable right, the right of a man who cultivates the earth to remain upon it. I shall never agree that in this matter it is possible to justify injustice by pleading values or destinies.*²⁴

It follows that Buber fiercely opposed the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and fields and the expropriation of their land, no matter what form that took. For him the restoration of the Jewish people entailed above all that they demonstrated justice; here he quoted Isaiah 1:27 as 'a prophecy of truth' concerning the future of Israel:

*Zion shall be redeemed by justice.*²⁵

21 Reproduced in Paul Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) p. 255.

22 *Land of Two Peoples*, pp. 169-73.

23 *Land of Two Peoples*, p. 170.

24 *Land of Two Peoples*, p. 171.

25 *Land of Two Peoples*, pp.251-52. This verse refers both to the gracious saving action of God and to the right living that this salvation should produce in his people.

Two Peoples in One Land

Buber was convinced from as early as 1919 that it was for the true good of the Jewish people to *'take those steps and actions which are necessary for the achievement of a lasting and amicable agreement with the Arabs'*.²⁶ In 1925 Buber became a founder member of the group, Brith Shalom (Covenant of Peace). Gershom Scholem, another founding member, explained that what united the group was the conviction that *'the Land of Israel belongs to two peoples, and these two peoples need to find a way to live together ... and to work for a common future'*.²⁷ What they had in mind was a bi-national state within the existing political framework of the Mandate exercised by Britain. In 1942 the group was largely superseded by Ichud (Union) whose founding members included Buber, Scholem, and Judah Magnes (all serving at the Hebrew University); also Henrietta Szold, who founded the Jewish charity, Hadassah, to provide medical care for both Jews and Palestinians in the Land. Albert Einstein and Hannah Arendt were closely associated with this group.

These groups never achieved a wide political following but were influential by virtue of the stature of some of their members. For example, in 1946 both Buber and Magnes gave testimony to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on the future of the Palestinian Mandate, and two years later Magnes obtained a private interview with President Truman just prior to the Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948.

His Interventions

Because Buber lived for most of the first two decades of the new state of Israel, his interventions in public life are significant pointers to where he would stand on Israel/Palestinian issues today.

Buber made two principal protests against Israeli government laws, both to no effect. The first was in March 1953 against draft legislation entitled 'Expropriation of Land', which legitimized after the event the Custodian of Absentee Property selling the property and lands of 'absentee' owners to the State or Jewish (but not Palestinian) citizens. Absentees were not only Palestinians who had fled or had been forced to leave what became the state of Israel during the War of Independence, but also included Palestinians who had fled to the hills within Israel and were in fact absentees still present in Israel.

Buber wrote:

*We fail to understand why, according to press reports, hardly a single Jewish Member of the Knesset has raised his voice against a law intended to give the stamp of legality to acts and deeds which he would consider a grave injustice if they were directed against himself or Jewish property.*²⁸

26 *Land of Two Peoples*, p. 41.

27 *Land of Two Peoples*, p. 72.

28 *Land of Two Peoples*, pp. 262-63. See also Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians* (Newhaven and London: Yale UP, 2011) pp. 39-40.

Buber's second main protest was in February 1958 when he presented to the Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, the 'Memorandum on the Military Government' which Ichud had prepared.

Military rule was imposed on the Palestinians still living in Israel in October 1948. The regulations were similar to those which the British introduced at the end of the Mandate to deal with a state of emergency. One regulation empowered the Military Governor to expel the population from any area; another to ban free movement of individuals; another to sanction arrest and detention for an unlimited period without explanation or trial.

These regulations applied in practice to all places where groups of Palestinians lived. Buber pleaded that the Military Government should be confined strictly to border areas. In fact Military Government continued within Palestinian areas in Israel until 1966. Following the Six Day War, the same military regime was applied to the newly acquired territories. As from 1993 it still applies in the same form to Area C (about 60 per cent) of the West Bank.

One feature of the military regime is that it allows the demolition of Palestinian homes for unspecified security reasons. From 1967 until 1987 about 18,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the West Bank. Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions (ICAHAD) considers that only about 5 per cent of these demolitions have to do with security concerns.²⁹

Another feature of the regime is that Palestinians require permits (which for a great many are refused) to move from one town or village to another within the West Bank itself, as well as to cross into Israel proper. For those Palestinians who are granted permits a great deal of time has to be spent in waiting at the checkpoints. Consequently it is difficult to visit family or friends, to go to hospital in case of an emergency, or in some cases for children to go to school. The delays involved tend to make it uneconomic to sell local products to outlets in Israel proper or for export.

29 Jeff Halper, *An Israel in Palestine* (London: Pluto Press, 2nd edn, 2010) p. 53. See also the Appendix where the figures agreed by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, B'Tselem and similar agencies are set out.

THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

What I hope emerges from the foregoing introduction to cultural and political Zionism respectively is that their different approaches are highly relevant to the issues confronting the people of Israel today. There are of course other dimensions to the Israel/ Palestinian problem, such as the presence of militant Moslem fundamentalism in some sections of the Palestinian community. The problem is complex and it is not helpful to fight over it on the basis of over-simplified polarities.

But at the risk of possibly offending some – I only ask to be listened to in an ‘I – Thou’ mode of dialogue – I offer a few personal comments. These are my own views, which, though I believe are within the principles of the CMJ ‘Statement on Israel and the Palestinians’,³⁰ are not intended to represent an official position of CMJ itself.

There is more than one Israel

Advocacy agencies such as the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and similar bodies are duty-bound to defend whatever actions or policies the state of Israel may be currently pursuing,³¹ regardless of what opposition or protest is being mounted by Jews in Israel. In recent years they have expanded the term ‘anti-Semitism’ to cover any criticism, even criticism in love, of the state of Israel.

But the state of Israel is not the same as the Jewish people living in Israel, There is more than one Israel. On the one hand, there is Likud and its changing coalition partners: Likud was formed in 1973 by Menachem Begin, a revisionist Zionist. The party is characterized by a philosophy of ‘security first, peace later, if ever’.

On the other hand, there is that small but significant group represented by peace activists such as Jeff Halper of ICAHD and R. Arik Ascherman of Rabbis for Human Rights (Israel), The latter acknowledges his debt to Ahad Ha’am. Both risk their lives by chaining themselves to Palestinian homes in front of the bulldozers sent to demolish them. This other Israel also includes Amira Hass and Gideon Levy, journalists with *Ha’aretz*, who act as modern-day prophets challenging the conscience of Israel. One leading thinker to be placed here is Marc Ellis, a Rabbi and Jewish theologian, who stands in the line of Martin Buber, Judah Magnes and Hannah Arendt.

That there is more than one Israel is brought home by the chapter ‘Children’s Future’ in Terje Carlsson’s documentary, *Israel versus Israel*.³² Here a grandmother who made *aliyah* in Communist days from Czechoslovakia is seen with her two grandchildren at a playground. She says she is going to do all she can to prevent her grandson from playing war-games and expresses foreboding that when he grows up he may have to kill when serving in the IDF. We then see her talking with her son, the

30 Agreed by the CMJ Council on 22 July 2004.

31 This is why Lawrence Brass, Treasurer of the UK Jewish Board of Deputies, felt he had to step down: ‘for six years’ he had been ‘bursting to criticize the Israeli administration’ (see the *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 February, 2015)

32 The DVD is distributed by Choices Inc. and may be purchased from www.choicesvideo.net

father of the two children. ‘But he may have to’ he counters, ‘the Arabs are jihadists; they just want us out of here; they want us dead.’

The grandmother, who regularly goes out with Machsom Watch, to be present at some of the 500 checkpoints to intervene if abuses take place, wants her grandchildren to grow up to be ‘thinking and sensitive, to be sensitive to people who suffer, who are different’. She sees little prospect of Israel having changed by the time her grandchildren have grown up, but reflects on the fact that no one expected the collapse of Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe; so who knows what providential shift may yet occur?

Depending on where we come from, we may identify more with the grandmother than her son, or the other way round, or perhaps in some measure with both. On reflection though, we can see that each of their perspectives does not fully take account of the other’s. The grandmother is perhaps forgetting the Jews’ understandable anxiety over security resulting from their long history of persecution culminating in the Holocaust, an anxiety fuelled by suicide bombings and rocket attacks. The son, for his part, sees the Arabs in stereotypical terms. Yes, the hardliners of Hamas pursue their aims by violence, but what about the moderate Mahmoud Abbas and the Fatah party? The son also seems to be unaware of the very different kind of Palestinians at Bil’in (near Ramallah) who for the last ten years have held weekly non-violent demonstrations against the siting and construction of the Western Barrier Wall which separates them from their lands which have now become part of a Jewish settlement.³³

The grandmother, however, unlike her son is well aware of the human cost to the Jewish Israelis of maintaining the occupation. Consider, for example, the effect on IDF soldiers of having to show who is in control at checkpoints, or having to enforce house demolitions, or to make arbitrary arrests without having to explain the charges.³⁴ She also understands the effect over many years of extremely tight bureaucratic and military controls over the Palestinians in the West Bank: frustration and resentment that provides a fertile breeding ground for suicide bombers.

The main reason, I suggest, for Christians who love the Jewish people and pray for them, to side primarily with either the grandmother or her son lies in the stance we take on the application of prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the Jewish people. For my part, as I have reflected on the Old Testament as a whole, I do not see that the promises of the prophets concerning the eventual restoration of the Jewish people can justify seizing land without compensation or expelling the present inhabitants, or any other kind of wrongdoing. As Marvin Wilson at the CMJ annual conference in 2012 stressed, we must not let the ‘foretelling the future’ element of the Prophets override their fundamental call for kindness and fair dealing, especially towards the powerless and unprotected: ‘eschatology should never annul justice.’³⁵

33 See *Ha’aretz*, 26 February, 2015.

34 ‘Breaking the Silence’, a human rights group comprising former IDF soldiers, seeks to bring into the open ‘those things soldiers on service cannot speak to their mothers about.’ They have put some videos on YouTube.

35 Lecture 2: ‘Understanding the Prophetic Literature of Israel’, the sixth basic rule of interpretation.

There is hope

Many of those who have pondered the question of where the state of Israel stands today are deeply pessimistic about the future. For example, Avi Shlaim at the end of *The Iron Wall* quotes Albert Einstein's comments in 1930 on the Jews' failure to seek rapprochement with the Arabs:

*Only direct cooperation with the Arabs can create a safe and dignified life ... What saddens me is less the fact that the Jews are not smart enough to understand this, but, rather, that they are not just enough to want it.*³⁶

18 Shlaim then concludes that this is how he 'feels today after forty years of research and reflection on the tragic and seemingly irreconcilable conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours'

Marc Ellis looks beyond what he takes as the present tragedy, and from a standpoint within Judaism suggests the possibility of an ultimate renewal:

*That the Jewish testimony in the world needs renewal is beyond questioning. Its importance is also beyond questioning. The time is now and is already too late. But too late can become right on time – when the time is right.*³⁷

However, for the believer in Jesus who holds on to Romans 11 there is the assurance that God has not and never will give up on the Jewish people. One day there will be a full inclusion of the Jews with untold blessing for the world (verse 12). Perhaps one form that blessing may take will be that the state of Israel becomes like Switzerland, only more so – a model given to the world of how different peoples can live together in peace, with justice, in the same land!

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream
(Amos 5:24).

36 Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p. 814.

37 Marc H. Ellis, *Judaism Does Not Equal Israel* (New York and London: The New Press, 2009) p. 225.

A STATEMENT APPROVED BY JEWISH AND ARAB STAFF AT CHRIST CHURCH JERUSALME AND UNANIMOUSLY AGREED BY THE CMJ COUNCIL ON 22 JULY 2004

Introduction

CMJ was founded in 1809 by Evangelical Christians who believed that the Christian gospel, which came from a Jewish context, should be shared with Jewish people as a priority. Its original name *The London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews*, though couched in unhelpful terminology, was intended to describe this purpose. The Society also reached out to Jewish people in compassion, providing hospitals, schools, job creation and training for the unemployed as well as teaching and worship in Hebrew. CMJ believes that the term “Restoration” when applied to the Jewish people is primarily restoration to their Messiah, Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Christ; and secondarily restoration to a safe homeland after 2000 years of persecution. Furthermore, the focus of New Testament eschatology (the doctrine of the end times) is on Jesus and holy living, rather than land. However, the question of what the Ministry thinks about the State of Israel and its relationship to the Palestinians is important - hence this statement.

Statement

1. CMJ encourages the Church to express sorrow and regret before God for the dreadful history of Christian anti-Semitism and to renounce all anti-Semitic attitudes. At the same time it encourages the Church to renounce any negative or uncaring attitudes towards Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular.
2. CMJ believes that God has neither finally rejected the Jewish people nor replaced or superseded them by the Church. A “remnant” of Jewish Believers has always been included in the Church. But what of the majority? Paul teaches that God has a special purpose to bring them to faith in Christ. He writes: “Did God reject his people? By no means”. He adds: “Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all”. Paul foretells a future blessing for them, and through them for the world, which he variously describes as “their fullness”, “their acceptance” which will be “life from the dead”. He concludes: “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...” Romans 11:1, 11-15, 25,26).
3. CMJ rejoices in the growing number of Jewish Believers in Jesus, in Israel and throughout the world.

4. CMJ believes that both Jewish and Gentile believers (including our Palestinian brothers and sisters) are united in the one “olive tree”. In fact, Jesus has made Jew and Gentile one *“and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility”*. Jews and Gentiles alike are reconciled to God through the cross and “both have access to the Father by one Spirit”. Gentiles are “fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household a holy temple in the Lord ... in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph 2:14-22). There is therefore “neither Jew nor Greek” in terms of standing before God (Gal 3:28). So Jewish (Messianic) Believers in Jesus are not spiritually superior (or inferior) to Gentile Believers.
5. CMJ has never limited its ministry in an exclusive way to Jewish people, nor does it wish to do so. The primary purpose of the Ministry is to share the love of Jesus with the Jewish people, but it also works for reconciliation between all people (especially between Israeli Jewish Believers and Israeli Arabs, between Israelis and Palestinian; Jewish people and Gentiles) because that is a demand which comes from the heart of the Gospel, for God loves all people equally. This means that He loves the Israelis and the Palestinians equally. God’s purpose in creating one new man out of Jew and Gentile is part of His greater purpose through Christ to reconcile to Himself all things (Eph 2:15-16; Col 1:20).
6. CMJ does not adopt a position on any particular millennial view, but it has always seen the return of the Jewish people to their ancient land and on a national scale to their Messiah, as a precursor to the return of Jesus in glory.
7. CMJ rejoices in God’s faithfulness to the Jewish people in ensuring their survival as a distinct people during 2000 years of exile and persecution.
8. CMJ rejoices that, after 2000 years of exile and persecution, including the Holocaust, the Jewish people now, at last, have returned to the land from which the majority were dispersed in AD70, although there has virtually always been a Jewish presence in the land. The Ministry affirms: “We see the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel as a sign of God’s faithfulness as revealed in Scripture”. Many members of the Ministry see the return of the Jewish people to the land as the beginning of a fulfilment of the covenant promises to them in Scripture. However, it must be remembered that Israel is a secular state which is no more religious than Britain.
9. CMJ recognizes that the State of Israel was set up as a result of a majority vote of the United Nations in 1947 that a Jewish state should be established within Mandatory Palestine and regrets the Arab rejection of this decision.

10. CMJ recognizes the tragic displacement of many Palestinian people, with all its attendant pain and deprivation, which resulted from the re-establishment of the State of Israel and the subsequent attack on the new state by the surrounding countries. It also recognizes the similar displacement of Jewish people from Arab nations.
11. CMJ understands the determination of the Israeli Jews to preserve the Jewish state, to avoid a return to being persecuted and abused by anti-Semites throughout the world. However the Ministry does not hold any official position as to the appropriate location of the borders of the state.
12. CMJ believes it has a particular calling to show the love of Messiah to Jewish people everywhere. But the Ministry takes the same critical approach to some policies and actions of the State of Israel as it would over any secular state.
13. CMJ affirms that God is a God of justice and peace, and that He desires justice and peace for all people groups.
14. CMJ affirms that God is a God of compassion. We should show that compassion to all innocent sufferers, whether Israeli or Palestinian. The Ministry recognizes that the Israelis, after 2000 years of anti-Semitism, face a resurgence of anti-Semitism, a military threat from various nations, Palestinian terrorism and a threat to the stability of their safe homeland through demographic factors. It also recognizes that many Palestinians have lost their ancestral homes and continue to experience military occupation. Sometimes they suffer unjustified oppression, humiliation, violence and the destruction of their homes. They also experience economic disaster and lack of infrastructure, partly through Israeli policies and partly through the failures of the Palestinian Authority.
15. CMJ deplores the resurgence of anti-Semitism throughout the world, especially in Western Europe, including the UK, which takes the form of verbal and physical attacks on Jewish people, attacks on synagogues, schools, cemeteries and memorials, a revival of the world Jewish conspiracy theories, including broadcasting of the (fictional) "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and even a resurrection of the old blood libel, accusing Jews of ritual murders. The Ministry has always sought to stand with the Jewish people against such evils.

Conclusion

CMJ commits itself to move beyond the present debate amongst Christians, which is often characterized by sterile polarisation and inflammatory words, to show understanding and tolerance and to focus on reconciliation, justice and peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. It appeals to mission agencies and the wider Church to cooperate in this. CMJ recognizes the great complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute but believes that the power of God is infinitely greater than this complexity and that we should pray for his sovereign purposes to prevail

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